

Arcanis

THE WORLD OF
SHATTERED EMPIRES™

Legacy of Damnation



Brian Schoner





Legacy of Damnation

by Brian Schoner

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Contents

Prologue – Living Legacy3

Introduction.....6

Chapter 1 – Tieflings, Half-Fiends, and Other Nasty Folk.....7

Fiends.....8
 Demons8
 Devils8
 Non-Fiendish “Parents”8
 Efreeti9
 Night Hags9
 Cambions (Half-Fiends).....9
 Tieflings (Planetouched)10
 Dark-kin10
 The Pull of the Taint11
 Strengthening the Taint.....12
 The Tainted and Character Classes12
 Barbarian13
 Bard.....13
 Cleric.....13
 Druid.....13
 Fighter.....13
 Holy Champion / Paladin14
 Monk.....14
 Ranger14
 Rogue15
 Sorcerer15
 Wizard.....15
 Arcanis Glossary15
 Dark-kin on Onara16
 Other Tainted in Arcanis.....20

Chapter 2 – The Sealed Lands.....20

The Sealed Lands and the History of Arcanis.....22
 Using the Sealed Lands in Other Settings23
 Why Don’t the Infernals Control Everything?23
 The History of the Sealed Lands24
 In the Earliest Days.....24
 The Shadowed Age.....24
 The Rise and Fall of the Auxunite Empire25
 The Time of Terror27
 The Sealing.....30
 The Years of Chaos34
 Centuries of Quiet War.....34
 Geography of the Sealed Lands.....36
 Climate and Weather.....36
 The Wall of the Gods.....36
 The Blackwood.....36

The Western Cliffs37
 The Northern Hills37
 The Central Plain.....37
 The Sea of Tears37
 The Cold Fens37
 Peoples of the Sealed Lands38
 The Lordship of Iron38
 The Riders44
 Tarmalen46
 The Thorn Hills.....47
 Bastion.....50
 The Legion of Unyielding Courage54
 Pleasance57
 The Haina Empire58
 The Frost Giants.....62
 Those Who Lurk64
 The Forgotten Villages.....65

Chapter 3 – New Rules.....116

Psonics and Magic in the Sealed Lands67
 Death in the Sealed Lands68
 Infernals in Arcanis.....68
 Dark-Kin.....70
 Dark-Kin Bloodlines71
 The val’Vasik.....74
 Infernal Heritage.....75
 Infernal Warrior.....76
 Infernal Arcanist76
 Infernal Stalker78
 New Feats.....79
 The Order of the Ivory Bow.....85
 New Prestige Classes.....89
 Black Silk Wearer89
 Descendant91
 Hellrider94
 Infernal Harmonist96
 Infernal Berserker98
 Scourge.....99
 Sentinel101
 Summoner.....102
 Taint Hunter.....104
 Warlock.....105
 Life Quests.....107
 New Domains and Magic.....114
 New Spells.....114
 New Magic Items.....116
 New Creatures.....120

Open Game License.....127

Prologue

Living Legacy



I never thought I would cry because of a book. For that matter, I never thought I would cry again; I had wept so much and so often during my miserable, lonely childhood that I honestly didn't think I had any tears left. But that one brief sentence in a small village's Book of Days was like a confirmation that my life was something more than a meaningless exercise in pain and hatred, and so I wept. Then I blinked the tears from my eyes and read it again, just to make sure.

14 Vires 716 I.C.: Borne, to Lira Weaver, a Demon Chylde, Name and Father unknowne.

My first clear memory is of being beaten by my father.

He did that a lot during my childhood, to myself and my mother, but I remember this one specific time because it happened outside. I rarely got to go outside at all, and even when I did, I was usually dragged back into the house before the punishment started. This time, whatever I had done – it may just have been the fact that I was outside at all – had so enraged my father that he just began pummeling me right there in the yard, at the base of the old oak tree that I vaguely remember trying to climb. I had my eyes closed most of the time; the beatings didn't really hurt, but I knew even then that letting my father know that would be a bad idea. But I remember opening my eyes just a little, and seeing my mother watch from the doorway. She was crying, and I remember wondering at the time if she was crying for herself or for me, because as sure as sunrise, a beating for me meant one for her as well.

I still don't know which it was.

The old village priest had been uncomfortable letting me into the church archives to begin with, and seeing me start to weep didn't reassure him at all. I could tell by his frown that he was trying to work up the courage to ask me to leave, so I quickly read the rest of the entry:

Goodwife Delayne, who had helped with the Deliverye, told Father Ranwycke that the Chylde's Skyn was as black as Nyght and as scaled as a Serpent's, and said also that it had bitten her in the Hande as she pulled the Infant from the Wombe. After blessynge the Wounde in the name of Beltyne, Father Ranwycke immediately gathered several stoute and devoute Menne of the Vyllage and led them to the House of Lira Weaver, that he might determynne the Nature of her Synne and have the Chylde destroyed ere it do further Evylle. By the Tyme they arrived, Mother and Chylde had fled into the Nyght. The Menne searched for the whole of the Nyght, but the Synners were never founde. Father

Ranwycke then led the Vyllage in Prayer for the Soule of the Mother and for the safety of those whom her monstrous Offsprynge might harme.

"Just a moment," I said to the priest. "I need to find one more thing." He grimaced, and looked towards the door as though wondering if he could get out before I pounced on him and tore him to shreds. But he didn't stop me, which was the important part, and I flipped back through the Book of Days until I found what I was looking for, several months earlier.

28 Numen 715 I.C.: A straynge Traveler came to the Vyllage near Sundowne, travelling on Foote and wearing a heavy hooded Cloake that he would not remove. He did not stop at the Churche to offer Prayer, but went straightaway to the Inne, where he asked for Lodging for the Nyght. Boros the Innkepe saide that no Manne should stay the Nyght in his Inne unless he revealed his Name, his Home and his Fayce. The Straynger called himself Arryn, and claymed to have come from the Towne of Nocke, but he would not pull downe his Hooede, saying that a Manne with enough Sylver should be able to keep his Fayce to himselfe. Boros then spat in the Straynger's Ayle, saying that he could keep his Fayce to himselfe somewhere other than his Inne. The Straynger growled at that like an angry Dogge, but paid for his Ayle and lefte to seek a Home willing to give him Shelter for the Nyght. Lira Weaver took Pitye on him and said he could sleepe on her Floore. He did this, and lefte the following Mornynge causing no further Trouble.

