

to grant a permanent animation to their stitched-together creations. The secret of how they harness the deceased hag-mother's power is known only to the three of them and represents their last bargaining chip should the powers of the Nine Hells decide their tenure is at an end.

While the basements are sealed off from the rest of the inn, there are no guards when the hags are off dealing with guests. The basements are accessible through an iron door that has *Arcane Lock* on it. Read the following if the characters decide to investigate:

The basement of the inn is a huge cavern carved from the rock. Arches of bone are built into the walls of the cavern for some unknown purpose. What looks like an angel hangs slackly from hooks on the ceiling; it seems to have been constructed out of the body parts of angels and devils.

This cavern is where the creations that the hags are currently working on are found. The angel doesn't have a spark of life as of yet, but if Anacreda feels threatened she can awaken her creation. The angel is a **planetar** that is considered a lawful evil Construct. It doesn't have its spellcasting feature. If the characters are here peacefully, review the "Services" section, for a description of what the hags might offer the characters, and ask for in return.

## S8: IRABELLA'S WORKSHOPS

A curious splash draws your attention to an area of the basement dotted with large pools of brackish water. Amidst the pools, a green-skinned woman is partly submerged within a large iron-clad bathtub, set upon a wheeled platform. She is leaning out of the tub, studying various body parts arranged on a table before her. The waters of the brackish pools ripple continuously, as if something large moves beneath their surfaces.

Irabella the hag (Irabella uses the **archmage** stat block, but her creature type is Fey) seldom leaves her great wheeled bath, that is hauled laboriously about the ramps and elevators of the inn by the staff of **kobolds** she commands. Her workshops are half-submerged, and here she creates aquatic monstrosities on demand. Great Sahuagin priest-kings, aboleth archmages and elder kraken all send emissaries to her, and she makes benthic terrors to trouble the dreams of sea gods. She is sharp and bitter in manner, abusive to her servants and needling

to her patrons and sisters, but she also commands the day-to-day running of the inn and its kitchens, tedious work the other two have no taste for. Hence her constant barbs are endured.

**The Pools.** Each pool is 150 feet deep and connected to one another. The creature in the pool is a lawful evil **dragon turtle** stripped of most of its shell but imbued with infernal energies (Legendary Resistance 2/Day and its Steam Breath deals necrotic damage instead of fire damage). If any pool is disturbed, or Irabella is attacked while in this room, the dragon turtle attacks. During battle, it uses its movement to slip through the tunnels connecting the pools, to position itself tactically, as required.

**Treasure.** Characters find 1d4 *Soul Coins*, if they search the workshop, though if their pilfering is detected by Irabella, she attacks.

**Phylactery of the Mother.** As soon as the character searching for the phylactery containing their mother's soul enters this room, they hear her voice whisper their name. But her voice sounds like she's trapped under water, and it's distorted. Each hour they may make a DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check to try to find her. Only that character can make the check, and no one can help them with it. If they fail the check there is a 1 in 6 chance that Irabella, if not previously encountered, enters the room and confronts them. Once found, the characters are able to retrieve their mother's phylactery from beneath the brackish waters.

The character has taken possession of the phylactery of their mother and gains the Phylactery Benefit associated with it.

## S9: MALECKI'S WORKSHOPS

Through the gap made between two pillars of bone, you see various large pens, surrounded with walls of bone. A huge beast is chained to the floor in one of the central pens, its head full of tusks and its body a mass of spikes. An elf woman is apparently tending to the creature.

Malecki, who claims to be the direct descendant of Malagard, is a **night hag** (with 150 hit points) whose work is on a grand scale. Her workshops are huge caverns in the rock, supplied with arches of bone that serve as gates from which her creations can leave, too vast to navigate the physical tunnels to the surface. She calls her work 'bespoke behemoths', living war engines of armor and tusks and spines, and she is happy to deliver them via her gates direct to a battlefield of her patron's choice if required. Malecki appears as plump and cheerful and is absolutely not to be trusted under any circumstance. Her creations are of undeniable power



THE RICKETY STEPS LEAD DOWN  
TO THE HAGS' WORKSHOPS.

## TEMPTATION OF DECEIT

### "Life After Death"

Malecki carries a strange amulet in one of her robe's many pockets. This is a cursed item known as the *Amulet of Duplicity* (see appendix D).

but are best released and then avoided as they've a tendency to forget who their master is soon after being deployed.

Malecki is still working on her latest creation, a yet-to-be-named fiendish war-machine (uses the statistics of a **goristro** demon). It is tethered by a magical chain with a length of 5 feet (though given the creature's size, it is capable of reaching much further than that). Currently it is docile and apparently tolerates, if not enjoys, Malecki's grotesque surgery. If she is attacked, Malecki uses a bonus action to free it from the chain, and the creature defends her.

## S10: ANACREDA THE ANGELMAKER

A workshop that also appears to be used for the storage of spare creature parts is tucked away on the opposite side of the other basement chambers.

Shelves line many of the walls, floor to ceiling, and upon those shelves sit several iron cannisters full of feathers of various plumages and colors.

A hideous winged woman is apparently examining the paraphernalia, though it is unclear whether she is looking for something or simply admiring the collection. Her dove-grey wings twitch, as she glances over her shoulder in your direction. She asks, "Are you here to commission a build, or have you arrived to offer my sisters and I a discount on the used body parts of one of your companions?"

Finally, there is Anacreda the Angelmaker, the leader of the coven. **Anacreda** (see accompanying stat block) makes beasts of the air and bears a great pair of dove-grey wings herself, a living advertisement of her skills. She is only ever hideous, never bothering to disguise her true visage, but at the same time she has a stern grandeur to her that strikes Fiends and mortals both with its gravity and awe. Nobody has tested her to find out how personally powerful she is, but when Glasya herself comes to visit it is Anacreda she guests with. The two of them sit for hours, drinking peculiar vintages and exchanging secrets. And, while Glasya is the one entity whom Anacreda visibly defers to as her superior, the archdevil treats the ancient hag better than most of her own direct subordinates.

## SERVICES

As well as making monsters to order, the three sisters keep up a busy trade in exotic components and pieces, part of a network of speculators, harvesters and collectors that spans the planes. In addition, they happily modify Fiends and even mortals. They replace and add limbs, senses, and organs, both on request from those seeking greater personal power, and to fulfill specific punishments for recalcitrant Fiends that Glasya sends to them. Because they represent an unusual little blister of relative lawlessness in the Nine Hells, the sisters have also been known to hide fugitive mortals from infernal pursuit, for a price—though they're also not averse to taking payment and then betraying their guests,

## ANACREDA

Large Fey, Neutral Evil

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 253 (22d10 + 132)

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Con +12, Cha +10

**Skills** Deception +10, Perception +9

**Damage Immunities** cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., truesight 10 ft., passive Perception 19

**Languages** Common, Giant, Infernal, Sylvan

**Challenge** 17 (18,000 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +6

## ACTIONS

**Multiaction.** Anacreda makes two Claw attacks. She can replace one of the attacks with a Crushing Hug attack.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.  
*Hit:* 16 (2d8 + 7) slashing damage.

**Crushing Hug.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 51 (8d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Large or smaller creature, Anacreda grabs it with both arms. The target has the grappled condition (escape DC 18). Until the grapple ends, the target takes 73 (12d10 + 7) necrotic damage at the start of each of Anacreda's turns. Anacreda can't make attacks while grappling a creature in this way.

**Spinewall.** Anacreda causes a 50-foot-long, 5-foot-wide row of bones to pierce the earth at a point within 120 feet of her. She chooses the direction of the line. The bones rise 10 feet into the air and form a solid wall. A 5-foot section of bone has an AC of 20 and 10 hit points.

**Shattering Shriek (1/Day).** Anacreda shrieks loud enough to shatter stone and bone alike. Each creature within a 50-foot-radius sphere centered on Anacreda must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 55 (10d10) thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Unworked stone, exposed bone, and similar materials in the radius are shattered and turned into difficult terrain.

## HAG PARTS

### d8 Result

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1–3 | The hags can apply a patchwork collection of skin to the character, granting the character immunity to either fire or cold damage (character picks before surgery).   |
| 4–5 | A third eye can be grafted onto the character's forehead. It offers no benefit, but the hags lie and say it helps to see the future.  |
| 6–8 | One of the characters' arms can be replaced with a tentacle. The tentacle gives the character advantage on ability checks made to grapple another creature, but the character can no longer use weapons with the two-handed property or perform tasks that require two hands, nor can the character use the tentacle to wield a shield or weapon. |

## BAD DEAL

### d10 Result

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 1–3  | There are no side effects.   |
| 4–6  | The adjustments have introduced an aspect of the infernal into the character and they're now vulnerable to radiant damage. |
| 7–8  | The character's walking speed is reduced by 5 feet.  |
| 9–10 | The workmanship was shoddy and uneven. The character has disadvantage on initiative rolls.                                 |

if they're feeling treacherous. The three sisters of the Hag's Arms are anything but reliable collaborators save where their business partners are too powerful to play games with.

When mortals do beg their services, the required payment varies. Most often they might simply ask for one member of the visiting group—as a plaything, for their soul, or to trade on to some fiendish creditor. As mortals are oddly reluctant to enter into that kind of transaction, they take other services. There is almost always some rare component one or another sister is after for her latest creation, and they've devised a variety of powerful geas-type bindings to ensure that any agreement isn't reneged on. They particularly like effects that have their errand-runners gradually mutate or deteriorate the longer the task remains undone. In game terms, any Geas they cast works as if it was cast at 9th level. In addition, the geas can only be ended with the *Wish* spell or by killing the hag that cast the spell.

All three sisters appreciate things that are in short supply in the Nine Hells. A bard's skilled performance, some witty repartee and a challenging game of skill might serve just as well as a quest across all the known planes for a piece of an ancient monster still currently within its original owner. Until you go before them, cap in hand, it's impossible to know how hard a bargain the hags will drive.

Risk-taking characters might want the hags to help them survive the dangers of the Nine Hells. Roll on the Hag Parts table ... this is the modification available currently (this might change the next time the characters visit Malbolge). If the cost of 3 *Soul Coins* is paid, one character gains the modification after 2d4 hours of surgery. However, there is almost always a drawback. Roll on the Bad Deal table.

### **Deathstalkers—Obtaining the Scourge of Shadow.**

If the characters are searching for the *Scourge of Shadow*, Anacreda wants to make a deal with them. She desires the head of Baalzebul's chief general, Abigor, in retaliation for a slight he made to her the last time he visited the inn. Anacreda promises to get the scourge, but only if they agree to having the Geas spell cast on them. Alternatively, if the characters defeat Anacreda and her sisters in combat, the hag bargains for her life by offering up both the scourge and Glasya. The archdevil visits often, usually without any guard. What could be a better revenge for the characters, than killing the daughter of Asmodeus? The hag is more than willing to help set an ambush for the archdevil.

When **Glasya** (see appendix A) arrives, Anacreda sits with her and serves a frothing tea that both consume. If Anacreda is cooperating to ambush the archdevil, the tea weakens Glasya in the following ways. Glasya can't use her Call Underling, Fiendish Regeneration, or Mesmerizing Gaze in Malbolge for 1 week. As soon as Glasya finishes her tea, Anacreda beckons the characters from the shadows to attack. During combat, the hag uses her Spinewall to disrupt and corral Glasya and she claws at the archdevil as long as the characters are nearby to assist. Glasya doesn't seem overly surprised at the betrayal—this is the way of the Nine Hells after all.



THE EYE MARKET LOOMS OVER THE SURROUNDING STREETS.

## CHAPTER 9

# Maladomini, the Domain of Ruined Cities



NCE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LAYER IN THE Nine Hells, Maladomini has since fallen to ruin due to the overzealous actions of its ruler. In an attempt to return his realm to beauty, Baalzebul orders the construction of a new city every few years. When these inevitably don't meet his standard of perfection, he abandons the city and starts anew. The entire layer is now covered in a thick, toxic smog, and sickly black ichor oozes from everything. Hidden behind the smog is a ruby-red sky, blackening the higher it gets. Despite all this, Maladomini remains the only layer with an official school, and many of the intelligent devils call it home.

## RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

Before running this chapter read the “Maladomini Overview” section. You can use the information in this section to guide your players through the different attractions this layer has to offer.

## ENCOUNTERS

During their travels across Maladomini the characters encounter some of the devils that call this place their home. Roll at least once on the Random Encounters in Maladomini table whilst here.

## LOCATIONS

If the characters want to explore some of the other locations in Maladomini, the “Key Locations in Maladomini” section will help you set the scene. There is much to see, as Maladomini is forever being developed, with new cities rising every few years that rival the might of the ones that came before. Two of the cities the characters might choose to visit: Grenpoli and Gorloron. The city of Grenpoli serves as a welcome safe haven for many. Within its walls all forms of aggression are forbidden. The city of Gorloron, the latest of Baalzebul's vanity projects, will no doubt be surpassed by an even more ambitious metropolis in the future. Besides the cities, the characters can explore the Carnival Eternal. There are many lethal thrills to be found within, and as the characters stroll across the carnival grounds, devils cry out to tempt them to go on the carnival's Hellish rides.

## OBJECTIVES

Make sure you keep track of your player's objectives and lead them to the corresponding areas to ensure they can complete their goals. Once done exploring, they need to make their way to the Eye Market. Here they can find some of the items and souls they're searching for.

The following objectives can be attained in Maladomini:

### OBJECTIVE IN MALADOMINI

Objective	Location
Phylactery of the great con	Eye Market: Ganglands (Memnoriac's territory)
Phylactery of the spouse	Eye Market: Ganglands (Ilkatar's territory)
<i>Staff of the Woodlands</i>	Eye Market: The Slums
Jenevere	Eye Market

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN MALADOMINI

### d6 Encounter

- 1d4 **erinyes** quietly travel throughout the realm, checking in on construction projects. They're spies from another layer of the Nine Hells, though from which they're unwilling to share.
- 2 Construction on a new project is being done by thirty **lemures**, led by a **corruption devil** (see appendix B).
- 3 An **amnizu** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) researcher is exploring the various ruins nearby, cataloguing what it finds for storage in Grenpoli.
- 4 Three swarms of **ayperobo** (see appendix B) wander through Maladomini looking for something to fight.
- 5 Hidden within a nearby ruin is a small camp of six **spined devil** runaways. They shirked their construction duties and are hiding from their former masters.
- 6 A belch of foul smog suddenly drops from the sky, covering one of the characters and expanding out from them. Treat the smog as if it were a 9th-level *Cloudkill* spell except that it covers a 200-foot-radius sphere and has a save DC of 21.



## MALADOMINI, THE SEVENTH HELL

### TEMPTATIONS

Have the characters encounter at least one temptation during their time in Maladomini. If the characters give in to temptation, use the information in appendix E to keep track of their corruption level.

### MALADOMINI OVERVIEW

The River Styx enters the realm through a massive canyon that stretches to Malbolge. The river moves from the canyon into a massive subterranean cave system, where it avoids the exploitation of the surface for some time before emerging from underground and exposing the smog covered sky to those sailing its waters.

During its heyday, Maladomini was a beautiful paradise, with varying biomes and lush vegetation. Sadly, the only forests that remain are either decaying or dead, with no wildlife or beauty to be found. In between the deforestation lie strip mines, surface mines, and processing facilities that belch smog and toxins into the air. Any water that once existed has turned to sludge, save only for the secluded Styx. The layer is truly a testament to Baalzebul's failure in his search for perfection.

Each of the ruins covering the realm is more spectacular than the last. During their construction,

Baalzebul wanted each to be his ultimate metropolis and spared no expense. Even in their detritus they remain grotesquely beautiful. Occasional treasure hunters from other planes explore the ruins in search of treasure, and many escaped devils or souls hide deep inside. The overexploitation of the surrounding lands makes the ruins some of the safest spots in the layer, and they remain largely forgotten by the ruling archdevil.

Despite his disloyalty to Asmodeus, Baalzebul remains the archdevil in charge of Maladomini. His rule is assisted by other powerful archdevils, including Abigor. Baalzebul is driven towards perfecting his realm and many construction projects are constantly underway. Devils not working on the various construction projects prefer life in the domed city of Grenpoli.

### LEAVING MALADOMINI

The only known way in or out of Maladomini is the Styx, though rumors claim other entrances and exits exist. Because of the stream of devils entering and exiting the realm for training and schooling, scholars believe there to be a hidden infernal passageway that connects the layer to the rest of the Nine Hells. Explorers also claim that the cave system the Styx passes through has connections to other layers, though such connections have yet to be

found. Besides, if one can brave the cave systems, the Styx is a relatively easy method of travel.

## FEATURES

Although Maladomini remains one of the safer layers, the influence of the Lord of the Flies remains powerful. Whenever a creature is asked a question, they must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is magically compelled to tell a lie, stretch the truth, or avoid answering—anything that would prevent the truth from being told.

## KEY LOCATIONS IN MALADOMINI

The characters need to make their way to the Eye Market but may want to spend some time in the other locations found in Maladomini. Use the information below to guide their excursion.

### CITY OF GRENPOLI

Unique to Maladomini and known throughout the Nine Hells is Grenpoli, the City of Diplomacy. All forms of aggression or weapons are forbidden within the city, and a powerful spell suppresses violence when it would occur. Upon entering the city through one of its four gates, visitors are searched, and their weapons confiscated. These will only be returned once their visit to the city has ended. Grenpoli contains the Political College of the Nine Hells, which offers devils courses in deception, manipulation, and negotiation. Located just outside the city is Offalion, a training facility that enacts large-scale

### TEMPTATION OF BETRAYAL

#### *"If I Could Read Your Mind"*

The characters are approached by a devil that offers them the ability to read the thoughts of someone important to them for the cost of 1 *Soul Coin* and 800 gp. If one of the characters is tempted, run the appropriate temptation event from chapter 2.

scenarios to train devils, testing and enhancing their ability to barter effectively with mortals. These exercises prepare a multitude of devils for delicate excursions into the Material Plane.

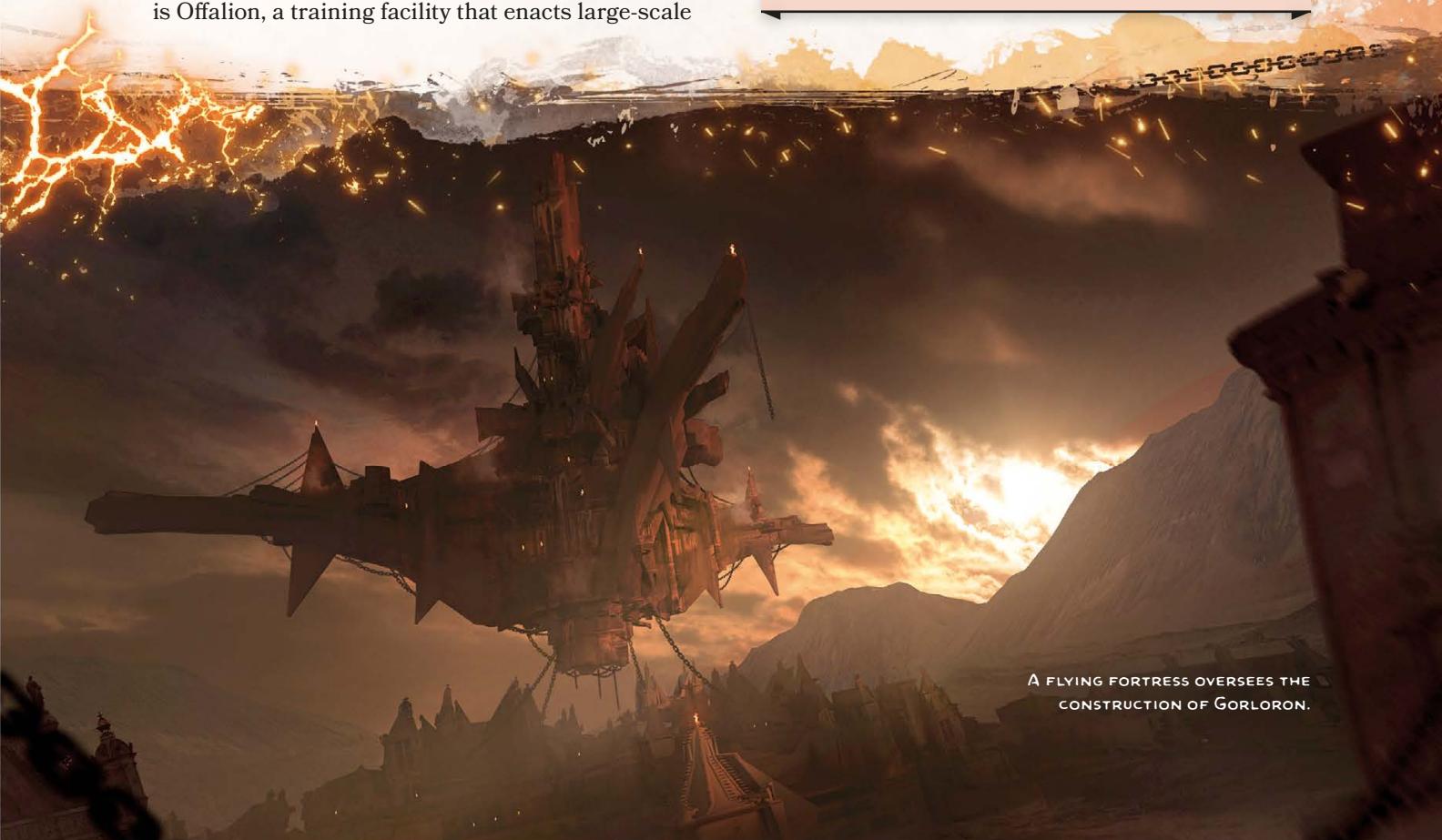
## CITY OF GORLORON

Baalzebul's "greatest" city of the moment is Gorloron, which contains his seat of power and much of the devil population in the realm. The city's construction is still underway, and the place is utter chaos.

### TEMPTATION OF OPPRESSION

#### *"A Palace Fit for a King"*

Here in the (current) capital of Baalzebul's realm, you can't throw a stone without hitting an architect. All are vying to gain favor from the tormented archdevil and to convince him to let them build bigger and better. One of these architects approaches the characters, explaining that his latest proposal was rejected once more. It is desperate for work and offers to build the characters a fortress or a temple in their name. The price is 3 *Soul Coins* and 2,000 gp (a rare magic item brings the price down to 500 gp). If any of the characters take the devil up on their offer run the appropriate temptation event from chapter 2.



A FLYING FORTRESS OVERSEES THE CONSTRUCTION OF GORLORON.



VISITORS MUST DOCK THEIR SHIPS  
OUTSIDE THE GATES OF GRENPOLI.

## CARNIVAL ETERNAL

Also of note is the Carnival Eternal, which is a terrifying and absurd amusement park built to reward successful devils. If the characters have not yet encountered the “Ruin and Amusement” random encounter (see chapter 2), feel free to run that now if the characters explore the Carnival Eternal.

## THE EYE MARKET

This dangerous area is nestled in the center of a ring of partly abandoned buildings, all of it the turf of various factions vying for control.

## ADVENTURE: THE EYE MARKET

The Eye Market is run by an odd couple—a mind flayer and a beholder. For the right price, they will replace the eyes of a customer with new jeweled eyes of great magical power.

If asked about the Eye Market, Koh Tam has this to say:

“Maladomini is the layer of deceit but none are more deceived perhaps than its master, Baalzebul himself who ruins every part of it in a vain attempt to create a wonder of beauty that will put the other planes to shame. Constantly beginning and then abandoning his increasingly ambitious projects, he leaves behind a polluted waste of dead forests, toxic water, and the shells of half-completed palaces, castles and cities, each abandoned as it fails to meet its architect’s impossible standards.” He gestures at the debris of the various unfinished projects that litter the landscape.

“In one particularly expansive cityscape comprised of a labyrinth of roofless houses, half-raised towers, and foundations of great works, there in the shadow of a ruined dome surely too grand ever to have been completed, squats the Eye Market, the underside of Maladomini. A festering secret hidden under the nose of the layer’s archdevil, a siren’s lure to all those exhausted by the hideous waste of the layer. Because there is salvation to be had there, of a kind. If the sights of Maladomini offend your eyes, the devils say, then pluck them out. My intuition tells me you should venture to the Market next.”

## ADVICE FROM KOH TAM

Koh Tam warns the characters to be careful while on the streets around the Eye Market. He can also offer the following advice:

- The Eye Market is the name for the entirety of the neighborhood surrounding the specialty store in the inner district operated by strange beings known as Vaness and Fling. It is also the name of their store.
- Rival gangs of devils roam and control various portions of the Eye Market, and it would be best to not get mixed up in their turf war.

This is a location well known to many travelers and Koh Tam can provide a standard map of the Eye Market (see appendix F) to the characters. They can then use this map to decide which route they want to take to reach Vaness’ and Fling’s shop (area M6).