"Thank you," I told the priest, and flipped the book closed. "One more question, and I'll be on my way." I could see his hands shaking; I think he thought that I was going to belch fire on him right there, or something. But all I did was ask him the way to the "Towne of Nocke."

My mother tried to hide it from me, but it was obvious from an early age that I was different. I couldn't tell what it was about my face that made her look sad, and my father look disgusted, every time they looked at it, but the knobby gray growths on the skin of my arms and legs were obvious enough. One day when I was very young, I was peeking out from behind the curtains – I wasn't allowed outside, even at that age – when I saw a man coming up the dirt road past our cottage. I crouched down below the windowsill, because no one else was ever supposed to see me; the beating that I got after a passing tinker caught a glimpse of me made that clear enough.

But I still peeked out over the sill, and as he got closer, I could see that his face and hands were covered with rough lumps of skin that looked a lot like those on my arms. I got excited – was this some long-lost relative, someone coming to take me away to see the world? In my fascination, I began poking my head farther and farther up, until a rapid and unexpected shove from my mother got me out of sight.

"What are you doing?" she asked, in that nervous tone she used whenever I was doing something I shouldn't.

"Did you see him?" I said. "He looks like me."

My mother's eyes widened, and she looked out the window at the stranger. I could hear my father yelling at him to get off our property. She looked out at the stranger for a moment, and then looked sadly down at me. "Oh, darling, he's not like you. He's sick. He has a disease that makes him look like that, he's not...he's not like you at all."

I was genuinely scared at that point. My father came in muttering about "damned lepers," but I barely heard him. "Am I sick?" I asked my mother.

"No," she said, "you're not sick, dearest."

"Am I going to die?"

She bit her lip, then said, "Everybody is going to die some day, sweetling, but that's not going to happen to you for a long, long time yet."

But my father just looked at me, and I could almost hear him thinking, *that's what she thinks.*

Nocke – or Nock, as its inhabitants spelled it now, those few of them who could read – was more of a village than a town these days. It was on the eastern edge of Sylvania, nestled in a small notch in the Corelathian Mountains. Judging from a prominently displayed map in the first tavern I came to, the town founders thought the mountain range looked like an arrow, and the settlement was built right where the notch for the imaginary bowstring would be...hence the name. Terribly quaint, I'm sure, but not too relevant to my purpose for being there.

"So," the barkeep said to me, "you want to find out about some fellow that lived here three hundred years ago."

"That's right," I said, pleased that he had finally managed to understand at least that much of my inquiry.

"And all you know is his name?"

"His name, and the fact that he probably looked a little unusual."

"Ugly as sin, you mean," he said. "Like you." He barked a laugh, and a few of the patrons echoed him.

I could feel my hands clench into fists below the bar, out of his sight. Such a little, off-handed remark he had made, the same sort of banter he probably exchanged with his customers a dozen times a night. And yet, directed at me, it made me want to reach over the bar and grab his fat, sweaty head by the ears and slam it into the bar over and over and over...

Instead, I nodded, and forced a smile. "Maybe even uglier."

He laughed again at that, and nodded to me as though respecting my ability to laugh at myself. I felt oddly pleased, as though I had passed a test of some sort, and then immediately felt angry at myself for caring what this fat lummoX thought of me.

"So who might know about something like that?" I asked, trying to keep myself under control.

The barkeep scratched at his greasy chin and thought, a skill he obviously hadn't practiced much. One of the patrons came to his rescue, however, suggesting that I talk to "Old Pate in the Town Hall" who would presumably have access to whatever records the village still

had. I thanked him, paid for my drink, and left, still smiling.

Luckily for the village dogs, none of them came near me on my way to the Town Hall. I was really in the mood to kick something. Hard.

I woke up as my father lurched through the door, knocking over a chair and almost falling as he tried to navigate the room in the darkness. He had been drinking, of course, and would likely have tripped over something even if it hadn't been the middle of the night. But the chair gave him something specific to be angry at. Not that it would end there. It never did.

"Woman!" he slurred, fumbling for the chair on the floor. I could see him clearly despite the darkness, something I had never told anyone about. It had taken me a while to realize that my parents couldn't see at night unless there was a fire or a candle or something. I assumed it was just something else that was wrong with me, and never mentioned it.

"Stupid woman!" he yelled again, louder this time. My mother's eyes were open; I could see them glistening with unshed tears, in the dark of their bed. She was awake, but pretending not to be, hoping that perhaps that would spare her another beating. Sometimes it worked, but not often.

"Leave a damn chair in the middle of the damn floor, a man could break his neck." *If only you would*, I thought, and was immediately ashamed of myself for thinking it. He had finally found the chair and tried to lift it back into place, but he was still standing on the back of it, and all he managed to do when he pulled upwards was break off a foot-long length of one of the legs. I saw my mother flinch when she heard the wood break; I probably flinched, too.

"I'll show you, you stupid clumsy fool wench!" Hefting the length of chair leg, he stumbled over towards the bed. "Where are you, stupid woman?" He bumped into the bed and almost fell over, but put a hand down to steady himself. "You need to learn about leaving chairs out." He felt around for a moment and touched her leg. "There you are," he said, with a sort of cruel pleasure in his voice. He raised the chair leg unsteadily over his head. She closed her eyes; she couldn't see what he was doing, but she knew what came next. She had been through this before.

The blow never landed; I had padded across the floor, silently coming up behind him, and I locked my hand around his wrist just as he was about to strike. "Whuh?" he said, turning towards me with a confused slowness. I could smell sour ale on his breath, and as I looked down at him, I realized for the first time that I was bigger than he was.

"No more," I said. "No more hitting her, and no more hitting me. Ever."

He squinted at me in the darkness, as the realization of who I was slowly penetrated his drink-fogged brain. "Boy?" he said, before grinning a stupid drunken grin at me. "You want another beating, is that it, boy? You're never to touch me, you know that. But you never learned, did you? You never learned a damned thing. I should have snapped your ugly neck when you first took

a breath, you ugly piece of dung. But she said you were mine, and like a fool I believed her. As though my seed would ever make something as hideous as you." He was sounding less drunk now, and more like the cold angry man I had grown up hating and fearing. "Well, I've had enough of you, boy. You let go my arm *right now*, you hear, or I'll kill you like I should have done years ago."