## THE LAW

Watching over the streets around the Eye Market is Akrekarn, the closest this morass has to the law. A **corruption devil** (see appendix B) retired from a life of blackmailing mortals, Akrekarn patrols the streets around the market with a writ from Baalzebul, allegedly enforcing the archdevil’s will but in truth simply shaking down locals and visitors for all he can get. He is more than ready to have his mob of infernal deputies (**six bearded devils**) seize anyone who won’t bow the knee or proffer a bribe, taking them to be tormented, sold, or ransomed as he thinks best. When not terrorizing the streets, Akrekarn takes his unspeakable pleasures in the one completed building in the city, a guard house he has made his headquarters. Or else he is to be found at the Eye Market itself, shaking down the proprietors and reminding them that they operate only on sufferance.

### AN EYE FOR OPPORTUNITY

There are watchful eyes everywhere and the moment characters attack either Ilkatar, Memnoria, or Jace-lisk, Akrekarn is informed. Before the battle finishes, he arrives in an infernal airship, a gift from Baalzebul, accompanied by his bodyguard of **six bearded devils**. He doesn’t interfere with the battle but if the characters are victorious, he takes control of the vacated gang-leader’s territory and won’t permit passage until he’s gotten approval from Baalzebul. Akrekarn makes it clear that attacking him will bring on the archdevil’s wrath.

If the characters are defeated, he takes half of the character’s belongings from the gang-leader, to store in his headquarters. Details for the airship can be found in the Airborne and Waterborne Vehicles table in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide* except that Akrekarn’s vehicle requires half the crew and accommodates only half the number of passengers.

# THE EYE MARKET

0 100 200 300 400

Feet

Side View



AKREKARN IMPOSES THE LAW ON THE STREETS OUTSIDE THE EYE MARKET.



## EYE MARKET LOCATIONS

The characters must navigate dangerous streets to get to the Eye Market. However, if they keep their wits about them, they may just find what they're looking for.

### M1: OUTER STREETS

Like the great corpse of a whale sunken to the sea floor, the city around you is at once both utterly dead and teeming with life—scavengers and parasites all contending for a scrap of flesh. You see them in the darkened corners of winding alleyways and the entrances of crumbling doorways. Watching. Waiting. Below your feet the pavement is potholed and hazardous and dilapidated structures loom all around like giant bones picked clean, haunted by the revenant of intended greatness.

Reaching the market is easier said than done. The convoluted streets of the abandoned city it nestles within are fraught with peril around every turn. Desperate lost souls and minor devils, cut loose from

the hierarchy of the Nine Hells, throng there—most bitterly seeking the unique service the Eye Market can provide but unable to pay the fee. Every hollow shell of a building hides a nest of wretches preying on each other, scrabbling in the mulch, or descending into the monster-haunted and unsound sewers of the place in the hopes of finding something of value.

A variety of gangs preside over this layer of scum, extorting prices of souls, flesh, and labor from those on their turf. This being the Nine Hells, of

### DANGEROUS TERRITORY

There are dozens of smaller gangs in the broken streets around the Eye Market, but the current major players are Ilkatar's Brood, Jacelisk's Knives, and Memnoriac. To reach the Eye Market (area M6), the characters must walk through, or fly over, one of the ganglands. Each major gang demands tribute to allow the characters passage through their territory. See the following descriptions about what each gang demands but the head of a rival gang-leader is also suitable tribute for any gang.

If any characters attempt to fly over gang territory, that gang challenges them in the air instead. Any descriptive text in the following sections will need to be adjusted if this occurs.

course, it isn't a dog-eat-dog chaos, but a knife-edged dance of diplomacy, custom, and expectation. Every gang is the heart of a web of alliances and carefully negotiated territorial arrangements, all of which contain hidden get-out clauses and exceptions that allow them to be shrugged off at any moment. The devils live strung between two poles, constantly living as though their word is their bond, yet ready to exploit loopholes to betray their fellows at every step.

## M2: GANGLANDS—ILKATAR'S TERRITORY

Ilkatar's people are abishai and pay at least lip service to Tiamat, in her lair far above. Of all the gangs, they value mortal treasure most, hoarding gold and gems and tithing to their great mother. They're by nature cruel but lazy, easily appeased with gifts or service.

**Tribute.** If tribute is paid, the characters may head north and around the inner district to area M3 or enter the inner district and reach the “Eye Market,” bypassing any other gangs. If the characters seek out Ilkatar to pay this tribute, proceed to the following:

You enter a large, half-finished warehouse turned dwelling, a dimly lit room filled with the sounds of snarling and hissing. Through the lingering smoke you discern a poorly made wooden throne and upon it, a green abishai. To the left of the throne stands a white abishai, clad in gleaming armor and holding a wickedly sharp sword. On either side of the throne, a pair of hell hounds snarl and growl, their fur matted with dried blood, and their teeth gleaming. The green creature speaks, “I am Ilkatar and this is my Brood. Have you come to pay tribute for passage, or to feed my very hungry pets?”

To pass through this territory the characters need to pay 7,500 gp or deliver a rival's head. If they choose to fight their way through, they're challenged by Ilkatar (**green abishai**), the **white abishai** lieutenant (see *Monsters of the Multiverse* for the abishai stat blocks), and four **hell hounds**.

**Treasure.** If the characters slay Ilkatar and succeed on a DC 22 Wisdom (Perception) check, they find a discarded lockbox under the wooden throne. Opening it reveals 3,500 pp.

**Phylactery of the Spouse/True Love.** The character who has ventured into the Nine Hells to rescue their true love finds them imprisoned in one of the buildings in Ilkatar's territory. The soul is tormented in a twisted hall of mirrors. The whole interior of the building is made of mirrored walls, floors, and ceilings.

## MIRROR REFLECTIONS

Result	Outcome
3 or less	The reflection vanishes, meanwhile three <b>white abishai</b> (see <i>Monsters of the Multiverse</i> ) step out of nearby mirrors, surrounding the character. If the character gets this result on their fourth or later roll, they find their true love instead.
4–6	The mirror shatters and the shards cut the character. The character must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
7–9	The reflection vanishes once the character reaches out for them. If the character gets this result on their fourth or later roll, they find their true love instead.
10–12	The character is pulled into the reflection by two <b>black abishai</b> . If the character gets this result on their third roll, they find their true love instead.
13–15	A <b>red abishai</b> lunges forward from the reflection and attacks the character but vanishes at the end of its second turn of combat. If the character gets this result on their second roll, they find their true love instead.
16 or more	They find their true love.

The soul is trying to find their true reflection among the hundreds of reflections around them. An impossible task, and painful and deadly every time they guess wrong.

To save them, the character needs to find their true love among the many reflections. Have the character make an Intelligence (Investigation) check. Look up their result on the Mirror Reflections table. Once the character has dealt with the outcome of a failure they can try again.

After finding their true love's reflection, it vanishes leaving the phylactery in its place. The character takes possession of the phylactery of their true love and gains the Phylactery Benefit associated with it.

## M3: GANGLANDS—MEMNORIAK'S TERRITORY

Memnoriak was once one of Baalzebul's architects, a **pit fiend** of great status and power. Like all such, his perceived ‘failures’ eventually led to his downfall, and now he squats with his ragbag of followers in the city he designed and will never complete. The single most powerful devil in the ruin, he is tormented by the collapse of his final project and has become a Baalzebul in miniature. Those under his control are constantly re-edifying the buildings around him, raising them up and tearing them down as he seeks his own minuscule perfection.

**Tribute.** If tribute is paid, the characters may head west and through the inner district to reach the “Eye Market,” bypassing any other gangs. If the characters seek out Memnoriac to pay this tribute, proceed to the following:

You step through open gates beneath the skull of a massive creature. A short walk past the gate, in the center of the courtyard, a muscular creature looms over a table upon which a haphazard model of the city-in-miniature rests. The model itself bears little resemblance to the real city it represents, yet somehow seems even more disorganized.

Without even looking up at you, the fiend snarls. “Welcome to Memnoriac’s grand city. Have you come to bow and worship, to scrape your knees on the rough gravel, and pay homage to me, the master-builder?”

To pass through this territory, the characters must pay 20,000 gold in gems and coins to fund Memnoriac’s construction efforts. Alternatively, they can offer something even more valuable: a compliment. Congratulating Memnoriac on his fabulous city and then succeeding on a DC 22 Charisma (Deception) check earns the Fiend’s goodwill and safe passage. Failing the check, or refusing to pay tribute, results in the pit fiend fighting the characters on his own. He refuses to believe he needs help defeating such puny adversaries. If slain, the Fiend has no treasure, just diagrams of his future building plans.

**Phylactery of the Great Con.** The character looking for their soul can find it among the lowlifes and grifters that inhabit the streets surrounding Memnoriac’s skull-gated manor. In other circumstances they would have been right at home here, conning their way to the top of the devil food chain. However, the character’s soul isn’t in the position to con anyone. It is being tormented by the gang that runs this territory. Memnoriac and his troop of devils have taken up root here after the pit fiends’ fall from grace. His obsession with perfecting and completing the city around him, sees him constantly changing the makeup of streets and buildings.

The character searching for this soul hears a voice calling for help from a nearby alley. If the characters investigate, read the following:

You see a pit has opened in the alley, almost ten feet in radius and large enough to create a barrier between your side of the alley and the five devils opposite you. They have cornered a trembling and wingless imp, its back to you ... and the pit. Its small body trembles in fear and as it takes a step back, it almost falls in.

The character realizes that this imp is the vessel for their soul and that they must rescue it from a **chain devil**, a **bone devil**, and three **bearded devils**. The devils immediately attack. On each of their turns, one of the devils tries to hit the imp while the others attack the characters. Each time the imp dies it comes back to life on initiative count 20 of the following round but another hostile bearded devil also materializes at the same time. The imp has the frightened condition and is afraid of both the devils and the characters and on its turn, it attempts to flee from both.

To free the imp from its torment, the characters must kill all pursuing devils before anything kills the imp. When this occurs, the imp vanishes, leaving the phylactery in its place.

#### M4: GANGLANDS—JACELISK’S TERRITORY

Jacelisk is a recent addition to the landscape, a tiefling archmage who brought her band of wicked companions to the Market for its particular services. Now, under the influence of recently installed eyes, she sees herself as the liberator and protector of the city she resides in, a great and adored hero. In truth she is as vicious as all the rest, with the added problem that her perceptions make her profoundly unpredictable—sometimes nobility itself and sometimes brutal enough to impress a full-blooded devil.

**Tribute.** Jacelisk has claimed prime gang real estate. If tribute is paid, the characters may head directly north, taking the shortest route to reach the “Eye Market,” bypassing any other gangs. If the characters seek out Jacelisk to pay this tribute, proceed to the following:

A reinforced gateway has been hastily constructed between districts. As you approach the gate a tiefling woman wearing blue robes, emblazoned with numerous tiny, iron, knives, emerges from an azure tent set alongside the gate. Three spike-covered devils follow her, alternating fawning glances in her direction, and hostile gazes your way. The tiefling’s eyes seem to be too large for her face and they glow with a strange amber hue as they stare at you.

“Welcome, travelers. I am Jacelisk, the Great Liberator, and these are my Knives.” She glances at her devil bodyguard, as well as towards many other devilish forms scuttling in the shadows. “Where might you think you are headed?” Somehow, impossibly, her eyes seem to regard each of you at the same time.

Given that her route is the shortest to the Eye Market, and observing that the character’s carry many interesting valuables, Jacelisk demands a rare or

better magic item and at least four uncommon or better magic items as tribute. If attacked, Jacelisk (**archmage** with resistance to fire damage, the ability to cast *Hellish Rebuke* twice a day, and the ability to use her *Eyes of Charming* one time), tries to keep her three **barbed devils** in between herself and the characters while she unleashes deadly magic. She has already cast *Mage Armor* and *Stoneskin* on herself. If the characters have attempted to fly past this area, they're intercepted by the barbed devils—Jacelisk has cast the *Fly* spell on them.

If slain, the characters may remove Jacelisk's eyes, and if returned to Vaness, these *Eyes of Charming* can be sold back for half their indicated cost.

## M5: THE SLUMS

Just walking the streets of the slum is a struggle. You must watch your step carefully to avoid tripping over heaps of refuse and random construction equipment and to avoid crashing into one of the countless lesser devils that swarm around, calling out in shrieking, whining voices to you and to each other. The air is heavy with a fetid stench and hot from the close press of desperate bodies. The streets are narrow, lined with miserable little attempts at shelter, shacks and sheds of sheets of rusted metal and rotting wood, leaning on each other in a despairing attempt to stay upright.

Closer to the shattered dome of the Eye Market itself is a whole town within a town, a wretched slum of shacks and sheds thrown up with materials salvaged from the abandoned construction works. Here is a morass of pathetic minor devils and travelers who mob any newcomer, desperately trying to sell them all manner of trash—broken weapons, ruined shreds of garments, cracked mirrors, the most meagre of worthless costume jewelry. To the uninitiated the whole desperate circus seems utterly inexplicable. Many will trade junk for equally valueless junk, rubbish passing hands in a constant round of meaningless commerce. Their grotesque parody of trade seems readily exploitable by anyone coming in from the outside, but there is a curious malaise on the streets around the Market. Deal too much with the trash hoarders and you might find yourself getting sucked into their game, desperate to make the next big trade or to acquire some filthy piece of detritus, valuing the junk just because everyone around you does the same.

A remarkable number of the denizens of this slum are damaged, victims of Baalzebul's construction works where safety is never a concern. Crooked and whining **imps** and other lesser devils roost or

slither everywhere, proffering fistfuls of slimy muck, desperate to get in on the ground floor of the city's nonsense economy.

### **Conclave (Druid)—Staff of the Woodlands.**

When the characters walk the slums, they're beset by lowly devils trying to sell them their useless trinkets. If a character is looking for the *Staff of the Woodlands* their attention is drawn to a miserable looking imp who has set up shop in the corner. When they inspect its wares, they find the staff among them. The imp has no idea of the value of the item it possesses. The character needs to succeed on a DC 16 Charisma (Deception) check to purchase it for a reasonable price.

Upon success the imp sells the staff for a mere 200 gp or 1 *Soul Coin*. It is so happy with the transaction that it throws an amulet of protection in for free. The amulet is a fake and won't protect the character. However, if the character wears the amulet, it leaves a green stain on their skin that can only be removed after 6 days. On a failure, the imp notices the character's eagerness to buy the staff and increase the price to 1,000 gp and 3 *Soul Coins*.

## M6: THE EYE MARKET

Inside the Eye Market is a workshop of peculiar arrangement. There are racks of tools along the back wall, scalpels, knives, and needles intermixed with the equipment of the jeweler's trade. At the front of the Market there is a grand glass case and, within it, small orbs of countless colors, carved from precious stone, are nestled in satin lined boxes. They seem to gleam with inner light.

The proprietors, Vaness and Fling, offer a service unique in all of Maladomini—in all the Nine Hells, in fact. They offer relief from the appalling oppression of the infernal landscape. They offer a glimpse of happiness and wonder, positive things, that benefit Fiends and mortals alike. A bizarre gem to find in such a corrupted setting. Except, of course, nothing in the Nine Hells is as good as it appears.

Vaness is a **beholder** of exceptional size, his pinkish hide puffed-up and corpulent. His central eye has been replaced by a lens of ruby quartz that, it is said, focuses magic rather than negating it. In his workshop, using telekinesis and extremely fine-scale disintegration, he crafts the eyes that are the Market's stock in trade. Fling, in contrast, is an **alhoon** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*), a mind flayer long gone on their peculiar path to lichdom. It acts as surgeon, implanting Vaness' creations and connecting them to the brains of its patients/customers. They make a strange and jarring pair, not least because of their manner. Vaness and Fling



VANESS INSPECTS HIS WARES.

strike the unwary as an old married couple, constantly bantering back and forth, making jokes at one another's expense, and exploding into arguments that settle almost instantaneously. It seems impossible that either creature could actually form a real bond, but to all intents and purposes the pair seem genuinely attached. Which often serves to lull visitors into a false sense of security. Vaness and Fling have not survived the Nine Hells for so long by being nice. They're as ruthless and powerful as any other infernal magnates, able to defend themselves physically if need be, but preferring to rely on their minions, treaties with the gangs and, if necessary, protection from Akrekarn and his posse. Moreover, anyone going to deal with them to actually gain new eyes should be very careful what they're agreeing to. Vaness and Fling have a flare for crooked bargaining that some devils could learn from.

#### TEMPTATION OF BETRAYAL

##### *"Two Kills for One"*

Upon defeating Fling, the characters find he carries a magic weapon. Run the appropriate temptation event from chapter 2.

**Hellriders—Rescuing Jenevere.** More information about Jenevere can be found in appendix C.

Characters looking for Jenevere, find the planetar imprisoned in Vaness' workshop. As the characters enter, they notice her caged in the back of the room.

On their travels around the Nine Hells, the characters may have heard the rumors surrounding Jenevere. It is said she has never been broken, not by any devil. She pains her tormenters by immediately forgiving them for their abuse, praying for those souls that inflict torment on her. She believes no one—not even the vilest of devils—is beyond saving.

The proudest Fiends think they're to be the one to break her, corrupt her. They fight over her. But possessing the planetar becomes tainted once they realize she can't be broken.

And now, imprisoned here in the workshop, Jenevere's magnificent focus is completely on Vaness. She stares intently in Vaness' direction, even though her radiant eyes were taken from her by her cruel captor. It is as if she is looking straight into the beholder's soul.

She doesn't even notice the characters approaching the cage, but as they do, they hear Jenevere talking. She is lecturing the beholder about forgiveness and urging him to surrender to the grace of the divine light. Vaness has clearly heard it all before and with a frustrated snarl he flings the tool he has been using at the cage. It bounces off Jenevere's head and clatters to the floor. But Jenevere's concentration doesn't even falter, as she continues lecturing the put-upon beholder.

This little exchange should inform the characters that Vaness is growing weary of his captive and might be willing to barter with them for her release. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces Vaness to let them take Jenevere with them, if they let the beholder hang on to the planetar's eyes. If the characters insist on taking Jenevere's eyes with them (or if they fail the check) he refuses them.

Once he refuses them, he tells them to leave. At this time the characters can either attack the beholder or leave and try to come back when the workshop is empty. Both scenarios end up in combat as Vaness is never far from his workshop. Any intrusion results in the beholder attacking the characters. After 5 rounds of combat, Fling comes to Vaness' aid, accompanied by two **grell** and two **grimlocks**. After defeating the two proprietors of the workshop the characters can free Jenevere.

If the victorious characters decide to look for Jenevere's eyes, a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals them floating in a container nearby. Once Jenevere is freed, the characters may use the ritual that the Hellriders taught them to free her from the Nine Hells.

### THE JEWELED EYES

In their workshop, assisted by a blind workforce of **grell** and **grimlocks** enslaved by Fling's mental powers, Vaness and Fling remove the natural eyes of their clients and replace them with the jeweled creations from Vaness' workshop, granting a whole new perspective on Maladomini. A simple thing, in a way, and yet priceless. Vaness' eyes allow his patients to see the layer the way it was meant to be. When a newly altered customer wakes from the surgery, the dome above them is complete, its ceiling ornate and painted with frescoes of surpassing

loveliness. Vaness and Fling are elegant and dignified, the master-surgeon and the genial artificer, surrounded by their immaculate staff. Outside, the spires of the city reach towards a glorious golden sky, and beyond that there are great verdant forests, jeweled castles that would melt the heart of a Fey queen, a world of glory and wonder such as the Nine Hells have never known.

The true power of the eyes is that these things aren't illusions, to those who can see them. Those towers can be scaled, the woods bear fruit that truly sates hunger. Instead of the poisonous sludge of Maladomini, the streams now run with sparkling claret liquid that tastes like the finest of wines and brings instant relief and freshness to the drinker. To live in the plane visible through Vaness' eyes is to be truly blessed.

The Eyes for Sale table lists the different types of eyes that can be purchased. These eyes do not require the wearer to attune to them, even if they normally would. In addition to the abilities mentioned, each set of eyes also makes the wearer no longer require food or water (because it is always abundant for them), and the weather affecting them is always pleasant (never too hot or too cold; they're immune to nonmagical fire or cold damage). Finally, no terrain is ever considered difficult for them. These effects persist even after the wearer leaves Maladomini.

### EYES FOR SALE

Magical Power	Requirement	Cost
<i>Eyes of the Archer</i> —When you use a ranged weapon to make a long ranged attack, you don't have disadvantage on the attack roll.	9th-level character	10,000 gp
<i>Eyes of Charming</i> (see <i>Dungeon Master's Guide</i> )	None	5,000 gp
<i>Eyes of the Eagle</i> (see <i>Dungeon Master's Guide</i> )	None	2,000 gp
<i>Eyes of Far Sight</i> —the recipient can cast <i>Clairvoyance</i> at will.	12th-level character	25,000 gp
<i>Eyes of Minute Seeing</i> (see <i>Dungeon Master's Guide</i> )	None	3,000 gp
<i>Eyes of True Seeing</i> —The recipient gains truesight out to a range of 30 feet.	15th-level character	75,000 gp

## THE TRUTH IS UGLY

Of course, there are drawbacks. The ancient and wondrous beasts that once roamed the forests of Maladomini are long extinct, but they're most certainly there to those with eyes to see. And this being the Nine Hells, they're frequently hostile. Many eye-bearers have been killed and devoured by glorious and majestic monsters that their companions can't even see, let alone fight. Moreover, everyone who leaves the Eye Market having conducted business with Vaness and Fling becomes a target. All those waiting outside would give a great deal more than their eyes to get hold of such things, even though the services of Fling would still be required to implant them. Overcome with wonder, many new patients are easy marks for muggers and back-street surgeons.

The chief question about all of this must be why Baalzebul puts up with any of it. Vaness, Fling, and Akrekarn maintain a careful charade where the two put-upon artisans are constantly under threat from the devil, about to be turned in to the layer's archdevil unless they can come up with the latest bribe or protection instalment. And yet it never quite happens, and somehow the peculiar pair are permitted to run their business, which seems to make a mockery of everything that Baalzebul is constantly, futilely trying to achieve in his domain.

The most persuasive reason is that the eyes, for all their vaunted promise, are a curse. The wearer is at first overwhelmed by the beauty they see, delighted to walk in a 'Hell' that is suddenly restorative and pleasant. Except the truth always creeps in. Those who wear the eyes can stave off reality only so far. In their dreams they see the truth of it, the ruin and the ugliness. Day by day the understanding grows that everything they see, that they could now never live without, is only a sham, however real it is to them. The knowledge torments them, and they're driven to their own hopeless attempts to achieve a lasting perfection. In this way they share in Baalzebul's private misery, and perhaps that is enough reason to keep Vaness and Fling around.

A seditious whisper suggests that there is another reason. That Baalzebul, lord of temptation, feels the hook of their services in him. The idea that he could see Maladomini as he wishes it to be, the great blueprint he constantly fails to build, eats him up constantly. So that he is constantly on the point of ordering Akrekarn to obliterate the Market, but never quite gives the order, because what if ...

Whenever a roll on any encounter table is called for, a character possessing eyes from the Eye Market must also roll on the following encounter table. If multiple characters possess these cursed eyes, they all share the same result. If any of these encounters result in combat, only the characters with cursed eyes can see their attackers or target them, and only they are harmed by the abilities of their attackers. Other characters may only provide support, such as healing, to the afflicted characters. Any characters that die outright, or are reduced to zero hit points, in these battles, immediately have their eyes removed and the attackers disappear.

## VANESS' EYES RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

### d10 Encounter

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1    | A blue abishai (see <i>Monsters of the Multiverse</i> ) leads a half-dozen black abishai, cloaked in Darkness spells, in an ambush, hoping to steal the eyes.   |
| 2    | A primordial glittering beast ( <b>adult black dragon</b> with no flight speed) hunts anyone who possesses magical eyes.  |
| 3    | Twisted vegetation emerges and grows around the afflicted character and a dozen strange creatures ( <b>nothics</b> with a burrowing speed of 30) crawl out from under the plants. They attack anyone with magical eyes.                                       |
| 4    | A beautiful bird the size of a building ( <b>roc</b> with legendary resistance 3/Day) hunts anyone who possesses magical eyes.  |
| 5–10 | A glorious vision entralls anyone that possesses magical eyes. Each of them must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or have the incapacitated condition for 1d12 hours as they stare at the vision. When they wake, they gain the benefit of a long rest. |

TRAPPED IN THE ICE, THE ANAKIM'S BRAINS  
ARE HARVESTED TO MAKE WINE.