"Try it," I said, and let his arm go.

He stared at me – or towards me, at least – for a long time, the chair leg still clutched tightly in his hand. If he had been sober, he might have realized that I was no longer afraid of him, but he wasn't. So when I said, "Put it down and go to sleep," he sneered and swung it down on my head. It hurt – he was still a strong man, my father – but it didn't knock me out. And that was more or less the last thing I remember until the next morning, when I buried him in the backyard and walked off into the world, leaving my mother alone.

Old Pate at the Town Hall was very old indeed, but he was nowhere near old enough to remember the time period I was interested in. He did have a very detailed set of Books of Days, though, dating back to the founding of the town. "We would have lost them all in the Heretic War – there was a battle here, you know, and the old Town Hall was burnt to the ground – but the Master of Records had them put in an iron box and buried before the armies got here, and the books never even got singed." He cackled at that, as pleased as if he had come up with the idea himself. I smiled, and nodded, and eventually he got around to fetching the books I needed.

Arryn of Nocke, it turned out, was the son of one Doratheia, an old "wise woman" who had lived in a cave outside the town for decades. No one had ever known her to have a husband or a lover, but she turned up with a child one day just the same. Naturally, the rumors said that she had been consorting with demons, and those few townfolk who had gotten a good look at the child certainly thought he looked the part. Still, no one seems to have troubled Doratheia or young Arryn, and while the records hinted that the boy might have grown up surprisingly quickly, there was nothing definitive written in the histories.

About fifteen years after Arryn was born, Doratheia died; the book didn't record exactly how, but there didn't seem to be any signs of foul play. Arryn stayed in her cave for a few years, but eventually moved on; at least, that was the assumption, since the cave was simply empty one day and there was no sign of him. I thought about adding a note in the margins about the village and the inn and the night spent with Lira Weaver, but I just closed the book instead. Who else would ever care about one more wandering freak from three hundred years ago?

"Dorothea," Old Pate mumbled as I gave the book back to him. "She was quite a legend in these parts, you know. Called her a witch, they did." He looked at me sharply, blue eyes piercing out from under his thick white brows. "Her cave is still out there, you know, if anyone had a mind to look at it."

After leaving home, I wandered aimlessly for a while, surviving on the food I had brought with me plus whatever I managed to steal from sleeping travelers or roadside inns. Eventually I was caught; I was opening up a traveler's pack in search of food when it began screaming, "STOP! THIEF!" over and over again. The owner woke up and said a few words, and the campsite was full of light; then he said a few more words, and gestured at me, and I couldn't move.

He was a wizard, as it happened, and after I finally convinced him that I was just looking for food, he took pity on me and decided not to turn me into whatever he was originally going to turn me into. He fed me at his campsite, and was about to let me go in the morning when he squinted at me and said, "I think you may be teachable. Do you want to learn magic?"

I had no idea what I wanted, but I knew that he had food and could do things that I didn't know how to do, so I said yes. So he took me back to his safe house, and taught me magic, and letters, and many other things beside. He also told me about how people like me came to be, and that the man I had called my father probably really *was* my father, as much as he would have despised that thought. And he told me why it was important to find out what I was and where I had come from, and suggested some places where I might start to look for that history.

He was also the first one who ever showed me what I looked like in a mirror, and I still haven't forgiven him for that.

I had to roll a large and impressive rock away from the entrance to Dorathea's cave; obviously Arryn, or someone who had been here after him, didn't want the old woman's place disturbed. It was dusty, of course, and full of unrecognizable old things on shelves that rotted away at a touch. But the rusty iron box beneath the deteriorating bed was still intact, and the books inside were fragile but readable.

I flipped through the books, scanning page after page of incantations and descriptions and summoning circles, until I found the one I wanted. The creature depicted was dark, and cruelly handsome despite the knobby lumps of flesh studding its arms and legs. But the real giveaway was the scrawled notation in the margin, a brief few sentences in the Infernal tongue describing what she had paid the devil with in exchange for the child she had always wanted.

I found the summoning circle underneath a rug in the kitchen, and after redrawing a few lines that had faded over the centuries, decided that it was still serviceable. I sat cross-legged on the floor at the edge of the circle, put the book down in front of me, and began to summon Arryn's father, my oldest and strangest ancestor. He was a devil, I knew that; but I also knew that I needed to see who and what he was, and to see if he had any idea that his damned lineage was still going strong. And I figured that however evil he might have been, there was no way he could be any worse than the human father who had raised me.

As it turned out, I was wrong.

Introduction

Legacy of Damnation is a multi-purpose sourcebook, but all of its content revolves around those mortal beings that have been tainted – or, some of them might say, blessed – with the blood of demons, devils or other evil beings from the nether planes. They may be called tieflings, cambions, dark-kin, half-fiends, or "them unnatural folk what live down by the swamplands," but whatever their names, they are something more than human...and perhaps something less, as well. For simplicity's sake, this book will refer to such beings collectively as the Tainted.

The first part of *Legacy of Damnation* deals with the Tainted themselves – what they are, and how they relate to each other and to the two worlds they bestride. The second, much larger section provides setting information for Arcanis: the World of Shattered Empires and details the Sealed Lands. This area is located on the continent of Onara. The remainder of the book is occupied by a selection of new OGL d20 resources – creatures, spells, magic items, prestige classes and more – that revolve around the Tainted and their Infernal ancestors.

As always, everything in this book is a suggestion, no more. The whole point of role-playing games is for you and your fellow gamers to tell *your* stories *your* way; our intent is simply to provide you with additional tools and ideas to help you along the road. Don't be afraid to change, ignore or contradict anything written here – after all, the Tainted have always defied easy categorization.

Happy gaming – and if the letters in *Legacy of Damnation* ever seem to squirm at the edges of your vision, it might be best to put the book down and walk away for a little while. Just to be safe.

About the Author

Brian Schoner is a computer programmer by day, a freelance writer by night, and a bass guitarist on weekends. He lives just outside Atlanta, Georgia with his lovely fiancée, Gail (without whom this book would never have gotten finished), and their two cats (without whom this book would have gotten finished a good deal faster). Special thanks must also go to Henry Lopez, for his continuing trust and support, and to Team Get 'Em for all of their patient help. Thanks, all!

Chapter One

TIEFLINGS, HALF-FIENDS, AND OTHER NASTY FOLK

Lotharius had checked every line of the summoning circle three times; each stroke of each of the thirty-nine runes inlaid into the floor of his workshop with blessed silver matched the corresponding symbol diagrammed in the Black Pages of Pazap. He had gone over the incantation dozens of times, practicing the tongue-twisting pronunciation of the Infernal chant until he could recite it in his sleep. The tools were ready: the silver knife, the ground cloves, and the three white doves, which he had raised from eggs himself and fed only poisonous spiders. I will never be more ready than I am now, he thought to himself. Placing the Black Pages on his lectern, he opened the book to the proper page, took a deep breath, and began summoning a prince among devils.

The chant took the better part of an hour, and required every bit of his concentration. The letters of the Pages seemed to twist at the edges of his vision, blurred as it was by sweat...and, towards the end, blood. He could spare no glance for the summoning circle, but the growing darkness on that side of the room and the mounting stench of sulfur told him that something, at least, was responding to his call. When he uttered the last syllable, spitting it out as though he could no longer stand to have it in his mouth, his ears popped suddenly as the presence in the circle abruptly became manifest.

"Who dares call me like a slave to service?" it said, and its voice was like bones being ground.

The hardest part was over, though there was no doubt that the devil was still a cunning and dangerous foe. Lotharius allowed himself a moment's relieved exhalation of breath before turning to face it.

Xabrac the Reaver towered over the wizard. Its skin was the color of old bones and had hundreds of iron nails protruding outward through it, their points tipped with a reddish-brown substance that might have been rust, but wasn't. Its wings, tipped with spikes the size of Lotharius' head, were wrapped around the devil's body like a scaly cloak. From time to time, something moved under them. Lotharius knew better than to look into its eyes directly, but their baleful yellow glow bathed the entire workroom in sallow light. It was huge and strong and deadly and old beyond his imagining...but it was also trapped in his circle, so he gathered his courage and spoke.



"I call, and you will serve like a slave, or be bound forever where you stand. By the power of my voice and the ancient rituals of the wise, I call you and bind you and command you."

"And what ancient rituals would those be?" The devil's voice was confident, despite its confinement.

"That is no concern of yours, Xabrac," the wizard snapped. "They were strong enough to bring you and powerful enough to bind you, and that is all you need know."

The devil nodded, almost casually, as it looked around the workshop. "Ah," it said, as those burning yellow eyes settled upon the lectern. "The Black Pages. A very potent tome...I know it well."

"You have been bound by it

before, then?" Lotharius felt an almost palpable sense of relief. "You know the extent of the power I wield over you because of it?"

"No...I wrote it," Xabrac said, as it stepped casually out of the circle.

There are many names for the various types of Tainted, and it's often unclear just what any given name signifies. Our first step will be to define the various types of Tainted beings, and get a rough idea of just how tainted they are. We'll begin with the most strongly Infernal creatures, and work our way down.

Fiends

Deveron grunted with exertion as his axe took off another goblin's head. The battle had been long, and bloody, and many good men lay dead or dying on the Plains of Metath. It had been a desperate struggle, but as numerous as the armies of the Shadow Lord were, the forces of Light still held. And as long as they held, there was hope.

But then Deveron smelled the brimstone, and saw a fiery whip rip the head from the general's standard-bearer, and felt the palpable waves of evil rolling across the battlefield like a rushing tide. The Shadow Lord had summoned forth the Demon of the Chasm, and there was no hope after all.

The fiends – demons, devils, daemons, and other assorted evil outsiders – are the progenitors, the originators of the sinister blood that gives the Tainted their name. While a detailed analysis of these entities is outside the scope of this book, it's important to realize what impact the different types of fiends might have on their partly-mortal descendants.

The process by which fiends reproduce is alien to human understanding. For our purposes, it is sufficient to know that while their biology is far different from our own, fiends are capable of cross-breeding with humans – *when they wish to*. No matter how fertile the mortal involved may be, if the fiend does not wish there to be offspring, there will be none. On the other hand, if the fiend is intent on creating a child, they can do so regardless of the mortal's condition. The mortal may be old, young, barren, or even sterile, but the fiendish seed will implant itself and grow to fruition regardless. This applies even if the mortal is male and the fiend female; the fiend can always draw forth enough energy from its mate to create a child if desired.¹

While on the topic, it is important to note that fiends, as a rule, do not have genders as mortals understand them. Even the dreaded succubus can take on a male shape as readily as a female one. While we may refer to a fiend as the "mother" or "father" of a Tainted offspring, this does not mean that the fiend is locked into a specific gender. Indeed, a single fiend could be the "mother" of one halfbreed and the "father" of another! The assignment of these roles is simply based on whether the fiend carries the child within its own body, making it the "mother," or leaves that duty to the mortal partner.

Demons

Demons are chaotic in the extreme: greedy, hateful, violent, perverse and unpredictable – except insofar as whatever they're up to will invariably be unpleasant. Demons might spawn a half-breed child for any reason, or for no good reason at all. Perhaps the demon simply wanted to satisfy its lusts, and a mortal was the closest available being with which to do so; inflicting a child on the hapless mortal would simply be a final, cruel afterthought. In such a situation, the demon would probably not care about the existence of its child, or even its survival. Another situation might involve the demon's attempts to spread evil and terror for its own amusement, in which case it might return on a regular basis to "teach" its child and encourage it to perpetuate the cycle of evil. Or the demon might have something very specific in mind, perhaps using the unnatural child as a cruel punishment inflicted upon a mortal who has somehow offended or wronged the demon.

In most cases, the mortal parent of a demon's child is female, while the demonic parent takes the male role. Demons are unlikely to want the child for its own sake, and if a half-breed child were to be born to a female demon, it would probably not survive to see its first birthday.

Devils

Devils' lawful tendencies make them much more prone to careful planning than demons are. If a devil has spawned a halfbreed, it is probably for a specific reason. Like demons, devils may create a child just to punish a mortal. However, they have also been known to sire children as part of a long-term plan for some greater evil – and for creatures that never age, "long-term" can mean a very long time indeed. If clerics and paladins belonging to a particular mortal family have plagued a certain devil, it might spawn a Tainted "family" of its own and nurture it for generations, waiting for an offspring that seems sufficiently mortal to marry into the family of its enemies and so bring about its ruin. Or perhaps the devil wished to seize a lawful mortal kingdom for its own ends; in female form, it could dally with the king, bear a Tainted child and then present it as the rightful heir to the throne.