## CHAPTER 10

# Cania, the Relentless Cold



ITH FREEZING TEMPERATURES AND constant blizzards of snow and ice, Cania is the least habitable layer of the Nine Hells. Unlike Stygia, which is a sheet of ice sitting atop a frozen sea, Cania is a massive glacier hundreds of miles deep. Its cold is magical in strength, completely ignoring all protection and sources of warmth that aren't magical themselves, and capable of freezing a mortal to death in only a few hours. Nobody knows what Cania's sky looks like, as it hides behind a white sheet of clouds created by freezing weather.

## RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

Before running this chapter read the "Cania Overview" section. It provides you with the necessary information as the characters come close to ending their journey down the River Styx. Tiax may have a special role in this chapter, so review the "Tiax's Betrayal" section later in this chapter. Ultimately, if the characters have completed their main objectives, the "A Thankful Patron" event occurs, setting the stage for the resolution to the adventure in chapter 12.

## ENCOUNTERS

This is the last layer of the Nine Hells in which the characters can use Koh Tam's barge. Their final journey takes them through the frozen landscape, diverting down a tributary of the Styx to the Sorrow Mine. Roll at least once on the Random Encounters in Cania table, near the massive waterfalls or after they divert towards the Sorrow Mine.

## LOCATIONS

The characters must journey to the Sorrow Mine, once they've learned of its existence from either Tiax or more magical means. The "Key Locations in Cania" section provides the necessary information for you to guide the characters' exploration.

## KOH TAM AND TIAX

Koh Tam suggests avoiding being noticed by Mephistopheles, fearing the archdevil's unwanted attention. Unfortunately, Koh Tam is less familiar with Cania. If Tiax is still with the party, he speaks up, for he has heard of the famed Sorrow Wine extracted from the Sorrow Mine. He suggests traveling there. He wants to accompany

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN CANIA

### d6 Encounter

- 1 Sudden winds whip fallen ice into a veritable blizzard. Making matters worse, a nearby iceberg gets sheared, causing pieces to fall to the ground. Each creature within the blizzard must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
- 2 A pack of three **vorvolakas** (see appendix B) circle in the skies above the icy surface, searching for mortal blood. Canian devils call them "ice vultures." Once they find a victim, they stalk and wait for the temperature to make things easier, staying in the air and just out of range until their prey weakens.
- 3 A young **Styx dragon** (see appendix B), cut off from the river by falling ice, sought shelter in a nearby ice cave. Without intervention, it will likely die of starvation or frostbite in a few days. It is both defensive and hungry, but it recognizes the position it is in.
- 4 **Halogs** (see appendix B) are known to resist the fires of Phlegethos, and as a swarm of four of them runs by, it becomes apparent they can also survive the freezing temperatures in Cania. They could provide a good source of food—if not for the characters, then for the devils native to this layer.
- 5 Scouting out the ever-shifting landscape of the layer is a small group of three **ice devils**. Who they work for—theirselfs, Cania's leader, or some other power—remains a mystery. Depending on their employer and their attitude, they could see mortals as worthy of a fight.
- 6 The frozen ground cracks and howls, opening up a ravine in preparation for a coming iceberg. Each creature in a 20-foot-wide line, a mile long, must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or stumble into the opening ravine, falling 200 feet and taking 70 (20d6) bludgeoning damage. The ravine could lead anywhere—a subterranean system, ruins frozen in time, or just an empty gap. If this encounter occurs while aboard Koh Tam's vessel, part of the River Styx begins to flow into the chasm and he's hard-pressed to steer past safely.

them everywhere but behaves oddly—at each new location he should be grumpy and insulting, but then promptly apologize when called out on his behavior.

## OBJECTIVES

Make sure you keep track of your player's objectives and lead them to the appropriate areas so they may complete their goals.

The following objectives can be attained in Cania:

### OBJECTIVES IN CANIA

Objective	Location
Phylactery of the merciless	Sorrow Mine: The Mining Town
Phylactery of the student	Sorrow Mine: The Mines
<i>Staff of the Magi</i>	Sorrow Mine: The Mines

## TEMPTATIONS

Have the characters encounter at least one temptation during their time in Cania. You can of course have them encounter more if you want. If the characters give in to temptation, use the information in appendix E to keep track of their corruption level.

## GUIDING THE CHARACTERS

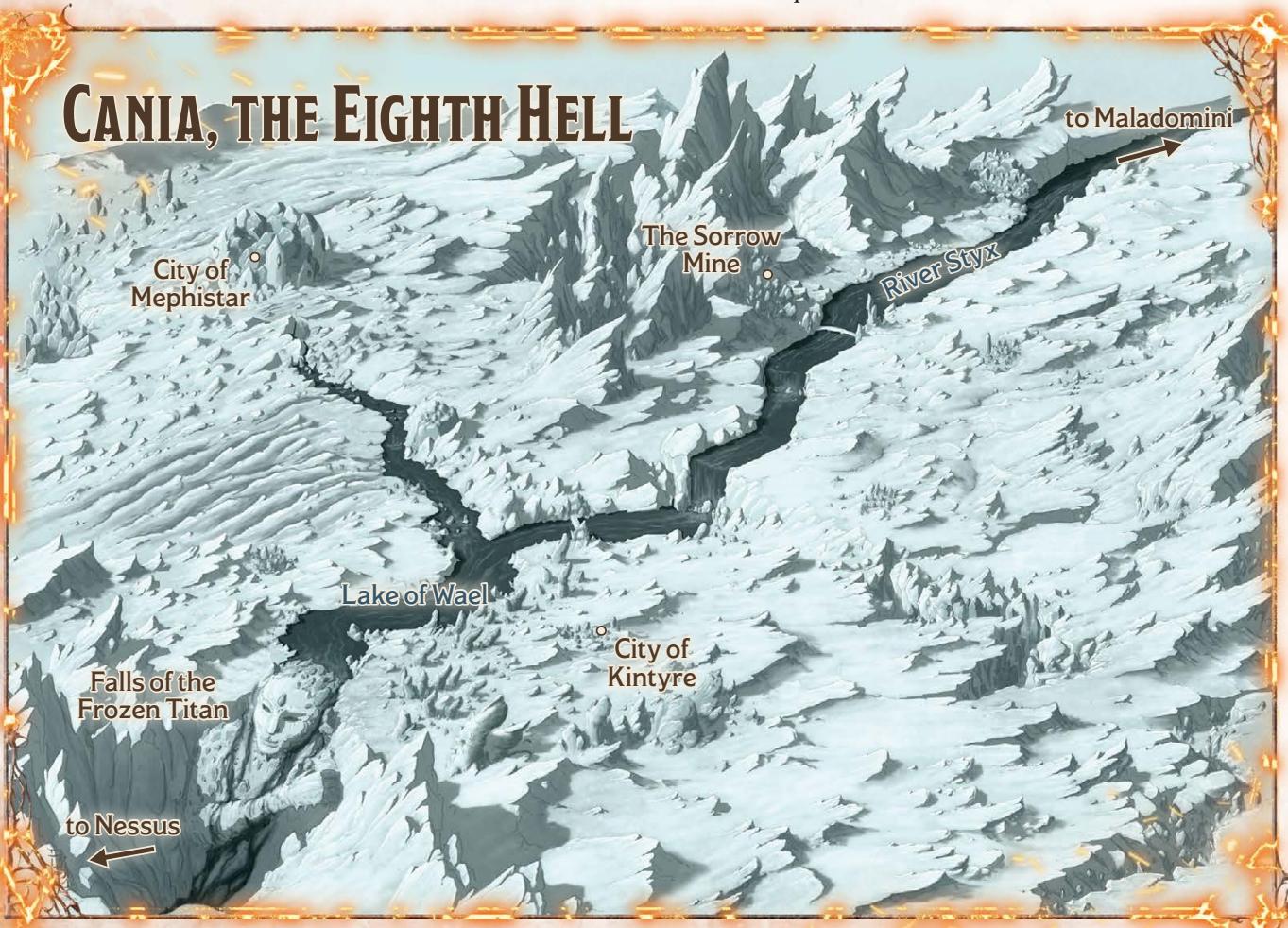
Remember, the characters need to use all their various spells and means of obtaining information to track down the items and phylacteries they require on their quest. Especially if Tiax is no longer with them and can't provide them with clues. You can also help the players by disturbing their characters' rest—perhaps resurfacing some of the nightmares described in the introduction—as they approach layers of the Nine Hells where objects they need to obtain are to be found. An interrupted rest is a small price to pay to find what they're after.

## CANIA OVERVIEW

The transition between Maladomini and Cania on the Styx is confusing and magical. One moment the river is sloping downwards through a cave system, and the next it emerges onto an icy glacier. While it cuts through the glacier towards its last stop, even the Styx can't avoid the temperatures of the layer. Icebergs and ice floes drift within the river, and its current slows significantly. Along its banks lie the remains of less-prepared boats, frozen over and forever abandoned. A sheer drop at the edge of Cania marks the end of the Styx, where it turns into frozen falls covering an ancient being on its way to Nessus.

In addition to the ice creating the layer, sheer mountains pierce the skies of Cania. Their faces

# CANIA, THE EIGHTH HELL



JOHN STEVENSON



are jagged and unforgiving, and the cascade of avalanches is almost constant. Partnering the mountains are the mobile glaciers and icebergs that carve the landscape. Seemingly with a life of their own, these massive ice structures meander through the realm, occasionally crashing into each other or the mountains in a spectacular explosion of ice and snow. They leave fissures and cracks miles deep in their wake, which are quickly covered by snow-banks, awaiting unknowing victims who then fall to their deaths.

Because of the freezing temperatures and hostile environment, almost no creature calls Cania its home. Mephistopheles himself, ruler of the realm, spends most of his time in a heated fortress, protected from the elements. His steward, Adonides, is the only archdevil native to Cania, and he regards it fondly despite the elements. Aside from Adonides, only ice devils (gelugons) live in the icy wasteland. Mephistopheles cultivates the devils, employing them as his standing army, spy hunters, and defense throughout the realm.

## LEAVING CANIA

If the rumors are to be believed, a heavily guarded portal beneath the city of Mephistar is one of only two methods of entering Nessus. The other entrance lies with the Styx and is equally as dangerous. Only by navigating the Styx from its first entrance into Cania can a captain find the exit—otherwise, some form of magic keeps the edge of Cania hidden and the river goes on indefinitely. Where the Styx reaches the edge, it pours over into a massive frozen waterfall, which solidifies around the body of a gargantuan ancient being. Reaching Nessus requires climbing down the frozen creature, a

perilous path plagued with deathly falls, dangerous creatures, and twisting paths. Should one survive the trek, they arrive at the entrance to Nessus.

The end of this climb is described in the “Climbing down into Nessus” section in chapter 12.

## FEATURES

Colder even than Stygia, all creatures on Cania face a constant battle with hypothermia. Each time a mortal finishes a long rest, they must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or gain a level of exhaustion.

Mephistopheles keeps a tight watch on any visitors to the realm to ensure no information is leaked. As part of his influence, any Divination spell cast while within Cania has a 50 percent chance to fail. When a spell fails, its materials and spell slots are consumed, but the spell has no effect. Creatures designated by Mephistopheles are immune to this effect.

## KEY LOCATIONS IN CANIA

Some of the major locations found in Cania are described below.

### KINTYRE

Hidden inside some glaciers and bergs are strange beings and massive constructions, alien to the Nine Hells. Some of the more powerful archdevils have learned to harness the glaciers and control their movements, constructing cities atop the most stable. Others have carved caverns into their faces, where some claim Mephistopheles hides laboratories and libraries of ancient knowledge. Largest among these structures is the ancient city of Kintyre, which taunts explorers with its hidden wealth.

### TEMPTATION OF DECEIT

#### "As Good an Answer"

If the characters make their way to the city of Kintyre, they find a community of prospecting devils. They're obsessed with finding Mephistopheles' libraries and want to gain the knowledge found within. Camps have sprung up in and around the city, from where these devils venture out on their expeditions. Enterprising devils have set up shop here, selling maps they claim mark locations of possible troves of knowledge, amulets that protect against the harsh climate, and other wares that would attract this particular clientele.

The characters are approached by a devil, who is willing to fabricate false evidence within Kintyre to answer a question of great importance. Run the appropriate temptation event from chapter 2.

### MEPHISTAR

Largest of the glaciers is Nargus, with the equally massive city of Mephistar constructed atop. Mephistopheles rules the realm from his heated citadel and from here he or his steward, Adonides, control Nargus. Mephistopheles has a legion of gelugons guarding the Pit, a shaft rumored to hold a portal to Nessus. It is roughly 500 feet across and several miles deep. A frozen lake lies at the bottom, 1,001 fathoms beneath which lies the portal.

### TEMPTATION OF MURDER

#### "To Cheat Death"

If the characters explore Mephistar they risk drawing attention from Adonides or Mephistopheles. But if they enter the city nonetheless, a **succubus** calls to them from a shop inset into the wall of the glacier-city. She offers to inscribe a magic tattoo and suggests it protects against death. She charges only 250 gp and has ink for only one such tattoo. Run the appropriate temptation event from chapter 2 if one of the characters gets tattooed by her.

### THE LAKE OF WAEL

Another icy lake resides near the Falls of the Frozen Titan. The characters are directed there to discover items to help protect themselves when they travel to Nessus. Yet something terrible lingers under its surface and the characters must confront it to claim their prize.

### FALLS OF THE FROZEN TITAN

Once the characters are ready to leave Cania, the most obvious option is climbing down the Falls of the Frozen Titan. If the characters are contemplating using The Pit in Mephistar, Koh Tam urges them against it. He offers instead to steer the barge along the River Styx towards the edge of Cania where the Styx plummets over the edge. There they can climb down the frozen river into Nessus.

Koh Tam docks the barge at the banks of the river, a little way from where the characters must start their climb. Proceed to the "Tiax's Betrayal" section.

### THE SORROW MINE

When the characters first enter Cania, Tiax gives them the following information. If Tiax has been disposed of, adjust the text as needed when Koh Tam delivers the information instead:

Tiax braces himself against the skin shredding cold and proclaims, "You ask mighty Tiax about Cania? Well of course, you do, for Tiax knows all! And he tells you this: not even devils are fools enough to linger long in this wind-blasted and land-locked plane. That is, save the gelugons and their liege, Mephistopheles. But they know a thing, they do, the same thing that Tiax knows, but you fools don't know the thing that Tiax knows, do you?"

He smiles smugly as if he has provided some great insight. Then he wipes away the ice accumulating upon his formidable brow and continues, "There's a place. Full of big, sad, moody giants trapped in glacial ice. Dead they are, which is good for the devils, not so much for the giants. So, listen to Tiax when he tells you this: it's the only place that matters in all of Cania. Devils might call it the Heights of Anakim, but Tiax named it the Sorrow Mine. And what you seek? Tiax shall find it for you there."

For his own furtive reasons, Tiax encourages the characters to travel to the Sorrow Mine.

### ADVENTURE: THE SORROW MINE

When visitors are finally able to take it in and understand what they're looking at, the Heights of Anakim are one of the most awe-inspiring and appalling of all the sights in the Nine Hells.

There was, at some point in the shrouded past, a bloodline of true giants, the sort that build worlds for gods. Beings of the earliest creation, when the many planes of the universe were still coming together, possessed of a might and craft no longer seen. As the greatest of giants often will, they fell into a dispute with the elder gods of the time. A war followed, fit to tear the firmament down and sunder the planes. And, in the end, they lost and were hunted across creation by the vengeful gods. In the height of their desperation, the giants made a foolish deal with the lords of the lower planes. Perhaps they were offered eternal sanctuary and

preservation against the annihilation the gods were bringing. Whatever the details of the bargain, they were tricked. And yet they were preserved, for in Cania they still remain.

## ADVICE FROM KOH TAM

Koh Tam's (or Tiax's) advice to the characters is as follows:

- He suggests the characters make their way to the Sorrow Mines, as he believes it is their best bet to find the last items they seek.
- He warns them to make haste and limit the time they spend here as Cania's cold is dangerous even for the devils of the Nine Hells.

## ARRIVING AT THE CLIFFS

You approach a vast glacier face, reaching three miles from the frozen plain, its upper reaches whipped by streamers of cloud constantly pushed past by Cania's eternal wind. The ice is shadowed and discolored. You seem to see shapes in it, perhaps a chance natural pattern of light. Except this effect is no trick of the light. Here are the giants of Anakim, set in the ice. They're the cliffs of the glacier. Packed shoulder to shoulder, toe to heel, wearing rags, their colossal frames emaciated from their long flight from divine retribution. Clutching tattered bundles that might be belongings or might be children. Hundreds of gigantic frozen figures, receding back into the ice until they're just shadows.

Those who get to the upper reaches of the glacier see the faces of the giants. The expressions of semi-divine entities who understood, at the very last, that they had been deceived—and that they were doomed to this frozen, eternal end.

## SORROW WINE

The mere fact and sight of the Heights of Anakim is enough to bring mortals to their knees, but it gets worse. Whilst devils aren't averse to the idea of just leaving things to be tormented forever, they found a use for the giants. So it is that the sharp-eyed visitor scanning the upper reaches of that appalling cliff finds scaffolding and gantries and excavation. Tunnels and quarries that carve into the literal faces of the giants to get at the treasure within.

Long after the powers of the Nine Hells had tricked the Anakim, Mephistopheles discovered the trapped giants contained a unique resource valuable to the rest of the Nine Hells and beyond. A combination of their semidivine nature, the ancient age they

## THE SORROW OF SORROW WINE

If sorrow wine is consumed by a creature that is not a Fiend, that creature takes 18 (4d8) necrotic damage. This damage can be healed only with a short or long rest.

were preserved from and their own vast horror at being betrayed means the minds of the giants are a source of the most concentrated misery to be found anywhere in the planes.

The labyrinthine brains of the Anakim contain blue-silver seams of the stuff, that can be quarried out, rendered down, and condensed into vials and barrels of pure corrosive suffering that the devils jovially refer to as 'sorrow wine'. To mortals, the substance is pure vitriol. Concentrated, it causes wounds that strong magic can't heal, and that burn with fresh agony forever. Diluted into a potion it imposes a burden of existential unhappiness that drives the drinkers to empty hedonism and sin as their lives become hollow and meaningless. To devils, the sorrow wine is a potent beverage, a unique vintage of misery fit for the tables of Mephistopheles and Asmodeus themselves. In the Giant Mine, Cania's ruler has a commodity not to be found anywhere else that he uses for bribery, reward, and leverage across the lower planes. His only challenge is reliably extracting it.

## THE SORROW MINE LOCATIONS

Locations relevant to this part of the adventure are described below.

### T1: THE MINING TOWN

Ahead of you, at the base of those giant sorrowful figures, there are the tell-tale signs of settlement: a glimmer of lantern light and the shadow of smoke blown thin across the gray sky by the icy wind. As you approach, you make out the shape of buildings. A sad collection of crude huts carved from ice and arranged around the only structure that looks like it was built with any care. This building is vast and tall, and even from a distance, you hear the sounds of machinery and harried workers within.

An odd assortment of creatures use the paths leading from town to mine: carrying empty baskets on their way up and heavier loads on their way down.

At the foot (literally) of the Heights of Anakim there is a town of sorts. A huddle of buildings, mostly carved from ice, built around one vast hall raised from iron interlayered with the hides of long-extinct monsters, where the raw giant-stuff is

### TIAX TAKES A MOMENT

The first time the characters enter the town with Tiax accompanying them, he hurries to the back of one of the buildings. "Tiax has a mighty burden to discard! I'll just be a moment." If the characters follow him, they catch a glimpse of Tiax handing something to an imp that vanishes promptly. If confronted, Tiax lies and says he was just repaying an old debt. In fact, he is preparing an ambush, to occur when the characters depart Cania. See "Tiax's Betrayal" at the end of this chapter for more details.

rendered down into sorrow wine. Beyond, the cliff face itself is cut and carved with multiple zig-zagging paths up to the heights, along with winches and lifts to take miners up, and bring the yield down. In the town dwells a variety of devils seldom seen elsewhere in Cania who deal with the administration of the mining efforts, the constant infernal accountancy of supply and demand and a modicum of trading with visitors.

### T2: BARON KLENDISK'S FORT

While most of the buildings in this town have been carved from the ice itself and squat low to the ground, as if huddling for warmth from the merciless cold, this stone and metal manor has a tall tower rising skyward. This is certainly the home of someone important.

The town itself is overseen by the gelugons—who shun such menial work—and commanded by one Baron Klendisk (**ice devil** with 250 hit points), who reports directly to Mephistopheles. The baron is an ice devil of twice the usual size, emaciated and hunched almost double, usually to be seen squatting on a spider-legged throne formed from an enslaved ice Elemental. Klendisk's public face is that of a monstrous tyrant, cruel in his discipline towards other gelugons and doubly so to any other devil breeds. Behind closed doors, he is a devil with a problem, because mining the giants and producing the sorrow wine is difficult and his own master brooks no excuses. Hence, while a terror to other devils, Klendisk is known to at least give a hearing to outsiders with a solution.

The difficulty is in the very nature of the stuff they mine. The raw seams of misery in the brains of the giants are powerfully destructive. Whilst Klendisk has no compunction about destroying souls or mortal prisoners, the cold of Cania and the corrosive nature of the misery destroys such tools before they can be of much use. Infernal labor has other problems. Contact with the giant-stuff makes them drunk: boisterous and leery with the heady misery of ages. A fiendish workforce would fall to

squabbling, brawling and unacceptable indisipline, even the icy gelugons themselves. It is a pitiful devil that needs to go beg outside help but that is the situation that Klendisk often finds himself in.

Though these mines would seem to be a good place to avoid, mortal travelers do visit. It helps that Cania has few other locales to recommend it, and the town at the foot of the Heights does at least have shelter and goods for trade. Sometimes mortals are sent there by other Fiends, seeking to abstract some of the processed sorrow wine for their own delectation or trade. Klendisk's ice devils keep a compound eye out for strangers, though, and anyone who comes to their attention without a good excuse or permits signed in triplicate find themselves introduced to the mines or the vats in swift order, or else claimed by Klendisk for a little informal torment. Assignment to the Heights is short on entertainment.

Usually, visitors simply stay long enough to turn a profit and then leave. Others hang on too long or try to claw too much from Klendisk. When his temper breaks, he loses all perspective and has them destroyed or cast out into Cania's killing cold.

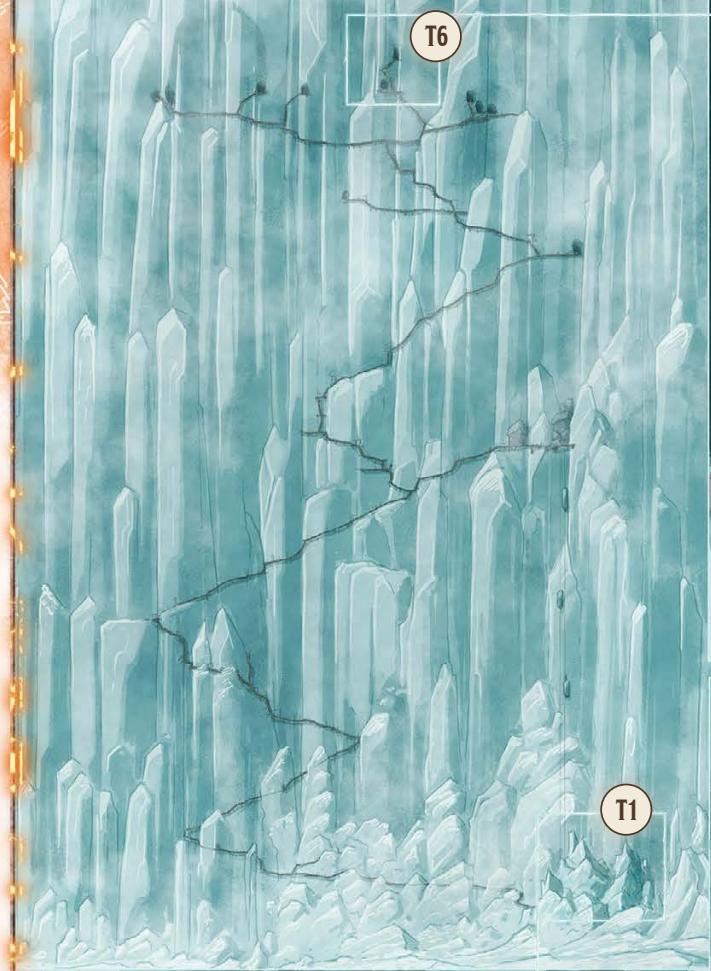
**Contractors.** Currently there are two major contractors working at the face, and one more running the rendering shed. Both mining contractors, Kargan and Cornelius, have a constant need of specialist materials—necromantic or machine components—and anyone bringing in fresh stocks will find favor with one (and attract the ire of the other). Alternatively, particularly wicked mortals with a solution to Klendisk's labor problems are always assured a hearing. The mines can always use a new contractor. For the price of 300 gp per day, Klendisk is willing to grant a dispensation to the characters so that they may attempt to work the mines.