Depending on their specific intentions, devils are equally likely to play the male or female role when breeding with mortals. If the devil wishes to maintain more control over the child, it will probably take the female role and raise the child itself, at least initially. Otherwise, it may simply "set things in motion" in the male role, though devils are far more likely than demons to keep a close eye on their offspring as the years – and generations – go by.

Non-Fiendish "Parents"

Demons and devils are by far the most common ancestors of the Tainted, but they are not the only ones. Several other types of evil outsiders are capable of creating half-

¹ Depending on the nature of your campaign, this may or may not always be true. The fiend might need to overcome the mortal's Spell Resistance to reproduce, meaning that most mortals have no hope of resisting.

On the other hand, perhaps a simple Fortitude or Will saving throw is enough to thwart the fiend's desires.

Spells – perhaps something as simple as a *bless* or *protection from evil*, or as complex as an enchantment designed for this specific purpose – might enable a mortal to lay with a fiend without risking pregnancy. However, unless such crossbreeding is common in your campaign, we suggest that you leave this as a mystery, and let the needs of the story dictate whether any such methods work.

mortal offspring, though few do. Note that unlike demons and devils, these beings have humanlike genders, and their reproductive processes are generally similar to those of humans.

Efreeti

These cruel fire genies rarely have the inclination to breed with humans, since they consider themselves far superior to humanity in every respect. On rare occasions, however, they have been known to interbreed with fire giants. The resulting Tainted offspring are similar in most regards to those produced in a human-fiend crossbreeding...just much, *much* larger.

Night Hags

As ugly as a succubus is beautiful, a night hag is not the sort of partner that any man would choose for his bed. However, night hags have been known to use their *polymorph* abilities to hide their hideousness in order to take human male lovers (who usually die horribly once the night hag has no further use for them). The children of these vile couplings are almost always female – the next generation of night hags. Male children are born only rarely, and are almost always killed immediately by their mother. Once in a great while, one somehow survives; these creatures tend to be hideously ugly, but very resilient, examples of the Tainted.

Cambions (Half-Fiends)

Darian paced back and forth in front of his cottage. Karith's pregnancy had been difficult, and the child was coming much too soon, but the damnable midwife absolutely refused to let him in the room until it was over, one way or the other. One way or the other, he thought to himself. By all the gods, let Karith live...we can make another baby, but don't let her die like this.

Then a scream came from inside the cottage. There had been screams before, and plenty of them, but this one was different. A loud thud came then, as of someone falling over, and he was already moving towards the door when another loud shriek came and was abruptly choked off. Flinging the door wide, he stopped and stared, unable to move. The midwife's body, sprawled in an unnatural position at the foot of the bed, lay in a spreading pool of blood...a pool which the tiny, red-skinned newborn was delicately lapping up with a long, forked tongue.

"Darian," he heard his wife say weakly. She was sprawled in the bed, covered with sweat and blood, and her eyes were glazed with pain and exhaustion. "Is the baby all right?"

Half-fiends are the first generation of the Tainted, born directly from a union between a mortal and an evil outsider. The term "half-fiend" can be applied to any such creature, humanoid or otherwise; humanoid half-fiends are generally known as cambions, and it is to these creatures that we direct most of our attention. A cambion's Infernal blood gives it a considerably longer lifespan than their mortal relatives, though few cambions survive long enough to die of old age.

Cambions whose Infernal parent is "female" are generally brought back to whatever plane their "mother" calls home, where their upbringing depends on what purpose their "mother" has in mind for them. Some are treated like any other fiend, though they are often weaker (though sometimes considerably smarter) than their "brothers." Others are trained from birth to fulfill a role in some devilish plot, which often leaves them nearly devoid of any personality beyond that which their task requires of them. In any case, these cambions are almost certain to be as evil and cruel as their fiendish parents.

Those cambions born to a mortal mother have an even more difficult road awaiting them. Most cambions develop at an extraordinarily fast rate compared to mortal children, even before they are born. Some may be born as soon as a month after their conception, and some stories tell of offspring of particularly powerful fiends which were conceived, grew to term, and were born in a single night! This characterizes the abnormal nature of these offspring, but also serves to ensure the survival of the Tainted one; few mortal women will bring a Tainted child to term willingly, and when they realize they are pregnant, many will go to extraordinary lengths to kill the child – or even themselves – before it is born. The actual birth of a cambion is an even more bloody and violent process than a normal childbirth; few mortal women survive the occasion, and those who do are usually barren – and often insane – for the rest of their lives.

The horrific nature of a cambion is immediately apparent at birth, and the strength of the taint in their blood makes their parentage virtually impossible to hide without magical assistance. Many newborn cambions only survive because of their rapid development; if their mortal family does not decide to kill them almost immediately after birth, the cambion quickly grows strong enough to defend itself, or at least to escape. In other, rarer cases, the cambion's human family decides to let the child live despite its nature; they may abandon the newborn to its fate in the wilderness, or raise it as they would any other child.

Cambions continue to grow at an accelerated rate until they reach maturity, which only exacerbates the isolation caused by their unmistakably Infernal appearance. They are subjects of fear, hatred, and scorn everywhere they go, which is why most of them remain loners throughout their lives. Most cambions which survive to adulthood were born in rural settings and interacted with few people outside their families during their younger years. Those born to city dwellers, or raised in places where their strangeness can be observed by many people, rarely survive to adulthood; almost invariably, someone eventually decides that the child is too foul to be allowed to live, and before long a cruel and fearful mob brings the cambion to a bloody end.

Those cambions who do survive to adulthood, usually only a handful of years after their birth, tend to be hardened loners with violent tempers and a knack for cruelty. The raging of their Infernal blood combines with the scorn and rejection they have received for most of their lives to make them bitter and moody. This, of course, only reinforces the low opinions that others have of the cambion, creating a vicious cycle that is nearly impossible to break out of.

There are a few places where cambions can find acceptance, however. A small number manage to find – or be found by – their fiendish parent, which is invariably a watershed moment in the cambion's life. If the fiend accepts their child, it may well mark the first time the cambion has ever been accepted anywhere; as a result, the cambion often follows its parent with an almost slavish devotion, doing whatever the fiend asks in exchange for a few morsels of companionship and respect. If the fiend rejects its offspring, however, this final abandonment often sends the cambion into a frenzied orgy of destruction and violence, frequently ending in its death.

Cults of fiend-worshippers are rare, but cambions who connect with such a cult usually become its centerpiece. When a life spent as the subject of relentless scorn and loneliness

changes to one in which they are obeyed or even worshipped, cambions often use their new-found servants to engage in a prolonged campaign of revenge against those who wronged them in the past.

Groups of thugs, criminals, or mercenaries sometimes accept cambions among their members, recognizing power when they see it. While a cambion may not instantly become the leader of such a group, as it might with a cult, they are often cunning and powerful enough to earn a leadership position among their newfound 'friends' before too long.

Only a few very rare and lucky cambions find acceptance in mortal society outside the bounds of a cult or gang. Occasionally, fate gives cambions an opportunity to meet one who is willing to love them for – or, more likely, despite – what they are. If the cambion recognizes this love, and can accept it despite a personal history of loneliness and anger, it may finally manage to achieve true happiness. Even these uncommon individuals almost invariably follow the path of evil, however; the raging emotions within their Infernal blood are simply too powerful to overcome.

Tieflings (Planetouched)

"My father hates me." Mondel threw another rock into the shallow, slow-moving creek. It vanished into the water with a plunk, which was the only reply to his statement, since he had fled the village alone and was talking to himself.

"The village hates me..." Plunk. Throwing rocks into the river did little to improve his mood, but actually throwing rocks at his tormentors would only have meant more trouble. In fact, the villagers had threatened to lynch him the last time he hurt one of the other boys, and if it happened again, his mother would probably not be able to talk them out of it.

"Even the horses hate me." Plunk. He had tried to steal a horse and run away, but the second he walked into the barn, the horses had panicked, rearing and kicking wildly. His leg was still crooked from where the bone had set wrong after the big draft horse had broken it.

"Everyone hates me." Plunk.

"Not everyone, Mondel," another voice said. Mondel was so startled he made it dark; his mother had told him never to do that again, but something about the voice scared him, and in the darkness he could get away if he had to. Besides, making it dark usually scared people away.

The voice chuckled. "Very good, Mondel. You've got quite a talent there...and you could have many more, if you'd let me teach you."

"Teach me?" Mondel tried to keep the fear out of his voice. "Who are you?"

"Your father, Mondel," the voice said. "Your true father."

The darkness faded, just a little, and Mondel could see the glowing yellow eyes looking at him. Eyes that weren't human. Eyes like his own.

Despite all of the dangers facing them, some cambions do manage to reproduce – most often by means of rape or prostitution, but rarely through genuine love. This second generation of the Tainted, and those that follow immediately thereafter, are still strong with the blood of the Infernal, though not nearly as much as their cambion parents². In the

taxonomy of the Tainted, these beings are referred to as tieflings, or less formally as "planetouched" or "hell-touched."

Tieflings vary widely in appearance. Some are obviously unnatural, though never quite so hideous as their cambion parent; a tiefling might have small horns, a forked tail, or black skin, while a cambion would be very likely to have all three of these features and more besides. Some tieflings are physically indistinguishable from normal humans, though almost all are accompanied by a palpable aura of "wrongness" which agitates animals and troubles sensitive humans. They also tend to live somewhat longer than the mortals whose blood they share.

The extent of a tiefling's physical abnormalities depends on the power of its fiendish ancestor. The grandson of a lesser demon or devil might have nothing more unusual than pointed teeth or iron fingernails, and his own children would be perfectly normal humans. On the other hand, the descendants of a demon prince or greater devil might bear obvious signs of their taint for two generations, and another half-dozen generations after that would still bear the unnatural aura of evil that marks them as tieflings.

The life of a tiefling is often very similar to that of a cambion, though their relative normality gives them somewhat better chances of finding some degree of acceptance in mortal society. Those tieflings who are born of love between a cambion (or tiefling) and a mortal have the best chance of reaching adulthood with an understanding and acceptance of their heritage. Other tieflings usually suffer much of the same abuse as young cambions do, though they do not experience the unnatural growth rate of cambions and thus have some chance of forming friendships as they grow older. Those who can conceal their taint usually learn to do so at a young age; unfortunately, this often leads to even worse rejection if those who have befriended them ever discover their true nature.

As adults, tieflings tend to gravitate towards the same roles that cambions are often driven to; they are generally found among thieves, thugs or soldiers. However, those cambions who can conceal their taint effectively have as good a chance as anyone to assume a 'normal' place in society, and the traces of Infernal power in their blood may even make them more likely to succeed if they use their abilities carefully.

Because their bloodline is not as strongly tainted with the Infernal, tieflings do not feel the full force of the pull of evil that cambions are always faced with. Most still gravitate to evil alignments because of the rejection and contempt that they are often treated with; however, tieflings have a much greater chance than their ancestors of turning away from their Infernal heritage, and even becoming good.

Dark-kin

My parents always made me work the fields at night. I never really understood why; my father said that some people needed to work at night just like some needed to work during the day, but I never saw anyone else out there at night. It didn't bother me, really; I could see just fine, and I never understood why my father had such a hard time seeing me when he came out just before sunrise to bring me back inside.

² Occasionally, cambions will mate with other cambions or full-fledged fiends; the offspring of such couplings are also considered cambions, as the taint in their blood has not been diluted by another generation of humanity.

Even when I wasn't working, I never got to spend much time with anybody else. My mother always brought my meals up to me in the attic rather than having me eat with my brothers. She said it was because they were bigger than me, and might pick on me because I was special, but she always looked sad when she said it, so I stopped asking.

Then one night, after it had rained all day, I was walking the fields to check on the crops when I came across a little, still pool of water. I bent down to drink from it, and the moonlight hit it at just the right angle, and I saw a face in the pool. When I saw the long, pointed ears, and the tiny line of red horns, and the solid orange eyes, I was afraid. But it was only when I realized that it was my own reflection that I finally began to understand.