**The Prison.** In the Sorrow Mines most of the workforce is either Undead or made of metal. However, there are still plenty of devils roaming about, many of them are under the influence of the sorrow wine. Imbibing too much doesn't always end well for the devil in question. The prison at the edge of Klendisk's Fort houses those unfortunate devils whose liquid bravado provoked Klendisk's wrath. It is run by chain devils with several prisoners of little importance currently housed in the cells.

**Phylactery of the Merciless.** The prison is where the soul of the merciless can be found. Upon entering the village at the foot of the mines, the character searching for this soul, feels a strange pull towards this location. When the characters enter, they must evade a patrol of three **chain devils**. If they're discovered, they're attacked, and at initiative count 20 of round 5, and every 5 rounds thereafter while combat continues, another chain

# THE SORROW MINE

1 square = 5 feet



devil arrives to help. While being attacked in this way, the characters can't easily investigate the cells—they need to eliminate the devils and go back to hiding first.

Finding their way is easy, as the character in question recognizes the voices coming from one of the cells. Inside two figures are torturing a flesh golem that resembles a haggard and emaciated version of the character. The torturers look and sound exactly like the character's true love but are actually **chain devils**. If the character slays the devils without exposing their true form first, another chain devil appears in the doorway. They immediately transform into the form of the character's true love before entering the cell and attacking. During these battles the devils constantly taunt and mock the character in the voice of their loved one.

A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check can help the characters understand that they need to remove the devils' disguises before slaying them. They can use *Dispel Magic* or any other similar means to help them break the magical disguise. Once the devils are wearing their own faces, and then slain, the flesh golem vanishes, leaving the phylactery in its place.

As the characters retreat, they must evade another patrol on their way out, as described earlier.

### T3: KARGAN SKUL'S HOME

A large mass of blue-green ice, comprised primarily of sharp angles, appears to be someone's home. All the windows are frozen over and so thick as to obscure any spying from the outside. Only the massive double doors at the front appear free of such frozen constraints.

This is the home of the most long-standing mine baron, Kargan Skul, and even she, a frost giant, bundles herself in fur, against the uncanny cold of the plane. She spends most of her time at the mines (area T6), tending to the Undead workforce she maintains. If the characters enter her home without permission, they're attacked by Kargan's butler (**archmage** but their creature type is Undead), and the household staff which consists of ten **ogre zombies**. An *Alarm* spell alerts the frost giant to the intrusion and if Kargan is encountered later in the mines, she attacks the characters without hesitation.

**Treasure.** There's a *Soul Coin*, 10 diamonds (each worth 1,000 gp) and 4,500 gp that can be recovered by pilfering Kargan Skul's home.

### T4: CORNELIUS BRASSGRAVE'S HOUSE

You realize that this is a home-within-a-home when you step through the ice-lodge's door and encounter wood paneling, fine (if scuffed) tile flooring, and a blazing fireplace on the far wall. Near the fire, a gnome sits in an over-sized chair that appears to have been assembled from various cogs, levers, and bits of leather. "It's all insulated," he says, his voice deeper than you expected. "Keeps the outer walls from melting. It is a simple principle, you see, one that involves thermo ... well ... wait ... Ah. Now I see. The giant, she's finally sent you to kill me, has she?"

Cornelius Brassgrave (neutral evil **veteran**) is a gnome artificer driven from a dozen separate haunts in the mortal planes, a creature of pure reason and no morality whose industrious experiments have poisoned seas and turned the living earth into a metal-tasting wasteland. He has made a number of large claims to Klendisk about how his machinery will revolutionize the mining at the Heights and is now finding that even golems and automata can be ground down by the weight of misery. Cornelius is less suited to Cania than most of the inhabitants of this mining town, so he tends to spend most of his time here, in his very warm home. His Constructs keep him informed and alert him to any problems in production.

Another reason that he's sticking to this haven is that Kargan Skul has been in a foul mood, believing him to be responsible for disrupting her supply lines. He isn't responsible, however, and just as confused about it as she is. If he is attacked, pieces of furniture animate (two **stone golems** with immunity to cold and fire damage) and come to his defense. If the characters slay Kargan Skul, thus raising Cornelius' value to Baron Klendisk, or they deal with the rogue modron in the mines, Cornelius rewards each character with brass armbands, engraved with the gnome's name and family crest (each is worth 600 gp but have no special properties).

### T5: THE RENDERING SHEDS

The air inside the rendering sheds is thick with the cloying scent of fermenting drink. Beneath this ugly, sour-sweet smell there hangs a heavy sense of misery, pushing down like an overbearing hand. But, somehow, the modrons that work the sheds have not collapsed beneath that weight. The short, geometrical creatures rush around, checking on machinery and inspecting vast vats of dark liquid.



The rendering sheds themselves are run under a quite different arrangement, one that has persisted for as long as any denizens of the Heights can recall, and which Klendisk himself is powerfully uncertain about. The Regular Orthoclast (lawful neutral **iron golem** with Charisma, Intelligence, and Wisdom scores of 16) is a thing of facets, eyes and geometrical shapes from the lawful planes of Nirvana, here with an apparently endless workforce of modrons. They work the vats and stills tirelessly, producing sorrow wine so long as the mines yield raw materials, and never complain or ask for payment. They usually work in teams of a dozen **tridrone modrons** overseen by a **pentadrone modron**. **Quadrone modrons** are used by the Regular Orthoclast to send messages to teams.

The modron's involvement predates Klendisk's appointment and the devil exhausts himself trying to discover the actual terms of their employment. In the absence of certainty, infernal rumor is that either these are, in some way, bad modrons who are being punished for crimes against lawfulness meaningless to others—or else the whole business is some grand experiment into the enduring nature of law. Certainly, individual workers eventually become corrupted by the work, sad little pieces of geometry infected with emotion, grinding to a halt as they're consumed by

misery. At which point the Orthoclast casts them out, and the devils are free to devour or toy with them, not that the creatures give any real sport. There are always, apparently, more modrons ready to troop down from the lawful planes and give themselves to the work.

#### T6: THE MINES

Once the characters reach the mine entrance at the top of the glacier, read the following:

You notice the eyes first. Each of them is enormous, in proportion to the colossal faces they're set in. Most are blown wide in horror, in pure, undisguised terror. These eyes rest above faces full of pain, with mouths drawn tight in grief or frozen open, midscream. But more haunting than the eyes of fear and rage are the eyes that contain nothing at all. No emotion. Just dull acceptance. There are shapes just above the eyes of some of these giants. As you draw closer, you think they might be caves and then you see the workers that scramble in and out of them and you realize that they're tunnels. Mines. Dug straight through the frozen heads of the dead.



THE MINING OF SORROW  
BRINGS ITS OWN CHALLENGES.

There are more treasures than mere misery frozen in the glacier. The giants were artisans to the gods before they rebelled. They clutch in their colossal frozen arms treasures from elder ages, secrets on great withered scrolls, the raw stuff of creation stolen from divine workshops. An intrepid team of mortals might steal up the cliffs and into the mines where untold treasures wait to be unearthed deep in the heart of the ice. Even the spoil-heaps of the mines themselves glitter with discarded wonders, if only one can get to them. For while the devils care only for the misery and the wine they make from it, punishing errant thieves remains one of their few pleasures and they always look forward to the next visitors—mortals or devils—to try it.

The items of value these giants crafted aren't easily transported. If an entire day is spent excavating, the characters recover a 100-pound statue made of gold and gems (and worth  $d12 \times 500$  gp). However, this excavation draws the attention—and

### THE SORROW MINE

While in the Sorrow Mine, any creature that isn't a Fiend that fails a saving throw, now has disadvantage on all saving throws, including death saving throws, until they leave the Sorrow Mine and finish a long rest.

wrath—of the devils unless the baron has granted the characters a dispensation. A similar statue can be recovered with each day's effort, until 3d4 have been unearthed.

**The Miners.** Most of the workers in the mines are either automatons, under the control of Cornelius Brassgrave, or the Undead created by Kargan Skul (lawful evil, Huge-sized **lich** but she isn't Undead, her creature type is Giant). Cornelius is at his home in the town below, but Kargan is almost always in the mine. She is a necromancer of considerable power and her solution to efficiently mining has been to use mindless Undead to do the brute work. She is constantly importing bones and cadavers from elsewhere in the planes, preferring to create ogre zombies and minotaur skeletons for the mining operation. The misery erodes even these, but so long as she can get the raw material, she can keep up productivity.

**Conclave (Sorcerer/Warlock/Wizard) –Staff of the Magi.** Kargan Skul wields the *Staff of the Magi* (40 charges), carries it with her everywhere, and is quick to use it if threatened. She will generally not relinquish the staff without a fight. However, if the characters deal with the rogue modron sabotaging her Undead workers, she is willing to sell the staff to them, for the sum of 10,000 gp.

**Trouble in the Mines.** There is a steady stream of Constructs and Undead, harvesting the raw material of sorrow wine, and carrying it to the mining town below. The two factions seem to ignore—or not even notice—one another. However, Kargan's workforce has deteriorated faster than usual, with fewer of her zombie and skeletons making the return trek to town. She has attracted Klendisk's ire by falling behind, and believes that her chief competitor Cornelius is sabotaging her supply lines.

Only if the characters are investigating Kargan Skul's claims of sabotage, do they discover the truth. A lowly modron (chaotic neutral **quadrone** with 50 hit points) has been corrupted by the overwhelming grief permeating the mines. It has gone rogue and skulks the shadows of the mines, pushing miners off scaffolding, or narrow rock bridges when it can. Unfortunately, the Undead tend to be easier to shove than the golems, so many more of Kargan's minions have been lost to the mines, than Cornelius' golems.

After an hour of investigation, the characters come upon the following:

There's a loud swoosh and you see a strange, blockish figure with wings fly out from the shadows and slam into an iron golem carrying a large satchel of ore. The golem doesn't even register the attack, and continues marching forward, while the winged creature shakes its head a moment before flapping its wings and flying back into the shadows.

If the characters pursue the modron, it tries to stay in the air 60-80 feet away from them and fires arrows. It can't be reasoned with. If it is badly damaged, it charges the weakest looking character and tries to grapple them. If successful, it uses its movement to jump into the abyss of the mine with its victim (maximum fall damage).

The characters can use this information as they see fit—if either Kargan or Cornelius learn of the rogue modron, hostility between their two factions decreases a bit. Klendisk, if told, won't reveal the truth to Kargan. He, of course, is more than happy to have Brassgrave and Kargan constantly sniping at each other. He has no interest in his underlings uniting and ending up in a position where they could make demands of him.

If the modron's body is returned to the Regular Orthoclash (area T5), it is taken away to be repurposed.

**Phylactery of the Student.** A character looking for the phylactery of the student, notices a gnome that is dashing between the feet of the zombie workers. The gnome is holding a bucket above her head. In truth the gnome is a shell that is used to

torture the student. The soul is linked to the body of a long-deceased female gnome and has been imprisoned here in the mines, enduring the agonizing pain and despair that comes from contact with the sorrow. The student is driven to work harder and harder by the brutish overseers.

A gnome sprints past you carrying, over her head, a bucket filled to the edges, the sorrow sloshing out of it as she runs. As it hits her face and hands, she lets out an agonizing wail. Fresh wounds appear where the oozing liquid touches her skin. Her knees buckle underneath her, and she falls to the floor sobbing. An overseer stomps over and starts chastising the gnome, forcing her to crawl back up. With a despondent sigh, she picks up the now empty bucket and turns back to fill the bucket anew.

If the characters follow the gnome into the workshop, they are attacked by four **ogre zombies**. Once three of the brutes have died, Kargan joins the fight to defend her workforce. After Kargan is defeated the body of the imp collapses lifeless on the floor, dissolving and leaving the phylactery in its place. Once the character takes possession of the phylactery of the student, they gain the Phylactery Benefit associated with it.

## A THANKFUL PATRON

When the characters are ready to meet with their group patron after completing all of the required objectives, they may ask Koh Tam to sail them to the agreed upon location in Cania. This location should probably be close to the Lake of Wael to encourage the characters to travel there after this meeting.

Sailing through the icy Styx is a ponderous affair, as the vessel glides past erratic ice floes and evades larger icebergs that seem to rise from the waters with disheartening frequency. Eventually the barge slides down yet another ice-crusted tributary and crests a bend in the waters. A pavilion-style tent waits along the shore, several feet back of the waters. A banner rises above the tent, apparently frozen in mid-motion despite these gusting winds of Cania.

The banner is a deep red with electrum-colored striping if the group patron is the Conclave of Halruaa. If the characters allied instead with the Deathstalkers, the banner is a velvety black, speckled with white frost. The Hellrider's banner is a bright silver, on it their coat of arms is depicted in radiant gold.

## THE HELLRIDERS

It is assumed that the characters have used the Hellrider's Salvation ability to safely return the Celestials they've rescued to the Material Plane. If they're still with the group for some reason, adjust the following:

Ramius turns from a table cluttered with maps and papers, to look at you. His smile is reserved, but it is a smile, nonetheless. "I have received word. You rescued the three from their dire predicaments and fulfilled your end of our arrangement. You have the thanks—and gratitude—of the Hellriders. I know your next steps shall take you into that final layer, where not even we dare to tread. Be yourself prepared before that time—without magical concealment Asmodeus shall surely catch you in his trap before you have even drawn your first breath of the foul air of Nessus."

## THE CONCLAVE

It is up to the characters whether they recover all the class-based powerful magic items the Conclave helped them locate. Their group patron objective is considered complete once they've dealt with the Unmaker.

The tent is empty when you enter, and in fact snow has blown in from the open flaps, accumulating into a low ridge near the entrance. But as you step foot inside, a semi-transparent image of Zythan appears before you. He extends his arm, as if intending to grasp yours. He smiles. "My duties call me elsewhere, but I wanted to offer you our thanks. Our alliance has been fruitful and though that business with the Unmaker was unpleasant ... you dealt with it like the professionals you are. I—we—wish you much luck in your final endeavors. I believe Koh Tam has advice to offer you, regarding a way to hide yourself from Asmodeus. I strongly suggest you heed his words. The Lord of the Nine isn't to be trifled with. I shall linger here a while; in case you need to talk more."

Zythan bows his head a brief moment and then moves about the tent, though it is clear he is actually elsewhere. If the characters have not destroyed the Unmaker's soul, they're asked to place the coin in which they've captured the soul inside the *Halruaan Ethereal Vessel*. The Halruaans dispose of it now.

## THE DEATHSTALKERS

The Deathstalker quest is considered completed if the characters have recovered at least 2 of the items—enough to weaken Asmodeus's allies and make the archdevil think twice about swindling the Deathstalkers.

The rattle of armor alerts you to a warrior's presence beyond the tent, but before you're able to enter, Sarevok himself strides from the interior to confront you on the snowy shoreline of Cania. Behind him several warriors in dark armor stand at attention, but the tent flaps fall back, concealing the interior.

"It is done then." Sarevok says. "Your intent shall take you into Nessus, next, if I am not mistaken. And when you set foot there, Asmodeus, he shall see you. This, I know. You lack the power needed to hide yourselves from him and I can offer you no help with that. But I do demand one of the artifacts I helped you find. At least, Asmodeus, shall not be able to recover that from your smoldering corpses, and I will maintain the leverage I require on him. He shall honor his debts without none of his devils' trickery."

Once the characters select one of the artifacts, Sarevok grasps it, nods his head curtly, and enters the tent.

## PARTING WAYS

The characters, unless they decide otherwise, are still considered as working for their chosen patron, but they no longer have an active mission with them. The characters have fulfilled their obligations, and the patron, by helping them throughout the adventure, has fulfilled theirs. The characters are encouraged to make final purchases from their contacts. The patron remains at this location until the characters return to the barge and sail away.

If spoken to again, the patron encourages the characters to climb down into Nessus, after acquiring appropriate magical protection from Asmodeus's watchful gaze. They're also cautioned to stay focused once they're in Nessus—they should obtain what they need from that place and return swiftly.

## FINAL GIFTS

This is an opportunity for the group patron to assist the characters. If they require a couple *Soul Coins* or a small measure of gold, the patron might be convinced to give this to them at this juncture.

## BEFORE LEAVING CANIA

When the characters appear to consider travel into Nessus, Koh Tam becomes concerned. Before entering Nessus, the characters must find the means of avoiding the watchful eye of Asmodeus. Magic items such as *Amulets of Proof Against Detection and Location* can do this, but the characters would need one for every member of the group. Koh Tam knows of an ill-fated expedition to Nessus that ended in the Lake of Wael. He knows that each one of them possessed an *Amulet of Proof Against Detection and Location* since he was the one who transported the group.

Koh Tam is insistent that the characters would be apprehended the moment they set foot in Nessus, without protection. He strongly urges them to seek out the failed expedition to recover the amulets and offers to guide them towards “The Lake of Wael.” Only after some sort of protection has been obtained, should the characters climb the frozen falls of the Styx into Nessus itself. Once they reach the falls however, “Tiax’s Betrayal” occurs.

## THE LAKE OF WAEL

Sailing the Styx through Cania requires the fortitude to endure the constant cold, but also Koh Tam’s ability to navigate the jagged chicane of ice that the river’s surface is plagued with. Visibility is practically nil, with icebergs looming from the frozen fog like great murderous ghosts. And then, when you least expect it, the banks widen until they’re lost in the mist and the waters become a rolling chaos of waves, as though you were on the open sea.

Some interaction of the Styx’s unnatural water and Cania’s unnatural ice has created a great flooded bowl, a lake whose surface has become a drifting maze of frozen islands. And sometimes there is a voice.

Whilst crossing the icy lake is still a formidable task, the lack of a rushing current allows the sailors something of a respite, as they pole their way through the creaking ice. However, the lake is the domain of something quite other, and has been for centuries. **Waeloquay** (see accompanying stat block) is a water Elemental of immense size and age. Exactly how it came to the Nine Hells in the first place is lost to time—brought by some infernal collector or slipping through a temporary portal between planes. It found its way to the Styx, losing all recollection of its own past and nature but not simply dissipating. Eventually it reached the bowl of the lake in Cania and settled there, slowly growing as it incorporated the substance of the malign river

into its nature until now it is the lake, and the Styx passes through it on its constant course down.

Waeloquay is obsessed with memory. Although it attempts to sequester its own experiences from the

## WAELOQUAY

Gargantuan Elemental, Neutral Evil

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 290 (20d20 + 80)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Wis +6, Cha +7

**Skills** Athletics +14, Nature +5

**Damage Resistances** acid; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Aquan, Common

**Challenge** 18 (20,000 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +6

**Magic Resistance.** Waeloquay has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Legendary Resistance (3/Day).** If Waeloquay fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

**Water Form.** Waeloquay can enter a hostile creature’s space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Waeloquay makes three Slam attacks.

**Slam. Melee Weapon Attack:** +14 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 26 (4d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

**Whelm (Recharge 4–6).** Each creature in Waeloquay’s space must make a DC 22 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, a target takes 21 (3d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage. If it is Large or smaller, it also has the grappled condition (escape DC 20). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and unable to breathe, unless it can breathe water. If the save is successful, the target is pushed out of Waeloquay’s space. Waeloquay can grapple one Large creature or up to four Medium or smaller creatures at one time. At the start of each of Waeloquay’s turns, each target grappled by it takes 21 (3d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage. A creature within 5 feet of Waeloquay can pull a creature or object out of it by taking an action to make a DC 22 Strength check and succeeding.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Waeloquay can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature’s turn. Waeloquay regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Flow.** Waeloquay moves up to its speed.

**Crush (Costs 2 Actions).** One creature that Waeloquay is grappling takes 44 (8d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

**Pummel (Costs 2 Actions).** Waeloquay makes a Slam attack with advantage.



Styx, they slowly leach away into oblivion. Whenever new ships arrive to navigate its icy labyrinth, Waeloquay sees them as a vital source of new experience. It doesn't care what experience. It just seeks to fill the constantly leaking void within itself.

Rising out of the water are many figures that, from a distance, look like living beings. As you draw closer you see that they're elaborate sculptures of ice. Fiends, mortals, and unknown creatures are all displayed in the throes of motion. The first few sculptures are impressively detailed, but the next set have vaguer features, smoother faces, and fewer accessories. The more sculptures you inspect the less detailed they become, until all that is left are half-formed mannequins with indistinct limbs and blank, smooth faces.

Waeloquay interacts with travelers by manifesting shapes out of water and ice—the forms of those Fiends and mortals that it has previously taken within itself, that become steadily less and less detailed as it forgets their features, until all it is left with are blank-faced mannequins. Alternatively, if anyone has been foolish enough to look down into the water, Waeloquay captures their reflection and creates an icy simulacrum of them. These creations (**doppelgangers** with immunity to cold damage) crawl onto the ship and seek to ambush individual sailors and throw them overboard into Waeloquay's clutches, or else try to wreck the entire ship against the ice. Anyone ending up in the water faces the effects of a Styx controlled by a hungry Elemental entity. Anyone who drowns in the water here becomes part of Waeloquay's library of memories, at least until the Styx abrades them away.

It is possible to bargain with the Elemental for safe passage and/or for the *Amulets of Proof Against Detection and Location* that were lost here years ago. Fiendish ships often carry sacrifices to throw overboard to sate Waeloquay's hunger, but it also accepts items of great sentimental value from which it gnaws some mental sustenance.

If the characters don't bargain, then they must fight against a manifestation of the lake. If they defeat it, then Waeloquay quickly moves them to the end of the lake and throws eight amulets into the barge, along with the skeletons still wearing them.

## TIAX'S BETRAYAL

When the characters journey to the Falls of the Frozen Titan and, just prior to descending into Nessus, this event occurs. Tiax has determined that he must now eliminate Koh Tam. He approaches the characters, alongside the other 2 crew members who have helped Tiax and Koh Tam manage the ship. Koh Tam follows some distance behind. If the characters are primarily evil, read the following (but skip past it, if the characters aren't evil).

Tiax has a strange look on his face, a gleam to his eye as he clasps his hands together and stares out at the icy expanse of Cania. He lets out his breath. "Now is the time! What time, you ask, oh great Tiax the all-knowing? Time for the right and the left hands of the ever-prepared Tiax to strangle the very breath from the lungs of pitiful Koh Tam. Kelemvor shall not win this day, this time. Tiax the mighty shall not allow it! Dying always teaches the best kind of lesson, do you not agree?"

Tiax presents his deal very quickly. If the characters help him slay Koh Tam, he promises to give them the barge, the 20 *Soul Coins* he carries, and swears to Cyric that he will help them complete their quests in the Nine Hells.

Otherwise, if the characters are good-aligned, or don't immediately agree to join Tiax, he springs his ambush on them and Koh Tam at this moment instead.

## THE ATTACK AGAINST KOH TAM

Tiax has previously cast *Mage Armor* on himself. Regardless of the characters' affiliation, he approaches Koh Tam in a friendly manner but casts *Contagion* (using the mindfire effect). The attack roll required for this spell automatically succeeds against the unaware Koh Tam unless the characters are able to warn him. Depending on past character decisions, Tiax may have allies or additional opponents as described below:

- Tiax has bribed one of the crew members (use the **veteran** stat block) and they assist Tiax in this battle.
- Additionally, if Grinken Eyre (neutral evil Medium-sized **empyrean**) was encountered in Minauros and not slain by the party, he has masqueraded as the other crew member since then and allied with Tiax. He assists Tiax in this fight. Grinken Eyre's presence makes the battle considerably more difficult if he is fighting the characters, so feel free to omit him.
- If the characters have previously met Sir Calenhad Strongheart in the "A Paladin In Hell" encounter, he may have joined them on the barge. If so, he sides with Koh Tam in this battle and comes to the characters aid if the characters do so as well. Calenhad is a lawful neutral **death knight** that doesn't have the Marshal Undead trait or the Hellfire Orb action.
- If Grinken Eyre isn't present, Tiax previously called in a favor owed him by an **ice devil**, who shows up at initiative count 10 of the second round of combat. The other crew member (also a **veteran**) fights to defend Koh Tam, in this situation.

The characters can choose to side with Tiax or Koh Tam. If they ally with Tiax, it is very likely Koh Tam will perish here and Tiax will serve his role for the remainder of the plot. On the other hand, Tiax is very fond of being alive and if reduced to less than half of his hit points (or otherwise feeling like the battle is going against him) casts *Dimension Door* in an attempt to retreat.

**Treasure.** Tiax carries 10 *Soul Coins* (he lied earlier about the amount) and so if the characters allied with him he promises to pay them the rest later. If the heroes defend Koh Tam successfully, he rewards them with 1 *Soul Coin* each.

## LEAVING CANIA

The characters are nearing the end of their ordeal through the Nine Hells. Before entering Nessus however, Koh Tam offers the following advice. If Koh Tam is dead, Tiax offers it instead, though perhaps not as truthfully as Koh Tam would.