Even the most powerful of fiendish bloodlines will eventually be diluted if it is mixed with mortal blood enough times. If a succession of tieflings continues to interbreed with humans or other mortals, there will come a generation that is entirely human, with no trace of its Infernal ancestry. Some tieflings are distressed by the loss of what they consider to be their birthright, and many actively seek out other Tainted with which to renew their “family heritage.” Others, however, rejoice at the sign that their taint is gone, and that their children will never need to suffer the scorn and hatred that they themselves experienced. Unfortunately, the fires of the damned are not so easily extinguished, and occasionally such a family will produce a “throwback” to their fiendish ancestors. These hapless souls are commonly referred to as “dark-kin.”

One might expect such distant descendants of evil to have a negligible taint, even weaker than that of a tiefling. Instead, it seems almost as though the tainted blood is “saved up” over the generations in order to produce a single, strongly Tainted individual (or, in rare cases, twins). The physical manifestations of the dark-kin's taint are at least as obvious as those of a tiefling, and are sometimes as strong as a cambion's. Most dark-kin manifest several different unnatural abilities, which vary widely from individual to individual; see Chapter 3 for some examples of the benefits and drawbacks which dark-kin experience³.

In some ways, the birth of a dark-kin can be more distressing to a mortal family than that of a cambion or tiefling. Those who have mated with a fiend, or know that such couplings have occurred among their recent ancestors, at least have some reason to suspect that their child may be Tainted, and can thus prepare themselves psychologically to some extent. The parents of a dark-kin, on the other hand, are often taken completely by surprise, since their family has seemed completely normal for generations. Strongly religious – or superstitious – cultures may view the newborn dark-kin as evidence of some sin or crime committed by one of the parents, particularly the mother. Others treat the child as they would any other ‘deformed’ infant; depending on the culture in question, this can mean anything from a loving and nurturing family life to the ritual sacrifice of the newborn.

The growth rate and lifespan of dark-kin is usually identical to that of their mortal relatives, though this is not an invariable rule. Indeed, few things about the dark-kin can be generalized successfully; they are so far removed from their Infernal ancestors that it is virtually impossible to predict their tendencies or abilities with any degree of accuracy.

Like their Tainted ancestors, dark-kin are faced with lives in which they will often be the subjects of fear, ostracism, and scorn. As a result, many fall into the same paths of crime and violence that plague cambions and tieflings. Others, however, seem to treat their heritage as a challenge to be overcome and become some of the staunchest defenders of good to be found anywhere. Unlike their ancestors, dark-kin do not seem particularly predisposed towards evil, though their often-hideous appearance makes most mortals assume the worst of them. They are also tied to the plane of their birth, and are not considered outsiders as tieflings and cambions are.

Dark-kin do not breed true; despite the strength of their taint, the child of a dark-kin and a human will, in all likelihood, be a perfectly normal human. Even the child of two dark-kin will be an ordinary human more often than not. However, the taint is not gone from their bloodline by any means; it is simply dormant again, for one generation or many, before expressing itself in the form of another newborn dark-kin.

The Pull of the Taint

She caressed his face, gliding her fingers tenderly across the tiny scales that served him for skin. So many people hated him for those scales, hated him blindly and mindlessly because one of his ancestors had bargained with a demon and lost. But if they would just talk to him, just listen to him, they would know that there was only goodness in his soul. It had taken so long to draw him out, to get him to trust her with his heart. But when he laughed, an honest laugh full of simple joy at being alive and with her, it was all worth it.

“I love you,” he said, smiling. His teeth were slightly pointed, yes, but they were oh, so gentle as well.

“I love you, too,” she answered, and meant it. She let her hand move down from his face to his neck, then his chest; first playing with the laces on his shirt, then sliding lower still. “So whatever shall we do tonight, my naughty little demon?”


She didn't even have time to register the sudden flash of anger in his eyes before he slapped her, hard enough to draw blood. “Never use that word when talking about me, do you understand? NEVER!”

Then, as quickly as it had come, the anger faded, and when she began to cry, he did too. His tears were black.

Despite the assumptions and stereotypes of the common folk, not all Tainted are evil. Admittedly, their blood does tend to draw them towards the darker alignments, and the loathing with which they are often treated does little to pull them back towards the side of good. But despite that, the Tainted are free-willed, and a fair number are able to set aside the evil in their hearts. A smaller number are even able to understand and follow the ideals of altruism and self-sacrifice which are the hallmarks of good alignment.

Even these individuals are unable to wholly suppress the unholy rage that boils in their blood, however. While their fiendish ancestors may have had personalities as varied as their forms, all were built around a fundamental core of hatred – hatred of goodness, hatred of beauty, hatred of life, hatred of things more powerful than themselves, or even hatred of their own miserable existence. It is the one constant aspect of any fiend's personality, and one which is invariably passed on to their Tainted children.

³ Note that on the world of Arcanis, the abilities of dark-kin have to date been fairly consistent despite their diverse bloodlines; more information on this situation can be found in Chapter 2.



In some Tainted, the hatred is easy to spot. They lash out, emotionally or physically, at anyone who gets close to them. This tends to reinforce the average citizen's belief that the Tainted are unstable and violent, so they respond in kind. This in turn reinforces the Tainted's behavior, making him that much more likely to lash out again the next time he is confronted. This self-perpetuating cycle of anger is very difficult to stop once it has started, which may explain why so many Tainted lead such short and miserable lives.

Those Tainted who manage to get along in normal society are usually the ones who have managed to control their innate rage, or at least channel it into less demonstrative and destructive paths. A Tainted whose profession is combat-oriented usually sees battle as an opportunity to let himself go, to release his destructive feelings on his enemy. For this reason, many Tainted follow the path of the barbarian; the frenzied battle rage that is the hallmark of that class comes easily to those with the blood of the Infernal, even if they were raised in a thriving city rather than a distant wilderness.

Other Tainted choose the opposite extreme, trying to keep their emotions tightly clamped so that the anger in their hearts never has a chance to escape. Many of these individuals seek to become monks or paladins, using the rigid moral codes of those classes as an aid in keeping their anger in check. While it is extremely difficult, a sufficiently dedicated Tainted can follow one of these paths and maintain her calm in trying circumstances...up to a point. Even the most upstanding Tainted carries the hatred of a fiend in her heart, however, and no matter how long she keeps it bottled up, it will eventually break free. When it does, months or years of repressed anger can boil to the surface, leading to an out-of-control chain reaction that usually shocks those acquaintances who know the Tainted as a calm, collected individual. Many a dark-kin paladin has found herself an ex-paladin after letting her anger get the better of her.