"The hard end of the Nine Hells, Nessus; when you've descended as low as you can possibly go. Hearing of it, one might think it isn't actually so bad. Not actively on fire, not frozen, not a deadly morass or a blasted mountainside. Just a regular kind of wasteland, dry and cracked, and finite, past which lies the infinite crimson void."

Koh Tam rubs his hands together, to warm them. "In a sense, Nessus is the Nine Hells condensed. All the devils are there, as the saying goes. Asmodeus does not brook trespass. The towers of the great city of Malsheem rise from the city's chasm to the highest reaches of the plane, and from them Asmodeus sees all. Once he receives the faintest whisper of an outsider loose in his domain, his eye will find them. You cannot hide from Asmodeus, only hope that he has something of greater import to devote his attention to. Mortals venturing here find no respite. Except ...

There is a place. Word of it seeps out into the upper layers of the Nine Hells, and the rest of the planes. Even in the domain of Asmodeus himself there is a place of sanctuary—if you can reach it. Asmodeus is an archfiend of intellect. He prides himself on his learning as well as his power. It is an offence to his pride that there are gaps in his knowledge. So it is that there is one place that the wise might come to and be safe from infernal retribution. Some are called, and others follow that chain of rumors. All of these come, eventually, to the Oasis of the Lethe."

Proceed to the "Climbing down into Nessus" section in chapter 12 if the characters have finished their adventures in Cania and are undertaking the climb. The characters are given an infernal map for the Oasis of the Lethe and cautioned to hang onto it until they need it. Koh Tam or Tiax offer the following parting advice:

"Together we have accomplished much, but your travels, and mine, are near an end. I shall wait on the River Styx for you for seven days. I do hope to see you again. If not, I can only pray that your suffering is brief. Fare you well."



ABIGOR, DUKE OF THE NINE HELL

## CHAPTER 11

# Hunted by the Dukes



HE EVENTS IN THIS SECTION MAY OCCUR AT any time during the characters' journey through the Nine Hells.

Not all dangerous devils confine themselves to a specific layer of the Nine Hells. Some roam, either escaping from enemies, or hunting potential victims. Among the greatest of these powerful devils are Brother Adramalech and Brother Morax, who are agents of Asmodeus and command a warship, the likes of which have never been seen outside the Nine Hells. But Baalzebul also has an agent who travels the River Styx—an archdevil known as Abigor, who pilots an infernal submersible.

## RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

There are two methods by which the characters can encounter either of these naval opponents. Either the characters are hunted by the warship or the submersible, or the characters hunt one, or both, of these devil-ships.

### THE HUNTERS

The archdevils, Brother Adramalech and Brother Morax, have been tasked by Asmodeus to hunt the characters down and take them captive. If they succeed in taking the characters captive, then they take them to Malsheem where they're confronted by Asmodeus (refer to the section on "Malsheem" in chapter 12).

The archdevil Abigor has been tasked by Baalzebul to simply kill the characters and eliminate the threat to him that they present.

### THE HUNT BEGINS

These archdevils start searching for the characters once they've completed one of their group patron's objectives. From this point on, every time the characters move between layers (while on the River Styx) there is a 25 percent chance that they're intercepted by one of these foes.

If the characters are intercepted, proceed to the "Ambushed by the Infernal Warship" or the "Ambushed by Abigor" section. You choose which one.

### THE CHARACTERS ARE SEARCHING

The characters might pursue Brother Adramalech and Brother Morax, in the hopes of rescuing Barachiel, who is a prisoner aboard their infernal

### CORRUPTION

These encounters may trigger a premature ending to the adventure. An additional gating mechanism you might consider is to avoid triggering this hunt until the characters have become corrupted. The information in appendix E helps you keep track of their corruption. Once they've grown too corrupt, the characters are infinitely tangled in Asmodeus's chains and making a deal with the archdevil is likely their best option anyways. But if they still have a chance of redemption, they don't want to end up in Malsheem too soon.

warship. Alternatively, they might seek Abigor for one of the following three reasons:

**The Triad.** The characters may have made a bargain with the devils Rimmon, Zagum, and Buer to capture Abigor (see "Malsheem" in chapter 12).

**The Geas.** They may have allowed Anacreda to place a geas upon them that compels them to slay Abigor (see "Anacreda the Angelmaker" in chapter 8).

**The Unmaker.** They may be seeking the Unmaker if the Conclave is their patron.

If the characters are searching for either vessel, each time they enter a new layer of the Nine Hells via the River Styx, roll a d8. The quarry they seek is on the layer of the Nine Hells that matches the result. Reroll the d8 if the result matches the layer which the characters are just exiting. If the ship they seek is on the same layer as they are, then the characters need to succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check to locate the target vessel or use magic to determine its location. If the characters have been told of the location of Abigor's submersible, there is no need to make this check—just pick a layer of the Nine Hells and inform the characters that is where Abigor may be found.

If the characters find their desired ship, proceed to either "The Brothers' Infernal Warship" or "Baalzebul's Infernal Submersible."

## AMBUSHED BY THE INFERNAL WARSHIP

Review the top deck (area N1), for details on the attacking force (the ship is considered to be at battle alert). Once the warship is close enough to the barge, the devils on the top deck, as well as Brother Morax, leap onto Koh Tam's barge to attack the characters. If the characters fall, Koh Tam and Tiax (if present) are incapacitated during the fight.

### UNFAIR FATE

If the characters are captured now, it will be challenging for them to complete any remaining quests. Use your discretion—if you don't think the characters are ready for the end stages of the plot, then don't have the Dukes find the characters just yet.

while the characters are captured and brought aboard the warship.

If the characters repel the invaders, or are captured, proceed to “The Brothers’ Infernal Warship.”

## AMBUSHED BY ABIGOR

Baalzebul’s submersible is considered at battle alert when it finds Koh Tam’s barge. The submersible surfaces and Seleucus (**pit fiend**) flies above the barge and begins repeatedly using its *Fireball* spell against it. Their intent is to kill the characters, and swiftly. Abigor himself prepares to defend the submersible if Seleucus is slain. If the characters attack the submersible, Abigor does everything in his power to defeat them.

If the characters are victorious and explore the ship, proceed to “Baalzebul’s Infernal Submersible.”

## THE BROTHERS’ INFERNAL WARSHIP

The warship is under the command of Brother Adramalech and Brother Morax.

### ENCOUNTERS

The exterior of this warship is patrolled by devils, as described in area N1. Additionally other devils occupy the watchtower (area N18). Evading their notice is challenging. If the characters somehow enter the ship without being noticed, the hallways are patrolled by a pack of four **displacer fiends** (see appendix B). Every minute spent in the hallways there is a 1 in 4 chance of running into them.

### WARSHIP WEAPONS

Each weapon requires an action to fire it and another action to reload it.

**Acidic Sprayer.** Acidic bile sprays from a nozzle in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the cone must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 40 (9d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature reduced to 0 hit points by this damage is dissolved, leaving behind any objects it was carrying or wearing.

**Flamethrower.** Fire shoots out of the weapon’s nozzle in a 60-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire ignites any flammable objects in the area that aren’t being carried or worn.

### LOCATIONS IN THE BROTHERS’ INFERNAL WARSHIP

The major locations found within the ship are described below.

#### N1: TOP DECK

The top deck of the ship is outfitted like a tribute to extremity. Ten flame throwers and ten acid sprayers line the deck in neat, alternating order, bubbling with vile green foam, or spurting out little bursts of fire, and interspersed among them are three enormous ballistae, armed with gleaming metal projectiles. At the rear of the ship, you feel the cutting heat of the furnace that powers the terrible vessel, and you hear the agonized wails of the souls being fed into it below.

The top deck is usually crewed by a half-dozen **cambions** aided by ten **bearded devils**. They attack anyone that isn’t a crew member. If the ship is at battle alert, then Brother Morax is on the top deck.

Characters might try to operate the shipboard weapons. While the great ballistae are only usable against other warships, the acid sprayers and flame-throwers can be pivoted to attack creatures on the deck (see the sidebar for details).

#### N2: ACID VATS

A swirling morass of sizzling green acid jostles with the motions of the warship, acid occasionally sloshing almost over the lip of the vat containing it.

These chambers are where the acid is stored that is used in the sprayers. There are ten of these acid vats, each one colored green on the accompanying map. Each vat is situated below an acid sprayer on the top deck (area N1).

#### N3: HELLFIRE FUEL

The Hellfire in the vat before you emanates a tremendous heat even before you ever get close to it. The air above the vat shimmers, distorted by the heat and occasionally sparks erupt, landing with a sizzling hiss upon the metal floor.

These chambers are where the fuel is stored that is used in the flame throwers. There are ten Hellfire vats, each one colored red on the accompanying map, and each situated below a flame thrower on the top deck (area N1).

# THE BROTHERS' INFERNAL WARSHIP



0 25  
Feet

## N4: COMMAND AND NAVIGATION BRIDGE

The room is cramped and dark, with most of the space being taken up by a massive chair and an equally oversized wheel. The chair and wheel face the only windows in the room, toward the bow of the ship.

Brother Adramalech can often be found here. He is usually only accompanied by three **imps** that he uses to send messages to other parts of the ship.

**Treasure.** There are a half dozen steel chests in this room. Each is locked and requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to unlock. Five of the chests contain platinum bars, each worth 1,000 gp. Each chest has 5 bars stacked inside of it.

The last chest contains plans written by Asmodeus himself. The plans detail how he intends to trick Baalzebul into leaving his plane so that he can turn him back into the slug form that Baalzebul so despises. He has ordered the archdevil brothers to find Abigor, Baalzebul's trusted lieutenant, and take him prisoner to draw Baalzebul out. This is the same plan that the Triad will offer the characters (see chapter 12).

## N5: BRIG

This room, near the front of the lowest level of the warship, is blocked by a solid metal door. From behind the door, you hear muttering and complaining. On a hook beside the door hangs a blackened key.

The rooms are used for disobedient crew members and prisoners of war. Unlocking the door with the key makes a loud screeching noise and by the time the door is fully opened, the prisoners beyond are already standing and looking expectantly at the door. There are currently four prisoners being held in separate cells—a **cambion** named Shlatchel, a **bearded devil**, a **couatl** that has assumed the form of a cambion to avoid conflict with his cell mates (though all other crew members know the truth) and the former Hellrider, **Barachiel** (see appendix C).

The key that opened the outer door also opens any of the cells. When Barachiel sees the characters, he approaches the bars of his prison.

The asasimar before you glows with what can only be described as a divine radiance. Despite his captivity and the wounds inflicted upon him, his grin is joyous. When he speaks, his voice rings with certain truth. “It was Ramius, my long-ago friend, that has sent you? He and the Hellriders?”

Barachiel insists on freeing the other prisoners (even though he doesn't know that there is a couatl here). He feels all of them have served enough time aboard this infernal vessel already. Once Barachiel is restored, the characters may use the ritual that the Hellriders taught them to free him from the Nine Hells.

## N6: NEST

This is where the brothers keep their **vorvolakas** (see appendix B). There are three to be found here unless the ship is at battle alert, whereupon the room is empty.

## N7: ENGINE ROOM

The engine seems almost like a living thing. It purrs, a deep rattling, rumbling sound, and the sharp, heavy heat that comes off it pulses like a giant's breath. Lemures slink about the room, tending to its needs. Among them stalks a hulking brute with tall, curved horns, snarling at the lemures and watching with gleeful satisfaction as the door to the engine chamber is opened and soul coins are thrown into the mouth of the beast. The souls shriek and scream as they're consumed by the red-hot flames within, their torment fuel for the engine's endless hunger.

The **horned devil** is called Coal Heart (he keeps his real name to himself) and does his job with a great deal of relish. A dozen **lemures** work for him and sometimes, when he's bored, he'll throw one of them into the furnace. Coal Heart is a favorite of Brother Morax and there is a 1 in 4 chance that the archdevil is making his way to the engine room to spend time with his favorite subordinate.

Anyone entering the furnace (or starting their turn in it) must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) fire damage and 17 (5d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Both Coal Heart and Brother Morax attempt to grapple an enemy to drag them into the furnace if combat occurs here.

## N8: KITCHENS

A dozen or so tieflings toil over vast pots of lumpy, bubbling goo, their shoulders slumped and eyes half closed in exhaustion. Imps dart around underfoot, taking away bowls full of squirming muck and dashing off with them to the mess hall. The air in the kitchens is stifling hot with a putrid smell that stings the eyes.



The tieflings (**commoners**) have no loyalty to the Brother archdevils. They're willing to tell intruders everything they know, as long as none of the imps are around to rat them out.

#### N9: MESS HALL

There are several long tables in the mess hall, all of them lined on both sides with an assortment of rickety chairs and sagging benches. Tieflings, cambion devils, and bearded devils can be found sitting, standing, and slouching around the tables, shoveling unidentifiable clumps of food into their mouths with joyless abandon. Imps come in and toss more bowls of vile sustenance down the tables and take away the empty dishes and unused utensils as they leave.

There are usually three or four each of tieflings (**bandits**), cambions and **bearded devils**. There are several smaller mess halls along the lower deck, but each only contain one or two occupants at any time.

#### N10: COMMON QUARTERS

There are numerous identical crew quarters throughout the lowest level of the warship.

The bunk room is cramped, dark, and smells vaguely like fish and a great deal like rotting flesh. The bunks are packed together so tightly they might as well be one unit. There are no mattresses, just stretched canvas cots with a layer of ragged, suspiciously stained blankets tangled together on top.

**Treasure.** Searching any of these rooms usually nets 1d10 gp and 1d4 pp. There is a 10 percent chance that 1d4 **bearded devils** return to their quarters during the characters' search. They won't engage but run to area N4 to alert the rest of the ship.

#### N11: OFFICER'S QUARTERS

Below-decks there are 6 almost identical officer's quarters.

There are two beds in these small quarters. A taste of sulfur lingers in the air.

**Treasure.** Similar to the common quarters, but a search reveals 1d10 pp and 1d4 gems worth 50 gp each.

#### N12: WORKSHOP

Approaching the workshop, you're assaulted by a vicious cacophony of awful noises. Within the large, overheated room you find several devils making repairs on a variety of weaponry and metal machinery. The sound of hammering and metal striking metal reverberates harshly off the steel walls, creating an agonizing and unending echo.

A **maelephant nomad** (see appendix B) named Zerkosis runs this workshop. It is assisted by four **bone devils** and four **barbed devils**.

#### N13: STORAGE

The various storage rooms are filled with rations for the crew.

#### N14: SOUL FIRE ENGINE

This is the engine that powers the ship. Anyone entering the engine area (or starting their turn in it) must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) fire damage and 17 (5d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

#### N15: FUEL RESERVE

This reserve of fuel is used to power the ship if the usual soul fuel is unavailable.

#### N16: ARMORY

The armory is filled with weapons of almost every kind. In addition, there are two magic weapons—a *Stygian Spear* and a *Demonbone Polearm* (see appendix D).

#### N17: KENNELS

This room apparently has no means of illumination. At the far end, in the shadows, rest several bulky, lion-like forms. The air around them seems to waver as if there were a disturbance near the creatures. You find it hard to concentrate on them.

This is where the **displacer fiends** (see appendix B) are kenneled. There are six of them here resting at any given time.

#### N18: WATCHTOWER

Near the rear, a metal-clad tower rises over the bulk of the warship, red-hued windows offering a full view of the ship's deck as well as the river all around it.

At any given time, four **cambions** are on watch, observing the cardinal directions for signs of other vessels approaching. If a vessel is spotted, or if intruders enter the watchtower, one of the cambions attempts to flee to warn the Brothers.

### BROTHERS ADRAMALECH AND MORAX

Asmodeus seldom deigns to wield the whip himself when someone rouses his ire. He has lesser devils to do that for him. Though, in this case, ‘lesser’ can still mean very powerful indeed. Adramalech and Morax have served the greatest of Fiends faithfully since the earliest days of the Nine Hells. They were angels within the host Asmodeus commanded. When he fell, they cast themselves willingly down to be with him. In an internal hierarchy rife with ambition and betrayal, the brothers’ lawful nature manifests as absolute loyalty. In return, Asmodeus

gives them what they want. They stand outside the intricate hierarchies of the Nine Hells, reporting directly to him and undertaking his commands with their own hands, his personal enforcers. His ‘hounds’, say other devils with a sneer of contempt, but Adramalech and Morax are as content with their lot as any devil can be.

They manifest most often as chalky white humanoids, Adramalech around eight feet tall and the hulking Morax, twelve. Morax is the more physically potent of the two, his hide spined and barbed, his hands jagged talons. Adramalech does most of the talking, to dreadful effect. As befits Asmodeus’s devils-of-all-work, they’re a versatile pair of monsters, more than equipped to punish those who have disappointed their master. And ‘punish’ is the operative term. Asmodeus dispatches his enemies to them when they’ve roused his personal ire.

**Morax** (see the accompanying stat block) has the tremendous strength and speed one would expect of a martial devil. His spines are brittle and hollow, and shards of them lodge in the flesh of those he strikes, or who strike him, where they rapidly begin to grow jagged extrusions of their own like miniature sea urchins. The shards must be cut out swiftly before they carve his victims up from the inside. This is mostly by way of a distraction so that **Adramalech** (see the accompanying stat block) can play his own games though.

Adramalech retains his angelic voice from before the fall. His golden words inveigle their way into the ears of listeners, confusing, distracting, distorting the way they see the world and causing mind-wrenching dissonance in mortal minds. Worse than this, Adramalech can conjure simulacra of his enemies’ loved ones, living or dead. More than mere illusions, these creations have a temporary life and thought drawn from the memories of the brothers’ enemies. This psychic link means that, when Adramalech torments them or Morax tears them apart, the pain is felt by those whose minds gave rise to them. In this way, Asmodeus’s decreed punishments combine physical agony and mental trauma in equal measure.

Though concentrating on destroying the less imposing Adramalech might seem the logical way to assault the brothers, the pair have a final surprise for their foes. They were as close as two angels could get before the fall and nothing in all the eternal ages of the Nine Hells has ever divided them. If either falls while the other still stands, the remaining Brother’s presence sets their fallen kin’s flesh bubbling in a frenzy of regeneration. They must be defeated together or not at all.

## BROTHER ADRAMALECH

Medium Fiend (Devil), Lawful Evil

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 212 (25d8 + 100)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	25 (+7)	25 (+7)	25 (+7)

**Saving Throws** Int +14, Wis +14, Cha +14

**Skills** Arcana +14, Deception +21, Insight +14, Intimidation +14, Persuasion +21, Religion +14

**Damage Resistances** cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

**Languages** Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 21 (33,000 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +7

**Devil's Sight.** Magical darkness doesn't impede Adramalech's darkvision.

**Magic Resistance.** Adramalech has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Unbreakable Bond.** If Adramalech is reduced to 0 hit points while Brother Morax still lives, Adramalech regenerates 50 hit points at the start of his next turn. This regeneration is interrupted if Brother Morax is reduced to 0 hit points before the start of Adramalech's turn.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Adramalech makes four attacks using Mental Barrage. He can replace one of the attacks with Brain Freeze or Cone of Madness (if available).

**Mental Barrage.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 60/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (4d8 + 7) psychic damage.

**Brain Freeze.** Adramalech attempts to overload the brain of a creature he can see within 60 feet of him. The target must make a DC 22 Intelligence saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. Creatures that fail the saving throw have the stunned condition for up to 1 minute. A stunned creature may repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on a success.

**Cone of Madness (Recharge 4–6).** Adramalech unleashes visions in a 30-foot cone in front of him. All creatures in the cone must make a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. For up to 1 minute, creatures that failed the save can't take reactions and each turn must use their action to make a melee attack against the nearest creature. Creatures may repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on a success.



### BONUS ACTIONS

**Conjure Effigy (Recharge 6).** Adramalech targets a creature, reading its thoughts and creating an effigy of a loved one in an unoccupied space that he can see within 60 feet of Adramalech. The effigy has 55 (10d10) hit points, an AC of 10, and ability scores of 10. It occasionally shouts for help, but otherwise takes no actions. While the effigy is alive, the target creature has disadvantage on attacks targeting Adramalech and any time the effigy takes damage, the target creature also takes an equal amount as psychic damage. If the effigy is killed, the target creature gains a level of exhaustion. If Adramalech is killed while effigies exist, they harmlessly melt into a warm sludge.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Adramalech can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Adramalech regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

**Barrage.** Adramalech makes a Mental Barrage attack.

**Mental Blocker.** Adramalech fortifies the mind of a creature he can see within 60 feet of him, or himself. The target benefits as if the *Greater Restoration* spell has been cast on them and is granted resistance to psychic damage until the end of Adramalech's next turn.



## BAALZEBUL'S INFERNAL SUBMERSIBLE

The submersible is commanded by Abigor.

### BAALZEBUL'S INFERNAL SUBMERSIBLE LOCATIONS

The major locations found within the submersible are described below.

#### B1: BRIDGE

The long hallway of the bridge is eerily silent. You hear the steady rush of water outside the submersible as the vessel cuts through the river, but inside it is still and dark. The brightest light comes from the words writ in fire on the walls, that flash briefly and then vanish. A long metal device hangs from the ceiling in the center of the room, with handles on the sides and small windows for the eyes.

### BROTHER MORAX

Large Fiend (Devil), Lawful Evil

**Armor Class** 21 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 337 (25d10 + 200)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	22 (+6)	27 (+8)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Str +14, Dex +13, Con +15

**Skills** Acrobatics +20, Athletics +21, Intimidation +11, Medicine +10, Stealth +13, Survival +10

**Damage Resistances** cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 21 (33,000 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +7

**Brittle Spine.** For each Brittle Spine a creature has, the creature takes 3 (1d6) poison damage at the start of each of their turns, and when Morax activates Burrow or Deep Burrow. Spines can only be removed by a *Regeneration* spell or similar, or by killing Morax.

**Devil's Sight.** Magical darkness doesn't impede Adramalech's darkvision.

**Magic Resistance.** Morax has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Spined Hide.** Whenever Morax is hit with a melee attack, the attacker takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage and gains 1 Brittle Spine.

**Unbreakable Bond.** If Morax is reduced to 0 hit points while Brother Adramalech still lives, Morax regenerates 50 hit points at the start of his next turn. This regeneration is interrupted if Brother Adramalech is reduced to 0 hit points before the start of Morax's turn.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Morax makes four attacks using his Claw, Spine Fling, or a combination of the two.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d6 + 7) slashing damage, and the target gains 1 Brittle Spine.

**Spine Fling.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d12 + 6) piercing damage, and the target gains 1 Brittle Spine.

**Deep Burrow.** Morax immediately deals Brittle Spine ongoing damage to all creatures that have at least one Brittle Spine that he can see.

**Bone Spikes (Recharge 6).** Morax shoves an arm into the ground, rapidly growing bones that erupt at a point he can see within 100 feet of him. Each creature in a 60-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 28 (8d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Creatures that fail the save gain 2 Brittle Spines, while creatures that succeed only gain 1 Brittle Spine.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Morax can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Morax regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Claw.** Morax makes a Claw attack.

**Bone Splinters (Costs 2 Actions).** Morax gestures at a creature he can see that has at least 1 Brittle Spine. That creature must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or the number of Brittle Spines it has doubles.

**Burrow (Costs 2 Actions).** Morax bristles the spines within a creature that he can see. The target immediately takes Brittle Spine ongoing damage.

The bridge is always crewed by a half-dozen **bone devils**. There is a 50 percent chance that the commander on deck is Abigor, otherwise it is the first mate, a **pit fiend** named Seleceus. If the submersible is currently at battle footing, then Abigor is in command. The words on the wall are written in Infernal and are how the aboleth in area B3 communicates with the bridge commander.

## B2: BRIG

This small room appears to usually be used for storage, but manacles have been bolted to the wall and a tiefling sits in a comfy chair beside them. There's a plate of food in his lap and a half full bottle of wine beside the chair. A small satchel sits under the chair. As he hears you enter, he looks up, licks his fingers, and smiles. "More guests of our superb host, Abigor? I'll wager a soul coin, that you are here to rescue me."

The prisoner is named **Aeshma** (see his entry in appendix C). The moment he walks free of the room with the characters, he holds out his hand for the coin he has won from them (he did win the wager after all). His satchel contains two *Soul Coins*, 15 gp, and a set of gambler's dice.

**The Conclave as Patron.** If the characters are working for the Conclave, Aeshma is the Unmaker. To fulfill their patron's objective, the characters must capture and destroy Aeshma's soul. Aeshma knows nothing of this: as far as he is concerned, he's just a fairly lucky (albeit compulsive) gambler making his way through life. Despite his ignorance, Aeshma, and the protection being the Unmaker provides, isn't going to make this grim task easy for the characters.

The following describes what the characters might learn from Aeshma, or how he might react depending on how they interact with him:

**The Manacles.** If asked why he's not chained up, he merely shrugs and says he made a bet with the guards and he won. He'll raise the plate of food and declare, "That's how I got this as well." However, if the characters appear to be dangerous to him, he lies instead and insists that there was another prisoner here, "A really bad fellow; they just dragged him off, that-away." If they leave, he attempts to hide from them in the submersible.

**The Unmaker.** If asked about being the Unmaker, Aeshma (truthfully) has no idea what the characters are talking about. The reality is that Asmodeus—and perhaps other archdevils—would like to use the Unmaker to set the stage for a wager of divine proportions, one that will leave the world permanently changed and possibly irreversibly broken. Though Aeshma himself is innocent

in this future wrongdoing, his soul is simply too dangerous to be allowed to exist.

**If Attacked.** Aeshma tries to talk his way out of conflict, and if that fails, he flees. If slain, the characters have 1 minute to use the *Conclave Coin* to capture Aeshma's soul, otherwise the Unmaker is reborn in the next generation and the threat returns (the characters fail their patron, who no longer provides additional support, other than Koh Tam's services).

Ultimately the characters must slay Aeshma and capture his soul with the *Conclave Coin*. Once accomplished, they can bring the coin with them to their final meeting with their patrons (see "A Thankful Patron" in chapter 10). Clever characters might instead destroy the coin now, ensuring that the soul doesn't fall into the wrong hands. An infernal ship's furnace consumes the *Conclave Coin* instantly and destroys the coin in the process. The soul trapped in the coin becomes trapped in the furnace instead, powering the infernal ship. Not even divine intervention can restore a soul destroyed in this manner.

## B3: COMMUNICATION ROOM

There is an immense tank filled with water in the center of the room. A grotesque creature with countless tentacles swims in it. The creature uses its many limbs to touch the infernal sigils carved into the wide wall in front of it with careful intention, leaving streaks of slime in its wake.

The tentacled creature is an **aboleth** that was imprisoned by Abigor centuries ago. It now serves the purpose of keeping Abigor in communication with everyone on the ship and its other servants throughout the Nine Hells. The aboleth uses the sigils to send messages to other rooms in the submersible or receive messages from those locations. Likewise, and not unlike a *Sending Stone*, some of Abigor's minions carry talismans that can send messages to this room or receive messages from it, even when they are on a different layer.

The aboleth knows many things and it is willing to share for the right price. A rare or more powerful magic item is what it wants in exchange for knowledge. It knows almost as much about the Nine Hells as Asmodeus himself. The most important thing it knows is the truth of Asmodeus's origins. You choose which of these origins is the true one:

- Asmodeus arose from the primordial chaos as the mightiest of the lawful gods, with Jazirian the only one who could rival him. They both took the form of a serpent and they set their minds on bringing law to the chaos. Eventually the two gods fought, and Asmodeus was defeated. His body fell through





BAAZEBUL'S INFERNAL SUBMERSIBLE  
EMERGES FROM THE STYX.

# BAAZEUL'S INFERNAL SUBMERSIBLE



0 25  
Feet

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN STEVENSON

- the multiverse until it crashed into Nessus forming the canyon known as the Serpent's Coil.
- Asmodeus is a fallen angel. He was originally tasked with keeping the demons of the Abyss in check, but eventually became better at killing demons he and his angelic followers took on demonic traits. This led to him being banished by the gods. But before he was exiled to the Nine Hells, he was able to fool the gods into signing the Pact Primeval. This is a contract between Asmodeus and the gods of the multiverse that allows Asmodeus and his servants to legally corrupt mortal souls so that they end up in the Nine Hells. These souls can then be used to increase Asmodeus's power.
  - Asmodeus served the first and most powerful god, He Who Was. Asmodeus chaffed at having a master, so he used an artifact called the Shard of Evil to kill his god. Then he was able to erase the name of the god from existence. The Shard of Evil is the ruby at the tip of the rod that is Asmodeus's signet. Asmodeus was banished to the Nine Hells by the other gods.

**Betraying Baalzebul.** If the characters are working with the Triad to trick Baalzebul into reverting to his slug form again, they can ask the aboleth to summon the archdevil here. The aboleth does this only if Abigor is incapacitated or dead and the characters must agree to cede control of the submersible to the aboleth afterwards. For the ruse to work, Baalzebul must be convinced to leave Maladomini. If the submersible is currently on the River Styx in Maladomini, the aboleth is able to navigate the vessel to the layer above or below this one before contacting Baalzebul.

Once the aboleth summons Baalzebul, proceed to the "Capturing Abigor" section at the end of this chapter.

#### B4: ENGINE ROOM

This is a Hellfire furnace. Anyone entering the furnace (or starting their turn in it) must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) fire damage and 17 (5d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

#### B5: KITCHENS

The kitchen staff, a handful of wretched imps, work quickly and with stern silence. They don't speak to each other, nor make any noise at all. There are towels on their cutting boards so that their knives won't make a sound as they slice through hunks of unidentifiable meat-like substance, and they stir tall pots of frothing gruel slowly, taking care not to strike the metal sides with the stirring utensil.

The six **imps** flee from any intruders, looking to alert the rest of the ship.

#### B6: SHOWERS

There are four rooms dedicated to bathing or showering, along with toilet facilities. These are often empty.

#### B7: COMMON QUARTERS

There are two large rooms dedicated to housing and feeding the crew.

There is a motley collection of devils in the mess hall. Great and small figures sit silently side by side, eating spoonfuls of thick, grayish gunk. Only the slightest of slurping, chewing noises can be heard, and beneath these sounds, the distant rush of water.

Each of the quarters contains two **bone devils** and three **cambions**. If fighting occurs in one of these rooms, the occupants in the other room are likely to hear.

**Treasure.** Searching any of these rooms turns up 1d10 gp and 1d4 pp.

#### B8: OFFICER'S QUARTERS

There are three beds in this room for the submersible's officers.

**Treasure.** Searching this room nets 8d10 pp. There is a 25 percent chance that a patrol of 1d4 **bone devils** notice anyone looting one of these rooms.

#### B9: STORAGE

There are several mostly empty rooms dedicated to storing rations and nonmagical weapons.

#### B10: ABIGOR'S BEDCHAMBER

Despite the cramped halls of the submersible, this is a reasonably sized room, with a large bed and a table with several chairs. Papers are scattered over the table.

Abigor is seldom here, as there is so much work to be done in maintaining the infernal submersible. The papers mostly detail the logistics of keeping the devil crew fed and disciplined.

## B11: TORPEDO ROOM

The room is narrow and cramped with strange equipment. There are rows and stacks of enormous metal cylinders packed into the room. Each cylinder is long and tapered, with the pointed end facing dark tunnels carved into the vessel wall that are just as wide as the cylinders themselves. Glowing infernal runes cover each of the cylinders.

There are usually two **bone devils** present, but on a battle alert the room has eight bone devils working feverishly to keep torpedoes loaded and ready to fire. There are thirty-four cylinders, each a torpedo weighing 800 pounds. They're usually inert, but if the submersible is at a battle alert, then 1d4 of them have been primed. To prime a torpedo, one must press the correct combination of runes on its surface. This requires a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check, for each torpedo (Fiends succeed on this check automatically). If a primed torpedo takes more than 10 damage it explodes, dealing 35 (10d6) force damage to every object or creature within a 30-foot-radius. Any primed torpedo damaged in this way explodes too. The damage from two or more torpedoes breaches the hull of the submersible, filling the room with the waters of the Styx within 2d4 rounds.

## B12: DEPTH CHARGE ROOM

There are racks of metal cylinders in this room. Each is squat and thick with a tapering rear that ends in a strange round fin-like shape. Glowing infernal runes cover each of the cylinders.

There are two **bone devils** present, whether or not the submersible is at a battle alert. There are ten depth charges, each weighing around 400 pounds. A depth charge must be armed before it is capable of detonating. To arm a depth charge, the correct combination of runes on its surface must be pressed, requiring a successful DC 19 Intelligence (Arcana) check for each depth charge (Fiends succeed on this check automatically). If an armed charge takes more than 20 damage it detonates, dealing 52 (8d12) lightning damage to every object or creature within a 60-foot-radius. Any armed depth charge damaged in this way detonates too. The damage from a single depth charge immediately breaches the hull of the submersible, filling the room with the waters of the Styx.

## ABIGOR

Abigor is Baalzebul's chief general, a warlike monster fit for the violence that the Lord of Deceit considers beneath him. Its preferred shape is a flayed-looking humanoid with musculature of polished metal. Physically, Abigor commands tremendous strength and destructive power. Its greatest joy, however, is to command a battlefield, ordering legions of infernal troops in complex stratagems against the enemies of the Nine Hells. In times past, Abigor has commanded the legions of Maladomini up in Avernum to stem the tides of the Abyss. Most of the time, though, Baalzebul keeps the monstrous creature close to guard against domestic threats or punish those underlings whose construction efforts disappoint their master, as they inevitably do. Abigor considers its talents wasted in such sideshows and its frustrated dreams of war manifest in counterproductive ways. Visitors sneaking through Maladomini might be surprised to find legions of devils standing about in parade ground order, or else marching and drilling, every maneuver perfect, yet their general is never satisfied. What the perfect city is to Baalzebul, military exercises are to Abigor. The archdevil forces its troops to march and salute and trudge through ever more complex motions as it plays at war. Alternatively, it throws its soldiers into vast war games across the ruinous country of Maladomini, decimating its own troops just to try out some new stratagem. Abigor is rightfully hated by all the devils under its command, and covertly mocked by its peers for its obsessions.

Getting close to Abigor without engaging legions of infernal troops is difficult—to Abigor's regret, in fact. Sometimes the archdevil decides to test Maladomini's security by creating openings for imaginary assassins and spies, to see who might take advantage of them. On one occasion this resulted in a determined paladin getting far too close to Baalzebul himself, for which Abigor spent some decades being whipped by infernal rust monsters. After that incident, Abigor became obsessed with presenting a clean and martial appearance, employing a small legion of imps to burnish its skin to a blazing shine.

An actual physical run-in with **Abigor** (see the accompanying stat block) should be a simple, brutal experience but its relative isolation at the heart of Maladomini has left it curiously desperate to make the most of any fight it might get into. Rather than simply tear up the opposition, it constantly changes to more and more complex and convoluted tactics, desperate to make the very most of any melee. In doing so, it can end up missing obvious opportunities to destroy its enemies, or even inadvertently give them an advantage or let them

## ABIGOR

Large Fiend (Devil), Lawful Evil

**Armor Class** 22 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 337 (27d10 + 189)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	14 (+2)	25 (+7)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Str +15, Int +12

**Skills** Athletics +22, History +12, Insight +10, Intimidation +17, Perception +10, Survival +10

**Damage Resistances** cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

**Languages** Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 22 (41,000 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +7

**Devil's Sight.** Magical darkness doesn't impede Abigor's darkvision.

**Magic Resistance.** Abigor has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Abigor makes four attacks using its Warhammer, Throwing Hammer, or a combination of the two.

**Warhammer.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) thunder damage.

**Throwing Hammer.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) thunder damage. Hammers thrown this way fall and stick into the ground after hitting their target and a new hammer appears in Abigor's hand.

**Thunderous Slam (Recharge 5–6).** Abigor causes all its hammers left on the battlefield to bristle with thunderous energy, exploding outwards with a roar. All creatures within a 10-foot-radius sphere centered on each hammer must make a DC 22 Constitution saving throw. Targets take 26 (4d12) thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If a creature is within multiple spheres, it must make the save multiple times, taking damage from each source.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Abigor can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Abigor regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Throw Hammer.** Abigor makes a Throwing Hammer attack.

**Call Thunder (Costs 2 Actions).** Abigor targets a hammer that it can see within 60 feet to let out a thunderous roar. Creatures within a 10-foot-radius sphere centered on the hammer must make a DC 22 Constitution saving throw, taking 26 (4d12) thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

escape. In one recorded instance, the archdevil even broke off the fight at its moment of victory to school its enemies in how they could provide a greater challenge, then insisted on beginning the fight anew.

### ASSASSINATING ABIGOR

If the characters have come to slay Abigor for the hag, Anacreda, when the archdevil is defeated, they feel the ever-pressing weight of the geas that has bound them magically lift. They've completed their end of the bargain and are free of the hag's influence.

### CAPTURING ABIGOR

The characters don't need to keep Abigor alive for the Triad's ruse to work. They simply must defeat Abigor and capture the submersible before convincing the aboleth to lure Baalzebul into a rescue attempt. If they've done this, and the aboleth still lives, and the characters return to area B3, then read the following:

As you prepare yourself for the arrival of the archdevil, Baalzebul, you watch the aboleth's slimy tentacles press against various glowing sigils. A long silence ensues, punctuated only by the occasional ping as the Styx's immeasurable pressure exerts against the submersible's metal hull. Then a sigil draws itself upon the floor, lines arcing and dovetailing, flaring bright and fading swiftly. For a moment a man with features exceedingly fine appears, in shadow, and then he shrieks, his voice deepening into a grotesque gurgle as the human-form shatters, expanding into a bulging mass of flesh, until a slug-like creature looms over you.

"W-what trickery is this?" And you recognize the voice, for you have heard it spoken from the mouth of Koh Tam when he was possessed by Baalzebul at the beginning of your venture. "My body ... my b-beautiful body. What have you done to me?"

**Baalzebul** (see appendix A) is both confused at his sudden transformation back into his most hated form and in rage at the characters. He lashes out at them. The characters can either stand to fight him or attempt to escape. In either case, they've completed the mission the Triad assigned them and if they survive here, they should return to Nessus.



NESSUS, A ROCKY WASTELAND.

# Nessus, the Bastion of Asmodeus

**N**HE FINAL LAYER OF THE NINE HELLS, bastion of Asmodeus and heavily guarded by his legions, is the cracked wasteland of Nessus. It floats within an infinite, blood-red void, which extends in all directions. Very few are given entrance into Nessus, with the patrolling legions of devils ordered to kill trespassers on sight, including other devils.

## RUNNING THIS CHAPTER

Before running this chapter read the “Nessus Overview” section. As this is the final stage of the characters’ journey into the Nine Hells, they need to find a way out of their contracts. Make sure the players get the chance to complete their quest objectives before triggering the final stage.

The individual character’s score on the Corruption Tracker (combined with their choices in this chapter) determines the possible outcomes available to them. The information in the “Final Stage” section helps you prepare for the final encounters in this chapter.

## ENCOUNTERS

The characters have entered the domain of Asmodeus. Even if they manage to travel the layer without setting off his defenses, they’re likely to encounter complications while they’re here. Before the characters enter either the Oasis of the Lethe or Malsheem, roll at least once on the Random Encounters in Nessus table.

## LOCATIONS

There are other locations of interest in Nessus, but the characters are warned against visiting them. They should remain focused on their mission and limit the time they spend in Asmodeus’s domain.

## KOH TAM AND TIAX

Koh Tam or Tiax (depending on who the characters sided with earlier) wait for the characters’ return by the Falls of the Frozen Titan. Once they’ve gotten what they came for, they need the barge to travel the Nine Hells one last time, to freedom.

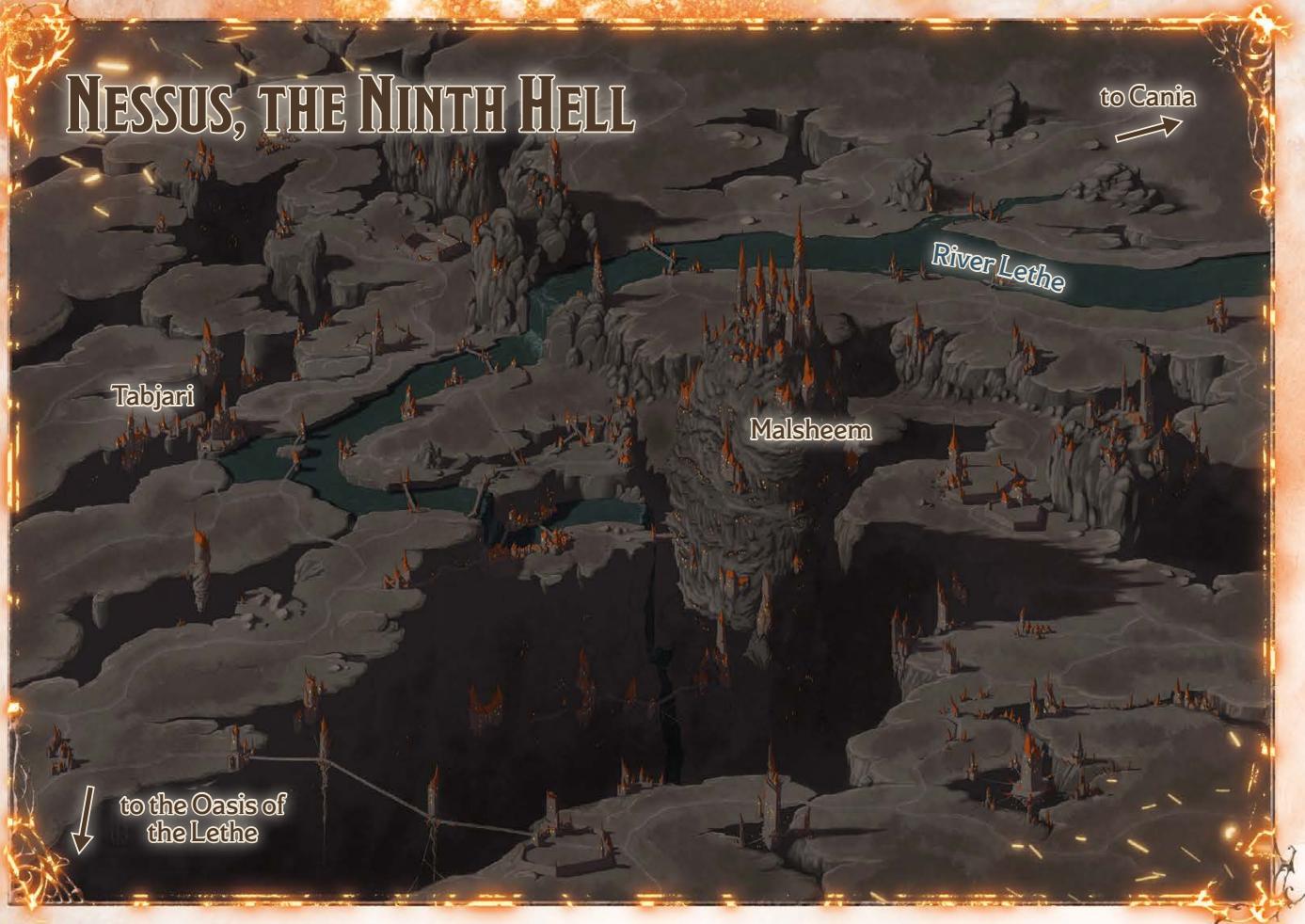
## OBJECTIVES

Before entering Nessus, the characters should have resolved their patron’s mission. Make sure that all phylacteries have been attained. Once they enter Asmodeus’s domain, they need to make haste and find a way to annul the contracts before Asmodeus prevents their escape.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN NESSUS

### d6 Encounter

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | A singular <b>amnizu</b> (see <i>Monsters of the Multiverse</i> ) approaches the characters with a smile on their face. It offers a quick passage out of Nessus in exchange for 2 <i>Soul Coins</i> per character. To each paying character it gives a wishbone, that when snapped, transports the character back to the Falls of the Frozen Titan in Cania.  |
| 2 | Two <b>pit fiends</b> spar with each other, testing their strength. They invite any travelers to spar with them. If they find their sparring partner to be lacking in strength, they quickly change their tune to harvest a wayward soul.   |
| 3 | A group of four <b>horned devils</b> patrol the skies of Nessus, looking for any potential intruders. If they spot any, they approach and ask to see a writ of passage. If the intruder can’t produce valid evidence, the group attacks.  |
| 4 | Filled with rage by the sheer quantity of souls it absorbed, a <b>tyrant shadow</b> (see appendix B) rampages through the layer. Creatures of its size and strength are rare, and its death curries favor in the realm. If they kill it, the characters have advantage on all checks when interacting with the Triad. Additionally, when the tyrant shadow dies, 3d4 <i>Soul Coins</i> are created. |
| 5 | A pride of six <b>hellcats</b> (see appendix B), led by a particularly menacing bezekira, stalks Nessus looking for prey. They avoid opponents they feel they can’t defeat.   |
| 6 | Actively sneaking towards the center of Nessus is a single <b>balor</b> dressed in black robes. It is constantly vigilant and approaches any creature that notices its presence. Its infiltration was difficult to secure, and it goes to any length to ensure no devil learns of its mission.  |



#### CAPTURED

If the events from chapter 11 led to the Dukes capturing the characters on behalf of Asmodeus, they're brought before the Triad. They may not have all the necessary phylacteries to confront Asmodeus yet. However, all isn't lost as they may still save their loved ones. The scenario with the Triad plays out slightly different if the characters were captured or not.

## THE FINAL STAGE

There are two ways that the characters can approach the last stage of their quest:

- Koh Tam has an invitation to a place in Nessus known as the Oasis of the Lethe. In this place of learning, the characters can discover how to free their souls or the souls of their loved ones from the contracts that bind them. To get there, they must follow another infernal river, called the Lethe, which eventually brings them to the Oasis of the Lethe.
- The characters can confront Asmodeus directly. To do this, they simply must enter Nessus, whereupon the Lord of the Nine senses their presence and sends a force to escort them to Malsheem. Asmodeus won't deal with the characters initially, instead he leaves them to his faithful servants

known as the Triad. If the characters navigate the trials of these three archdevils, then they might be able to convince Asmodeus to release the souls from their contracts.

#### CORRUPTION TRACKER

Before setting out in Nessus, consult appendix E. The information there helps you guide your players through the finale of their adventure. Do the following now:

- Tally the individual scores for each character on the "Corruption Tracker."
- Use the Corruption table to determine if the character has become corrupted.
- Use the Final Outcomes table to determine the resolution available to each character.

## NESSUS OVERVIEW

Though the Styx freezes in its passage to Nessus, it doesn't completely dry up. Near the bottom, the temperature shift causes a small section of the river to melt and finish its journey to Nessus below. This stream is heavily guarded and flows a small distance before pooling into the Forgotten Lake, the last stop. From here, it drains into the porous stone of Nessus, traveling to the very bottom of

the layer. It gurgles through a few of the deepest ravines before mysteriously vanishing on its journey to Gehenna.

An arid wasteland, Nessus resembles a rocky plain filled with cracks, pits, and canyons. The majority of the layer is flat, with only a few hills. Storms of fire and hot wind blow across its surface, and sandstorms aren't uncommon. Though many ravines mar its surface, only a few are important enough to have names. The Serpent's Coil is a massive ravine, rumored to contain Asmodeus's true body and caused by his fall into the Nine Hells. Its depth is practically infinite, and no creature has ever gone from the surface of Nessus to the bottom.

A close cousin of the Styx, the River Lethe originates on Nessus. Some scholars believe its pools are fed by the Styx itself, but the river's unique powers and secluded nature make such beliefs impossible to prove. From its spring in Nessus, the Lethe flows across the land, occasionally crossing ravines and canyons, before reaching the edge of the landmass. Unlike the Styx, the Lethe completely defies gravity, flowing over the cracks in the land without breaking its stride. It flows off the edge of Nessus unimpeded, where it continues to run off into the void, seemingly floating into the empty space.

Largest of all cities in the Nine Hells is Malsheem, home to Asmodeus and his infernal legions. The city lies within the largest trench in Nessus and expands from its bottom to the skies, marking the center of the realm. From its spire, Asmodeus looks out on Nessus and, when the fancy strikes him, the rest of the Nine Hells. The only other structure of the layer, Tabjari, is a copper fortress built into the walls bordering Reaper's Canyon. An impregnable citadel, the structure is home to Asmodeus's elite forces and acts as a vault, safeguarding his most valuable possessions.

All devils native to the Nine Hells, those that don't arise from the souls of the damned, are "born" on Nessus. Asmodeus's true form continues to bleed from his wounds, and from this blood sprout devils. They're quickly redistributed to various other layers, depending on need and duty, with Asmodeus keeping only the most powerful. Each archdevil answers to Asmodeus, the Overlord of the Nine Hells, who rules from the infernal throne in Nessus. They all plot and hope to gain the throne for themselves, yet Asmodeus has ruled the Nine Hells since their inception, and likely will continue to do so until the end of time.

Entrance into Nessus is nigh impossible, and rarely done. Those that choose to enter the realm do so by Asmodeus's invitation or are almost certainly destroyed by the realm's defenses. As the lowest

layer in the Nine Hells, exiting Nessus is only possible by ascending into Cania. Malsheem certainly contains portals of some kind within its walls, though their location is known only to Asmodeus and his guards—as is their destination.

## FEATURES

Asmodeus knows of all that enter his realm. Without some method of concealing their presence, Asmodeus always knows the relative location of each creature in Nessus. Visitors feel a constant state of paranoia, as if something is always watching.

## CLIMBING DOWN INTO NESSUS

The great gray swell of the River Styx begins to slow. Here and there great chunks of ice appear and are pushed along by the churning waters until they collide and begin accumulating into one mass that pushes up against the riverbanks. The ice becomes thick enough to stand on, but the rush of moving water below can be heard. Eventually this sound slows to a gurgling whisper and then falls silent. The ice stretches out for a distance, solid and white with arching crests where swells and rapids have frozen, and then it ends, and all that remains is empty sky. At the edge of the ice one can see out over the barren Nessus plains, vast and sprawling, reaching the far horizon. The drop below is dizzying. The powerful waters of the Styx have tumbled over the edge of the cliff and frozen into an enormous curtain of solid ice. The ground is scarcely visible, hazy with distance. Trapped within the plunging frozen waterfall is a titanic skeleton of humanoid shape dressed in gleaming armor. A giant.

To reach Nessus, the characters must climb down the body of an ancient giant, half submerged in a frozen waterfall that is the last stage of the River Styx. This skeletal figure, of a scale beyond the stature of mortal Giants, is armored in gleaming mail that remains pristine and shimmers within the ice.

Although no more than bones, some trace of life still clings to the frozen titan. Those approaching hear its voice in their head, speaking whatever language is most native to them. It names itself as Devorastus, a warrior of law, who came to the Nine Hells unknown centuries ago and, after slaying countless devils, ended up imprisoned in the eternal ice of Cania.

Devorastus asks all passers-by to work towards freeing it, even if it is only to chip a few handfuls of

ice away from its frozen tomb. Its words are persuasive, and an ability to read the thoughts of others permits it to tempt them with targeted inducements appealing to their morality, offering bribes, or pledging services.

There is a furious commotion around the titan's head. Mortals and devils brush shoulders as they chip and claw away at the ice around it. Some seem to be working in groups, others alone, but each acts with the same desperate fervor.

Over time a cult of desperate dissidents has arisen around the ice-locked head of Devorastus. Some cultists are mortal travelers who have nothing else in the plane save their hope that the giant will somehow save them. Others are actual Fiends, outcasts or rebels fleeing Mephistopheles' ire, who intend to use the skeletal giant as their war machine to fight their former master. Thus far the archdevil is either ignorant of the cult or considers action against it not worth the resources—or it is simply amused by its folly. The score or so of cult members pick feebly at the ice covering, attempt

to light fires that the cold of Cania kills, and make sacrifices in the hope the warm blood and shed life force will help free their champion.

Devorastus' vast armored form is plainly a long way from being free, and to chip a little ice away might seem a meagre price to pay to avoid the predations of the cult. However, Devorastus' true nature is very different, and the creature is far closer to escaping than it looks. Devorastus' actual form is similar to a gelatinous cube, currently wrapped around the bones of the titan. It is a demon, a lieutenant or perhaps rival of Juiblex, which travelled down the swift flow of the Styx before being trapped in the ice. As soon as even a small hole in the ice pierces through to the chamber it is encysted in, the creature will surge out, feed off the flesh of mortals and devils alike and then seek to return to the river in the hope it can follow the current to more hospitable climes.

Characters must expend significant energy to free Devorastus. Track each hour of active digging/excavating, per character, with every 30 points of fire damage counting as an additional 1 hour of effort. Once this tracker reaches 50, **Devorastus** (see the accompanying stat block) is freed.

## DEVORASTUS

Huge Fiend (Demon), Unaligned

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 275 (22d12 + 132)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	14 (+2)	22 (+6)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)

**Damage Resistances** cold, fire, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

**Damage Immunities** acid

**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

**Languages** telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 20 (25,000 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +6

**Legendary Resistance (3/Day).** If Devorastus fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

**Ooze Cube.** Devorastus takes up its entire space. Other creatures can enter the space, but a creature that does so is subjected to Engulf and has disadvantage on the saving throw. Creatures inside the cube can be seen but have total cover. A creature within 5 feet of the cube can take an action to pull a creature or object out of the cube. Doing so requires a successful DC 21 Strength check, and the creature making the attempt takes 35 (10d6) acid damage. The cube can hold only one Huge creature or up to six Large or smaller creatures inside it at a time.

**Sticky.** Devorastus can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

**Transparent.** Even when Devorastus is in plain sight, it takes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot Devorastus if it has neither moved nor attacked. A creature that tries to enter Devorastus' space while unaware of Devorastus is surprised by it.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Devorastus makes four attacks using its Pseudopod, Spit, or a combination of the two.

**Pseudopod.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 42 (12d6) acid damage.

**Spit.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 100/200 ft., one target. *Hit:* 28 (8d6) acid damage. A target hit by this attack must make a DC 21 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target has the prone condition.

**Engulf.** Devorastus moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter Large or smaller creatures' spaces. Whenever Devorastus enters a creature's space, the creature must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of Devorastus. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On a failed save, Devorastus enters the creature's space, the creature takes 35 (10d6) acid damage, and is engulfed. The engulfed creature can't breathe, has the restrained condition, and takes 42 (12d6) acid damage at the start of each of Devorastus' turns. When Devorastus moves, the engulfed creature moves with it. An engulfed creature can try to escape by making a DC 21 Strength check as an action. On a success, the creature escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of Devorastus.



Though your efforts have only produced a small, albeit deep, channel in the ice, there's a disturbing hissing noise, as if water has found its way to a tiny crack in a massive dam. A surge of pale liquid bubbles out from the hole you have created, almost instantly becoming a huge mound of ooze sticking to the ice. The trapped titan collapses as if whatever once sustained it, has escaped.

The massive ooze-like demon, barely visible against the ice, climbs up or down as necessary, attempting to consume anything nearby. If no enemies are detected within 60 feet, it begins crawling upwards, in the hopes of finding a more comfortable resting place.

Climbing down the titan isn't without its dangers. **Shredwings** roost in parts of the body of the titan. 2d6 of them attack anyone descending, but once half of them are killed, the rest retreat.

### ENTERING NESSUS WITHOUT PROTECTION

If the characters enter Nessus without any protection against divination, then they are sensed by Asmodeus immediately. He sends a force to escort them to Malsheem.

From across the arid plains there comes a distant roar. The ground trembles slightly and a hot, sweeping wind follows, sending up a curtain of red dust. A shadow passes suddenly over the land ahead of you. It is immense and slips over the distance with alarming speed. A second shadow joins it. There is another ground-shaking roar and then the sound of snarling and the rattle of weaponry. A massive fiend approaches, red, winged, and armed with a heavy metal mace. Following it are four equally large devils with dark, leathery skin and wings and six devils with enormous horns carrying tall forks with sharpened tips that glow with heat. Flanking this monstrous party are two dragons. The scales of the beasts' gleam a brilliant red and the cutting wind born of their powerful wingbeats carries with it the scent of smoke and sulfur.

The escort is led by a **pit fiend** and includes four **war devils** (see appendix B), six **horned devils**, and a pair of **adult red dragons** that the characters are to ride if they can't fly themselves. Even the most powerful characters will find this to be a difficult fight if it comes to violence, but the devils have been told to simply escort the characters, not imprison them. They only attack to defend themselves or if the characters refuse to accompany them. Proceed to the "Adventure: Malsheem" section.

## TRAVELING ACROSS NESSUS

Those traveling across Nessus can stick close to the River Lethe or strike out into the plains to avoid the traffic of devils that can be found along the river's edge. Below are two possible encounters.

### THE RIVER LETHE

The River Lethe is, if possible, less navigable than the River Styx. In many places the river plunges over vast, wild falls, and devils have had to laboriously build complex sequences of locks to permit their great river barges to safely traverse the drops.

On occasion, political feuds between devils spill over into direct sabotage and action. Consignments of valuable goods—souls, sorrow wine, magic artifacts, and mortal prisoners—are wrecked or sunk as one diabolic magnate strikes indirectly against a rival. The falls of Telkalal are a favorite location for such skullduggery.

The crew of a merchant's barge is desperate, running around and tripping over each other as they try to catch grappling hooks on the jagged rocks that line the top of the falls. They have little success and the few lines that draw taut snap under the weight of the barge and the strength of the water. Terrified screaming can be heard from the cargo hold. The barge jolts as another line snaps and draws closer to the edge of the falls. The screaming increases in volume. The drop of the falls is monstrous and there are towering rocks below, cutting out from the white spray like hungry teeth.

The barge is carrying a tithe from the archdevil Orvrastus, intended for Nessus. The loss of this tribute will bring Orvrastus into bad odor with Asmodeus. A variety of pettifogging bureaucratic obstinacies have resulted in Fierna of Phlegethos becoming irritated by Orvrastus, and she has sent a team of four **erinyes** to haul the barge astray. Instead of travelling into the calm waters of the locks, the erinyes are attempting to drag the vessel over the falls, while the infernal crew back the engines and launch missiles at their flying tormentors.

A dispute between devils may not be of overt interest to mortals such as the characters, but the treasures on board may well be—whether they constitute people to be rescued or valuables to be pilfered. In the chaos of the fight, it might be possible to get on board the ship, loot it, and get off before it goes over the falls.

Alternatively, the characters could assist the vessel's demise, and then hotfoot it below to sieve the River Lethe for spilled treasures. In doing so they must contend with not only the usual denizens of Nessus, but habitual mobs of infernal salvagers intent on acquiring the same riches.

**Treasure.** If the characters are successful, they obtain  $4d4 \times 1000$  pp and one rare magic item from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The characters also find  $2d4$  Soul Coins.

### THE PLAINS OF NESSUS

There is a saying in the Nine Hells, that nobody works harder than Asmodeus. The lord of all the Nine Hells neither sleeps nor rests, and whilst most of his servants devote plenty of time to sating their





IN AN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE NESSUS,  
DESPERATE SOULS HAVE STOLEN AN ARMORED WAGON.

hedonistic pleasures, the greatest of all Fiends constantly bends his mind to the corruption of the planes and the ensnaring of souls.

Even Asmodeus permits himself some entertainment from time to time, though his joys are little different to his duties. At times he enjoys hunting some of the more formidable captive souls in his possession.

Those he torments personally are, of course, lost beyond any hope of retrieval. Not one of them will ever escape his grasp. However, the finest razor edge of torment is that he persuades each one of them that there is a hope of reprieve. For his hunts, he often likes to allow his prey to think they've broken out of the prisons of Malsheem and that they've some sort of chance at freedom.

A large, armored wagon, drawn by a colossal monster, careens wildly over the plains. Overhead, thin figures with feathered wings that still shine with faint celestial light swoop and fall.

In this case, Asmodeus has permitted a gang of desperados to stage a breakout, purely for the joy of hunting them down.

The supposed escapees are a selection of some of the worst the mortal planes have had to offer over several centuries. Their current leader—though they fight among themselves a lot—is an orc warlord named Ormogg (neutral evil, orc **assassin** with 120 hit points), whose hordes despoiled cities and burned forests and flooded dwarfen holds with magma, but they've great sorcerers, wicked priests,

### AN OLD NEMESIS

This might be an opportunity to resurface villains from earlier in the character's adventures before they ventured into the Nine Hells, having them side with Ormogg in this prison break. Alternatively have the prisoners be comprised of an **archmage**, four **priests**, six **gladiators** and eight **veterans**. The creature pulling their wagon is a **miasmorne** (see appendix B) but it isn't truly under their control, at any moment it might turn upon them.

tyrants and murderers among their ranks. As befits prisoners of the Nine Hells, each one is irredeemably evil. They've stolen—been permitted to steal—a vast armored wagon drawn by a monstrous beast, and now they ride it across the barrens of Nessus with a ragged mob of devils hounding their heels. Asmodeus watches on, greatly amused, until he decides to send in his special hunters.

Asmodeus's former captives are well used to the torment of Fiends. His Bright Hounds are something else. The breaking of angels is an especial pleasure to the lords of the Nine Hells. Asmodeus revels in perverting them to his will, twisting them into cruel falcons. He has stables of them, no longer resembling angels but their radiant power might still bite the hand that unhoods them. They represent an additional test of his mastery that makes the whole hunt truly interesting.

The Bright Hounds are comprised of four **devas** and two **planetars** (lawful evil and delivering necrotic damage instead of radiant).

The characters, encountering the wagon on its headlong flight, might get involved in a variety of ways. The wagon's inhabitants, believing they know



THE OASIS FLOATS ABOVE VAST DESOLATION.

a way out of Nessus (which conveniently is at the Oasis of the Lethe, but is also just a lie planted by Asmodeus) may offer them a place aboard in return for fighting off the devils—only to be revealed as monsters almost as bad as the devils outside. The angelic hunters may provoke pity, though there is little the characters can do for them save end them.

## ADVENTURE: THE OASIS OF THE LETHE

Everything within Nessus' bounds is the unchallenged domain of Asmodeus, yet the Oasis exists just slightly beyond. Enough to satisfy the legalistic minds of devils, perhaps. The River Lethe runs through Nessus, heedless of topography, reaches the edge of the wasteland and just keeps going. It flows forever into the red void, eerie, discomfiting, and unexplained. The greatest infernal minds can't account for it, nor any god that has been petitioned for an answer. What lies at the end of the Lethe? Does it empty out into another constellation of planes? The question has ever troubled philosophers and cosmologists. And so, on the banks of the Lethe, a community of scholars and wizards has arisen to study this phenomenon and, through it, the underlying nature of the planes themselves. The Oasis of the Lethe is their haven.

### ADVICE FROM KOH TAM

Koh Tam previously gave the characters an infernal map. Show the players the map of the Oasis of the Lethe in appendix F. They can use this map to decide which points of interest they want to explore. Refer to the “Using an Infernal Map” section of chapter 2.

### MONSTERS OF THE RED VOID

There are certainly threats that come to trouble those at the oasis. Inexplicable monsters sometimes undulate out of the red void—bizarre beasts never seen before and never replicated. Whilst they represent unparalleled opportunities for study, they also devour the occasional student. Desperate fugitive souls and marauding adventurers fleeing Asmodeus's pursuit occasionally find their way to the Oasis and make demands of the arch-magister Elihandrel, though thus far his magical abilities have sufficed to return them to the archdevil's custody in short order. Sometimes conjurations called up by the mages themselves get loose and have a brief career of havoc before they're banished once more. But from the devils of the Nine Hells themselves, there is no threat. They're as obliging as the most unctuous servants.

# THE OASIS OF THE LETHE



## OASIS OF THE LETHE LOCATIONS

Some of the major locations found in the oasis are described below.

### O1: ARRIVAL

The Oasis is a floating island seemingly tethered magically to the endless flow of the River Lethe, a mile out from Nessus' edge. In contrast to the barren plane, it is green and verdant, thronging with life. There are trees meticulously trained together to form living buildings; there are pools of sparkling water that promise refreshment. Animals and birds dwell here, apparently without fear of mortal or devil. Lions and lambs, serpents and deer, all living in harmony.

Within the buildings of the Oasis there are libraries that would make a sage weep, telescopes and scrying pools and all manner of divinatory instruments to look into Nessus and the river and the wider planes. There are debating rooms and places for quiet contemplation. Any mortal who has ever valued the pursuit of knowledge instantly feels that they've come home.

**The Researchers.** Some of the planes' greatest minds can be found here studying the intrinsic nature of the cosmos—both the living who have

made the arduous journey and the souls of the dead. Asmodeus sporadically signs orders releasing the most learned of scholars within his domain from their torments so that they may aid in the research of the Oasis. The prospect of questioning the great minds of elder days is enough to bring some visitors to the community here.

### O2: HOME OF TESKETHMUS

One of the most respected minds of the current roster of scholars at the Oasis is that of Aldri Teskethmus, a living human **archmage** of the Red Wizards, who theorizes that the traditional arrangement of the planes is merely an artifact of mortals' limited ability to comprehend the wider universe.

### O3: HOME OF ORVEDARC

Orvedarc is a **duergar** heretic priest-scholar who died centuries ago and has spent time in the Nine Hells both in torment and in service to devils. Now released, he works on his incomplete research into the nature of divinity and divine magic.

### O4: HOME OF ISITRIX

Isitrix the Termagant is a sahuagin magician-queen (**mummy lord** but she isn't Undead, her creature type is Humanoid) who in life brought wars that encompassed entire oceans, but who now peaceably studies the River Lethe and its curious mechanics.

ELIHANDREL LURES SCHOLARS  
TO THE NINE HELL WITH THE  
PROMISE OF KNOWLEDGE.



## O5: HOME OF ELIHANDREL

It is an inevitable fact that those long-dead souls at the Oasis are mostly of evil persuasion. There are other incautious mortals who fall into Asmodeus's power, but the majority of souls in his domain are those drawn to the Nine Hells by the choices they made in life. However, the arch-magister of the Oasis, Elihandrel (use **empyrean** stats but Elihandrel is Medium sized), keeps order. His word is law, as much as Asmodeus's is within Malsheem. Those who won't abide by his codes of peace and scholarly amity know that a return to the Nine Hells awaits.

Elihandrel himself is an ageless high elf, robed in simple grey. He appears mild, confident in his authority and power, proud of the peaceful community he has built. His soft-spoken word is the end of any disagreements, ensuring that those under his charge never let civilized debate get out of hand. His guests have everything they need—the trees bear endlessly nutritious fruit and there are always books, tools, and scholars' supplies of surpassing quality. He even sanctions research expeditions to other layers of the Nine Hells. At his beck and call are a staff of curiously meek devils, still monstrous of aspect but on their very best behavior. Elihandrel himself reports to Asmodeus on a regular basis, sharing all the knowledge that his faculty uncovers. He denies that he is in any way enabling evil. Learning, he insists, is without alignment. His ultimate goal is to push past the adversarial model of the universe that has trapped all life in constant conflict, law against chaos, good against evil. He genuinely believes that a full understanding of the planes can lead to a perfect future without hardship or sin.

Elihandrel is very eager to spread word of his faculty out into the wider planes. He maintains correspondence with a number of temples, universities, and mage schools on the mortal planes. Whilst the appeal of studying the secrets of the Nine Hells is plain to evil mages and luminaries of all kinds, Elihandrel is very keen to maintain balance by attracting those of other aspects as well. He writes persuasively of the possibility of studying the heart of evil with an eye to countering its influences. One must truly understand a thing before one can defeat it, is his frequent refrain. Scholars visiting the Oasis from the mortal planes find the opportunities of the place overwhelming. There is always something new to learn—and not just miserly scraps but the great truths of the universe hanging just out of reach like fruit ready to be plucked. Conversation with other resident scholars is transcendent, opening the doors of the mind. Very few ever want to leave once they arrive.

## O6: THE LIBRARY

There are four grand hallways in the library. Each so vast and tall that neither their ends nor their ceilings can be seen. Magnificent marble pillars line the hallways, dividing them into sections, and each section stretches off until it is lost in distant shadows. There are upper levels, and these also grow faint as they rise beyond where the eye can see. Elaborate, curling staircases descend underground, suggesting further levels below, and rise upward until they vanish. Every available space, every nook and cranny, every shelf and row, is filled with books. Books, packed tight in neat rows and layered in towering stacks, stretching on, it seems, to eternity.

The knowledge contained within the library is unrivaled. An **amnizu** (see *Monsters of the Multiverse*) is the caretaker of the library, but also fully empowered to modify or annul contracts. Before the characters can ask for his assistance however, they need to prepare their arguments. The legal documents section of the library is where the characters find books that contain the clauses they need to build their case. However, if they want to look around the library before getting to work, there are many other sections of interest at the Library of Infernal Knowledge. Once the characters are ready to start searching for the clauses needed to annul their contracts refer to the “Legal Documents” section.

### INFERNAL KNOWLEDGE

Magic books and other knowledge can be acquired here. But if all these seem too good to be true, that is because they are. Characters should feel uneasy as they begin to acquire items and knowledge; everything has an ephemeral feeling to it.

### PERSONAL GROWTH

All these books work exactly as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*:

- *Manual of Bodily Health*
- *Manual of Gainful Exercise*
- *Manual of Quickness of Action*
- *Tome of Leadership and Influence*
- *Tome of Clear Thought*
- *Tome of Understanding*

### MAGICAL POWER

There are various arcane scrolls and books here.

**Spellbooks.** Several tomes contain descriptions of previously unknown 9th-level spells apparently more powerful than any known spell. With the right components, and a week of study each, these writings can be turned into actual spells that could

be used by wielders of arcane magic. These spells include:

**The Killing Winds.** These winds create a hurricane 5 miles in radius that deals necrotic damage to every living being within.

**The World Weave.** This spell changes the climate in a region permanently.

**Ioulaum's Longevity.** This spell extends the caster's life by snuffing out every life in a 1-mile radius. Each Humanoid life consumed adds a year to the caster's life.

**Volcanic Eruption.** This spell creates a volcanic eruption that lasts for days and devastates a region 100 miles in radius.

**Move Mountain.** This spell allows the caster to cut the top off a mountain and use it as a floating platform upon which a city or fortress might be built.

**Spheresail.** This spell allows the caster to create a spelljammer.

## RELIGION

Several religious tracts focus on topics pertaining to divinity and describe new and powerful 9th-level spells. After a week of study and communion with the source of their divine magic, clerics and druids can learn the following 9th-level spells:

**Dire Winter.** This allows the caster to bring about a winter across an entire continent that lasts for 2d12 years.

**Vengeful Gaze of the Gods.** A powerful single target spell that simply annihilates anything that doesn't possess legendary resistance.

## ITEM CRAFTING

There are various other tomes here too:

### The Tomes of Asgardian Metal Working.

Describes how to forge the *Hammer of Thunderbolts* and various *Belts of Giant Strength* in half the normal time and at half the cost. Additional margin notes suggest ways to make these items even more powerful.

## LEGAL DOCUMENTS

It is here, in the legal section, where the characters find the loopholes needed to annul the contracts. Each hour that is spent searching requires a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to find the legal books that are needed to annul one of the contracts.

Once a character has found a loophole, they can ask the caretaker to annul the contract. The caretaker is only too happy to oblige, commenting on the vigorous and impressive research the character has done to prepare their case. However, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check informs a character that it might be best to wait to trigger an annulment

## CORRUPTION

All of the characters can find the loopholes to their contracts within the library. However, for any characters who are corrupted during their time in the Nine Hells, annulling the contracts isn't the end of their troubles. Use the information in appendix E to guide the characters through their next steps.

until all the loopholes required for all the characters are found.

## BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Read the following only if there are corrupted characters among the group. It should be read aloud when the caretaker reviews the contract of a corrupted character.

The caretaker's enthusiasm for your meticulous research is noticeable. His eyes light up each time he reads yet another cleverly worded part of your defense. After several minutes he is interrupted by an attendant that whispers something in his ear. Whatever is said, it can't be good. The caretaker's shoulders slump and the devil looks sincerely deflated as he addresses you. "All for naught, it was all for naught. The Lord of the Nine Hells saw you coming, he did. I gather it was all a big game for him. I can annul the contract, yes that I can do. But I cannot undo the evil you have done during your stay in the Nine Hells. Your soul ... it is truly lost. Only the Triad can help you now."

The caretaker informs the corrupted characters of their predicament. If they want to improve their own fates, they have one more stop to make: they need to plead their case before the Triad at Asmodeus's palace in Malsheem.

## ESCAPE

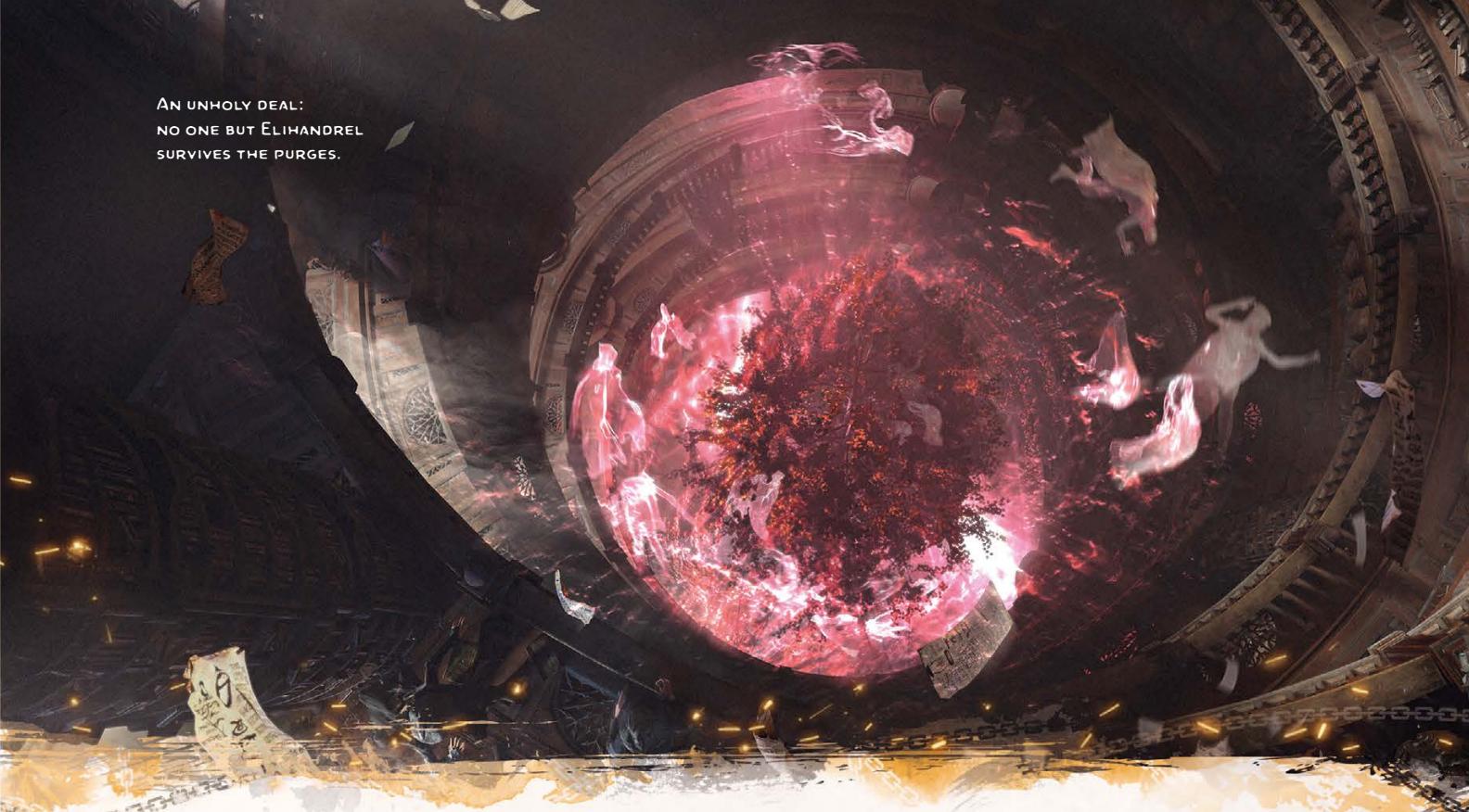
As soon as the caretaker undoes one of the characters' soul contracts, Asmodeus realizes what is happening and initiates a purge (see "The Purges" section for more information). Every minute that the characters remain at the Oasis, they must roll on the Random Encounters at the Oasis table.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS AT THE OASIS

### d6 Encounter

1	Nothing
2	A pit fiend
3	Five horned devils
4	Three maelephant nomads (see appendix B)
5	Two war devils (see appendix B)
6	Nothing

AN UNHOLY DEAL:  
NO ONE BUT ELIHANDREL  
SURVIVES THE PURGES.



Once the characters have escaped the Oasis, they're relatively safe as long as they continue to use the magic that keeps Asmodeus from knowing their location. If some of the characters are corrupted, they must travel to Malsheem and try their luck with the Triad. Otherwise, proceed to the "Leaving the Nine Hells" section at the end of this chapter.

### THE PURGES

There is, of course, a problem with the Oasis. This is Nessus, after all.

The deal that Elihandrel made with Asmodeus is known to almost none. Nobody really gets a chance to talk about it once the archdevil collects. Despite being beyond Nessus' physical borders, the Oasis remains in Asmodeus's domain, and Elihandrel must pay rent for his tenure there. At irregular intervals, carefully calculated by complex infernal clocks, the forces of the Nine Hells visit the Oasis and sweep it bare of everyone save Elihandrel himself. Every scholar and soul is hauled off to Malsheem, to be dissected for all they know and then put to eternal service or suffering as Asmodeus prefers. To study at the Oasis is to tacitly permit the Nine Hells a claim to your soul, and over the centuries the archdevil has drained the best and brightest minds of the planes by indulging Elihandrel's little project. The arch-magister himself considers the deal unfortunate, but a small matter compared to the vast reams of learning that his charges uncover. After all, the libraries remain intact. Nothing, therefore, is truly lost.

Read the following narration aloud when a purge occurs:

There is a powerful crashing sound somewhere in the library, followed by a roar and a piercing scream. The scream is joined by another, and then another, and the roar too gains company until the cold, marble halls echo with a cacophony of gleeful snarls and beastly roars and terrified, pained screaming and wailing shrieks.

### KNOWLEDGE THAT DOESN'T TRAVEL

The learning of the Oasis, that seems infinitely convincing to all the scholars who debate within its leafy halls, doesn't travel. Like a wine of uncertain vintage, the further you carry it from its region of origin, the less satisfying the taste. The cast-iron logic of Elihandrel and his fellows weakens, or else becomes abstruse, impossible to follow. It all sounds very intelligent until someone starts picking at the details, and then it seems to mean nothing at all. Asmodeus's last joke on the Oasis is that almost everything that those serious and high-minded scholars write down is complete nonsense once taken away from the curious influence of the Oasis.

### THE FORGETFUL SCHOLARS

Any knowledge or spells that a character learned at the Oasis is lost within 2d12 hours of leaving. This includes attribute adjustments from books such as the *Manual of Bodily Health*.

itself. Almost everything. The final barb of the archdevil is that every so often something that Elihandrel disseminates to the wider planes turns out to be of incalculable value, a true insight for the ages, perhaps even a weapon that can be turned against the Nine Hells. Those little scraps of true value mean that even those scholars who suspect the true nature of the Oasis still hear the siren call of temptation. After all, are they not the greatest minds of the age? Surely, they will be shrewd enough to outwit the trap the Oasis represents. And Asmodeus smiles to himself as yet another great sage descends to Nessus clutching one of Elihandrel's invitations, because there is no pride sweeter than the folly of the wise.

## ADVENTURE: MALSHEEM

Read the following when the characters approach Malsheem, either on their own or escorted by devils.

Malsheem is a behemoth of a city. It stretches from the bottom of a deep, jagged trench to the heights of Nessus' blood red sky, its towers and flagpoles stabbing like spears through the thick, roiling clouds overhead. In width it is also massive, swollen so greatly that the giant trench in which it lies seems a tight fit. There is a strange and frightening beauty to the place. Even from a distance you can see that the city's walls are uniform and polished, the curling spires of its palaces are precise and elegant and everywhere there is the gleam of precious metal and the light of burning fires.

There are several ways the characters might arrive at the city: captured upon entering Nessus and taken directly to Malsheem, brought here as

captives of the Dukes—some brave characters may even choose to walk into the city themselves. No matter how they get here, they always enter through the city gates of Malsheem. Here they're met by an escort of two **pit fiends** and eight **horned devils** who announce that they're to be guests in the palace of Asmodeus. The characters can go with them or attack. If they attack, the devils are joined by another pit fiend on initiative count 15 of every round. Once defeated, the characters are deposited at the palace for an audience with The Triad.

## THE PALACE

When the characters arrive at the palace, they are confronted by the three archdevils known as the Triad.

## THE TRIAD: RIMMON, ZAGUM, AND BUER

This triumvirate of bloated devils were angels once, who fell alongside their master back at the dawn of all things. Rather than committing to taking arms against the gods or embracing their fate, they attempted to play lawyer with the divine. For an age they sought to escape their fate by exploiting technicalities in what it truly meant to rebel or be counted among the supporters of Asmodeus. Eventually, their legalistic hair-splitting failed, and the gods delivered them to their master, who viewed them with utter contempt. He transformed them from their radiant angelic forms into great floating sacs of flesh and made them his notaries, so they could exercise their lawyerly talents in his service.

The Triad might appear homogenous to mortals at first sight, but they have different natures and predilections. Just as deities of fate often have a

MALSHEEM, THE SEAT OF POWER.



threefold nature, spinning, weaving, and cutting the strands, so the Triad are an equivalent for the contracts of the Nine Hells:

**Rimmon** (see the accompanying stat block), vast with weaving tentacles protruding from his form, drafts the twisted wording of Asmodeus's agreements—festooned with hidden loopholes, and buried subclauses to bind the unwary while denying them the rewards they truly seek. He has a fiendishly creative mind, fond of games, wordplay and inordinately long sentences with clause nested within clause until any sense of meaning eludes the reader entirely.

**Zagum** (see the accompanying stat block), is the interpreter of contracts, who takes the complexities Rimmon creates and uses them against the signatories, arguing the case of the Nine Hells in courts across the planes and ensuring that even the wildest soul can't escape Asmodeus's reach. He is a dry, thoughtful devil with a sense of humor. In those rare occasions where a mortal advances a line of argument that interests or surprises him, he has been known to recruit them to his staff of twisted legal minds—as an alternative to having Asmodeus's eternal enmity. While Rimmon is an introverted wordsmith, Zagum is gregarious, happy to share a joke and a drink with a mortal he is about to shackle to eternal torment.

**Buer** (see the accompanying stat block) is the torment. Her role is to enforce the contracts once Zagum has proved their binding nature beyond any doubt. Her hideous maw can chew over souls eternally and she is utterly without mercy, the



## RIMMON

Medium Fiend (Devil), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 262 (25d8 + 150)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	17 (+3)	22 (+6)	27 (+8)	25 (+7)	16 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Con +12, Int +14, Wis +13

**Skills** Arcana +20, History +20, Investigation +14, Perception +13, Sleight of Hand +9

**Damage Resistances** cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 23

**Languages** Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 20 (25,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +6

**Contractually Obligated.** Rimmon has advantage to hit creatures under an infernal contract and when he hits such creatures he delivers an additional 9 (2d8) damage of a type the

target is most vulnerable to. A creature bound under an infernal contract also makes all saving throws against effects originating from Rimmon with disadvantage.

**Devil's Sight.** Magical darkness doesn't impede Rimmon's darkvision.

**Magic Resistance.** Rimmon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

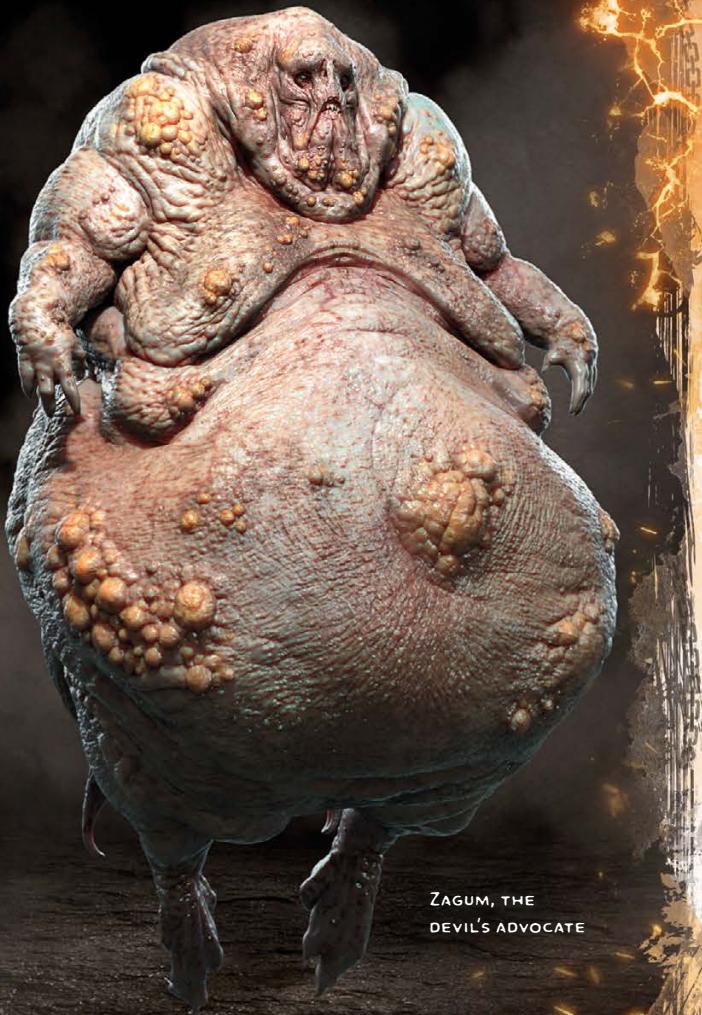
### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Rimmon makes four Sharpened Tongue or Wordplay attacks.

**Sharpened Tongue.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (3d4 + 4) slashing damage.

**Wordplay.** *Ranged Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 35 (6d8 + 8) psychic damage.

**Connected Clauses (1/Day).** Rimmon emits a burst of energy that arcs towards a creature he can see within 150 feet of him. Three bolts then leap from that target to as many as three other targets, each of which must be within 30 feet of the first target. A target must make a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, taking 63 (14d8) damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The damage type inflicted is of a type the first target is most vulnerable to.



ZAGUM, THE  
DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

## ZAGUM

Medium Fiend (Devil), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 255 (30d8 + 120)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)	25 (+7)	27 (+8)

Saving Throws Int +12, Wis +13, Cha +14

Skills Arcana +12, Deception +20, Insight +13, Intimidation +14, Performance +14, Persuasion +20

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +6

**Contractually Obligated.** Zagum has advantage to hit creatures under an infernal contract and when he hits such creatures he delivers an additional 9 (2d8) damage of a type the target is most vulnerable to. A creature bound under an infernal contract also makes all saving throws against effects originating from Zagum with disadvantage.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

In the event the characters come before the Triad after being captured by the Dukes, they may not have gathered all needed phylacteries. It should be clear to them that performing a service for the Triad is their best option. If they agree to do this, they're allowed to leave the palace. They can collect the phylacteries, capture Abigor, and resume negotiations.

inflexible lash of the law. When the Triad are forced to fight, it is Buer who brings the physical threat while the other two rely on magic to support her. Their greatest weapon, in the fray, is that those who are bound by infernal contracts are automatically vulnerable to their powers. In the small print of all their agreements is a clause of implied consent, so that every spell cast by the Triad can evade any attempt at resistance, and any physical defense comes to nothing. When you sign the contracts of the Nine Hells, you really are agreeing to get everything you deserve, whether you want it or not.

## THE CONTRACTS

The Triad acknowledges that the characters have likely come to Malsheem to nullify the contracts that bind either them or one of their loved ones. They have the power to nullify the contracts, but only if the characters give an item of value or provide a service.

**Devil's Sight.** Magical darkness doesn't impede Zagum's darkvision.

**Magic Resistance.** Zagum has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Zagum makes three attacks with Disarming Tongue or Oration.

**Disarming Tongue.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d4 + 3) slashing damage. A target hit by this attack has vulnerability to psychic damage until the start of their next turn.

**Oration.** *Ranged Spell Attack:* +14 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 35 (6d8 + 8) psychic damage.

**Legal Jargon (Recharge 4–6).** Zagum chooses a point he can see within 90 feet of him. All creatures within a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw. Creatures that fail the save are confused for up to 1 minute and must roll a d10 at the start of each of their turns.

On a 1, a creature moves in a random direction then ends their turn. On a 2–6, a creature can't use actions this turn. On a 7–8, a creature must use their action to make a melee attack against a randomly determined creature within their reach that is not a Fiend. On a 9–10, a creature can move and act normally.

A confused creature may repeat the saving throw at the end of its turn, ending the effect on a success.

# BUER

Large Fiend (Devil), Lawful Evil

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)

Hit Points 315 (30d10 + 150)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	22 (+6)	21 (+5)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Str +15, Dex +13, Con +14

**Skills** Arcana +10, Athletics +22, Insight +11, Intimidation +17, Perception +11, Survival +11

**Damage Resistances** cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 21

**Languages** Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 21 (33,000 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +7

**Contractually Obligated.** Buer has advantage to hit creatures under an infernal contract and when she hits such creatures she delivers an additional 9 (2d8) damage of a type the target is most vulnerable to. A creature bound under an infernal contract also makes all saving throws against effects originating from Buer with disadvantage.

**Devil's Sight.** Magical darkness doesn't impede Buer's darkvision.

**Magic Resistance.** Buer has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Buer makes three attacks using her Claw. She can replace two of the attacks with a Cleansing Bite attack.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d10 + 6) slashing damage.

**Cleansing Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d12 + 6) bludgeoning damage, healing Buer for an amount equal to the damage dealt.

**Spectral Reaping (Recharge 6).** Buer focuses her ethereal form, dashing up to 50 feet in a straight line through the ethereal plane. Any creatures in the line must make a DC 21 Constitution saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Buer may reappear at any unoccupied space along the line. For 1 minute after using Spectral Reaping, Buer is empowered by ethereal essence. Her Cleansing Bite attack now deals force damage instead of bludgeoning.

## BONUS ACTIONS

**Defensive Trip (Recharge 5–6).** Buer attempts to slow the actions of a creature she can see within 60 feet of her. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or be slowed until the end of its next turn. A slowed creature's speed is halved, it takes a –2 penalty to AC and Dexterity saving throws, and it can't use its reactions. Regardless of the slowed creature's abilities or magic items, it can't make more than one melee or ranged attack during its turn.



BUER, THE ENFORCER

## REACTIONS

**Soul Exchange.** When Buer is subjected to a spell targeting only her, she can attempt to swap places with a creature she damaged on her last turn. The creature must make a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature and Buer swap positions, and the spell now targets the creature instead of Buer.

## LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Buer can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Buer regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

**Teamwork.** Buer or one other devil within 60 feet of Buer makes a melee weapon attack against a target of Buer's choosing.

**Backdoor Clause.** Buer wreathes energy around a creature she can see within 60 feet of her. Until the end of Buer's next turn, the target is covered in fire or cold energy, Buer's choice. Each time the target is struck with a melee attack, the attacker takes 9 (2d8) fire or cold damage.

**Refresh Souls (Costs 2 Actions).** Buer devours a *Soul Coin*, instantly refreshing one Recharge ability of any devil within 60 feet, including herself.

BAALZEBUL'S  
SLUG FORM**A SERVICE TO BE PROVIDED**

The characters could opt to trick Baalzebul into leaving Maladomini, so that Asmodeus can turn the archdevil back into his slug form. To do this they must capture Baalzebul's trusted lieutenant Abigor. Asmodeus knows exactly where the infernal submersible that Abigor captains can be found. Once they capture the submersible, they must use the aboleth within the infernal submersible to lure Baalzebul into trying to rescue Abigor. When Baalzebul turns into a slug and realizes he has been tricked, he does everything in his power to kill the characters.

**ITEMS OF VALUE**

Alternatively, the characters might offer items of value:

- Two very rare magic items or one legendary magic item are appropriate payments.
- One of the characters' life and soul.

**LEVERAGE**

The characters can avoid the previous options if they've come across knowledge that gives them leverage over Asmodeus:

- If the characters have discovered the plans that Asmodeus gave to the Brothers Morax and Adramalech, then they can use this as leverage.

However, if they have the plans on them, then the Triad reminds them that those can easily be taken off of their dead bodies.

- If they learned the secret of Asmodeus's origins from Abigor's aboleth, that is significant leverage.

**NEGOTIATING**

This final negotiation is influenced by the choices the characters made during their time in the Nine Hells. If they're corrupted their options are severely limited. However, if the characters managed to keep their souls relatively untarnished, they have more options and may be able to outmaneuver the Triad. For each individual character, check the Final Outcomes table in appendix E to see which options are available in the negotiation.

**Setting the Terms.** A corrupted character who came to the Nine Hells to free their loved one can choose to add one of the following clauses to their new contract:

- You sacrifice your loved one to ensure a better position in the Nine Hells for yourself. Your loved one is returned to their torment. However, you're free to live out your life as an agent of Asmodeus. After you die, you arrive in the Nine Hells as a pit fiend. After you sign this contract, you may choose any 2 of the epic boons available in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check can increase this to 3).
- You commit to becoming an agent for Asmodeus for the rest of your life. In exchange, the soul of your loved one is released from their contract. After you die, you arrive in the Nine Hells as a horned devil.

A corrupted character who came to the Nine Hells to free their own soul has limited leverage with which to negotiate. They can try to improve their situation in the afterlife, however.

- You agree to become an agent for Asmodeus. This guarantees you arrive in the Nine Hells as a horned devil upon death. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check upgrades this to a pit fiend.

Uncorrupted characters have a better position in these negotiations and can easily convince the Triad to release their loved ones or themselves from their bonds with this new contract.

**There is Always a Catch.** Once terms have been agreed upon, the Triad writes up the contract. However, there are some obvious loopholes that could be exploited by Asmodeus. There are three loopholes in total, one written by each of the Triad. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the first loophole and alerts the characters that they're being tricked, lowering the DC for finding the second and third loophole to

15. Once discovered, the characters can succeed on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check to have the loophole removed—or they can threaten violence. If they're violent, then whoever they've threatened attacks. If it wasn't Buer that they threatened, she helps in the attack. The other(s) stand back and watch. At half hit points the hostile devil accepts defeat and removes the loophole.

Once the contract is finished, the characters are told to take it to Asmodeus for his signature.

## AUDIENCE WITH ASMODEUS

An audience with **Asmodeus** (see appendix A) is something that very few mortals have ever had. Asmodeus doesn't want to meet the characters just to sign their contract. He could have let the Triad handle that. He always has another angle to push, and the characters should be on their guard during what turns out to be his final temptation.

If any of the characters managed to free their loved ones without damning themselves in the process, Asmodeus wants to convince them to serve him one last time. Asmodeus butters up the characters by saying that he has witnessed their power, tenacity and ingenuity and has been greatly impressed. He tells the characters that he has an offer.

Any of the characters can agree to sign a contract that stipulates that their soul goes to the Nine Hells

when they die. However, they will arrive in the Nine Hells as horned devils. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check can make it so that they arrive in the Nine Hells as pit fiends instead. In exchange for their souls Asmodeus will grant them power undreamed of by most mortals. They can choose any 2 of the epic boons available in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check increases this to 3).

While he is disappointed if none of them accept his offer, he won't harm the characters. Instead, he teleports them back to Koh Tam's barge. See the next section.

## LEAVING THE NINE HELLs

At this point the characters may have been teleported back to Koh Tam's barge by Asmodeus, or they may be fleeing the Oasis. Regardless, once they reach the barge, your adventure is almost complete. It may be as simple as using the barge's plane shift capability to rise ever upwards from the lower layers to the higher. Or the characters may have unresolved grudges or debts to repay. Regardless, the characters have, in whole or part, bested the archdevil Asmodeus himself.

That is both an accomplishment and a signal to higher powers that the characters themselves may be a growing threat ...

ASMODEUS TOWERS OVER HIS GUESTS.



## APPENDIX A

# Lords of the Nine



HIS APPENDIX INTRODUCES THE LORDS OF the Nine Hells in more detail. These ancient and powerful archdevils represent some of the greatest evils in existence. Their depravity knows no bounds.

## ARCHDEVIL LAIR ACTIONS

Though each archdevil is unique and harnesses a range of capabilities in which they alone are specialized, they also share some common features, especially as they pertain to defending their lairs. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), an archdevil can take a lair action to trigger the unique lair action described on their statistic block. They may instead select an action from the following, Archdevil Lair Action list. Regardless of the type of lair action selected, archdevils can't take the same lair action two rounds in a row.

FLYING FORTRESSES  
PATROL AVERNUS.



### ARCHDEVIL LAIR ACTION LIST

**Attack.** The archdevil uses one of their available melee or ranged attacks against a single foe.

**Cast a Spell.** The archdevil uses their Spellcasting feature to cast an available spell. If the spell normally requires concentration, it lasts for the full duration instead.

**Deceitful Whispers.** The archdevil whispers to a creature they can see within 30 feet. The target must make a DC 22 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target has the charmed condition until the start of their next turn and must use their reaction immediately to make an attack against one of the archdevil's enemies, chosen by the archdevil.

**Fiendish Fortitude.** The archdevil recharges one of their expended abilities.

**Frenzy.** The archdevil casts *Haste* on themself. The effect ends at initiative count 20 of the next round.

**Summon Underlings.** The archdevil summons allied devils. The devils summoned depends on the archdevil using this feature. The summoned devils appear in unoccupied spaces which the archdevil can see. The Summoned Underlings table shows which devils each archdevil can summon.

**Teleport.** The archdevil teleports themself to an area they can see within 120 feet.

**Trap.** The archdevil casts the *Hold Monster* spell.

### SUMMONED UNDERLINGS

Archdevil	Underlings Summoned
Asmodeus	Any devil, including another archdevil
Baazebul	1d6 allied <b>horned devils</b> , 1d4 allied <b>ice devils</b> , or 1 allied <b>pit fiend</b>
Bel	1d6 <b>bearded devils</b>
Belial	1d2 <b>bone devils</b>
Dispater	1 <b>pit fiend</b>
Fierna	1d6 <b>bearded devils</b>
Glasya	1d2 <b>erinyes</b>
Leviestus	1 <b>pit fiend</b>
Mammon	1d2 <b>bone devils</b>
Mephistopheles	1d4 <b>ice devils</b>
Zariel	1d6 <b>bearded devils</b>