As a result, those monastic or holy orders which are familiar with the Tainted often find ways to "bleed off" their repressed rage in a more controlled manner. Menial tasks like chopping wood or breaking rocks work in some cases. Other times, organized fights are the chosen solution, giving the Tainted a chance to battle each other (or a well-armored foe) with non-lethal weaponry. A few groups even use such Tainted members as executioners; they will place the Tainted in a cell with a convicted criminal, and then describe the doomed man's crimes in heinous and excruciating detail. The tales are usually lurid enough to get the Tainted's blood boiling, and the violent rage that follows is worked off in a socially acceptable manner at the prisoner's expense.

As a final note, alcohol and some drugs tend to bring out the angry side of a Tainted's personality; most Tainted are even more likely to end up in a bar brawl than the average adventurer. Many Tainted are aware of this tendency, and try to moderate their drinking; others know about it, but don't care. Trying to stop such a Tainted from drinking, of course, is only going to make him mad. When confronted with a Tainted who is intent on getting drunk, the best solution is usually to find another tavern.

Strengthening the Taint

"I won't do this any more," she said, clutching the well-worn sheets around her as if she still had any dignity left to protect. "I won't."

"Why not?" I asked her. "You were a whore when we found you, and a cheap one at that. You certainly don't have to 'work' as hard here, and the money is certainly better. So is the ambience, for that matter. Unless you have a penchant for garbage-strewn alleyways, that is."

She glared at me with those remarkable orange eyes of hers. "I'm not denying any of that. But I don't like what you're trying to do here. I don't want to be a part of it."

"But my dear, you already are." I considered giving her a patronizing pat on the head, but then thought better of it; she hadn't had her claws clipped in several days, and I prefer keeping my blood in my veins where it belongs. "You're part of it by your very nature; that's why you're here. Out there in the city, you're hated because of what you are. With us, what you are is what makes us want you here. Out there, you're alone. In here, you're family. At least, we hope you will be."

"I don't want a family," she said, starting to cry. Her tears were oily, and slightly orange in color; I could faintly smell them, a scent reminiscent of lamp oil. "I don't want anyone else to have to live like this."

"If you cooperate, there will be more of us; and eventually, when there are enough of us, none of us will have to live like this any more," I said. "Besides, you really don't have a choice any more, do you?"

I didn't wait for her answer; I already knew it. Choice was not something that the Children believed in. Not in this, anyway. There was no point in further conversation, so I just began taking off my breeches, trying not to snag them on my talons.

Occasionally, groups have attempted to breed the Tainted together in the hope of producing a more strongly Infernal individual. Fiend-worshipping cults are the most likely to engage in this sort of project, in an effort to become closer to those whose favor they crave. The Tainted themselves also sometimes reproduce with one another, though this is more likely to involve two isolated individuals seeking solace in one another's arms rather than an organized breeding project. Other possibilities exist; those who study fiends may begin a breeding project in an effort to obtain better specimens for study, or a religious order dedicated to fighting devils may try to breed righteous dark-kin in an attempt to "fight fire with fire."

Whatever their motivation, those who would strengthen the taint in the Tainted have a long and arduous task ahead of them. Since dark-kin and tieflings do not grow to adulthood any faster than normal humans, the project will take decades to make any significant progress. It generally takes several generations for the breeding project to create dark-kin who will breed true, and several more to produce offspring with potent enough blood to be considered a tiefling. Once this is finally achieved, the breeding project has gone as far as it can; without introducing a full-blooded fiend into the program, no amount of crossbreeding will enable tieflings to beget a cambion.

The Tainted and Character Classes

I had never seen a paladin fight the way the knight in white did against that trio of demons. Oh, he had skill, certainly; he had skill and courage and strength, all the things you'd expect from a holy knight. But what really amazed me was the ferocity

with which he attacked, the sheer reckless fury of his blows, as though he hated the demons he was fighting with every drop of blood in his body. I couldn't see his face beneath the great helm he wore, but the way he fought spoke volumes. He didn't care if he died, as long as the demons did too.

He had come unexpectedly to our rescue just as the cult was about to sacrifice Delain, and had dispatched the murderous cultists themselves with cold, brutal efficiency. But when the high priest summoned the demons with his dying breath, the knight had attacked them with a rage bordering on the berserk.

When he had slain the last of them, he leaned on his sword for a long moment, sides heaving like a bellows, before straightening up and coming over to cut us loose. I'm not sure what made me do it, but as I rubbed my hands together to get the blood circulating again, I asked him quietly, "Why do you hate them so much?"

He looked at me for a long time before finally raising his visor. The face that looked back at me was like a cruel parody of humanity, with deep bloodless cracks running across his cheeks like dry riverbeds. His teeth were as long as any orc's, but sharp, and they gleamed like steel. His eyes were solid, featureless black orbs, like two windows into the abyss. And poking out among the sweat-soaked silver hair on his head were two small, black horns.

"Because I know their nature," was all he said.

In most cases, the Tainted are far too distinctive to live out their lives as farmers, merchants or craftsmen. As a result, many end up leading the itinerant life of the adventurer. While a sufficiently dedicated individual can excel in any walk of life, there are naturally certain classes that are a more natural fit for those with the blood of the Infernal coursing through their veins.

Barbarian

The ubiquitous rage that boils in the blood of the Tainted makes the barbarian class an obvious choice. The rugged cultures which produce barbarians are, in many cases, more likely to judge a person on their strength than their appearance, which gives a Tainted child a better chance to grow to adulthood. If they do, and if they demonstrate their savage anger and the strength it gives them, they often become respected (if feared) members of the community.

The one exception to this rule is found among those barbarian tribes that rely on horses or other animals for transportation. Most Tainted tend to provoke a very strong reaction among animals of all kinds, and as a result, a dark-kin born into a tribe of horsemen is likely to have a difficult and unforgiving childhood. In most cases, individuals like this are abandoned by the tribe, or even killed, as soon as their "problem" becomes apparent.

Bard

Tainted bards are extremely rare, and with good reason. A bard relies on being charming, likeable, and (at least to some extent) physically attractive – all qualities in which the Tainted are, on the whole, somewhat lacking. This is not to say that there are no attractive, personable Tainted, but they are a very small minority even among the very small minority of the Tainted. Even those Tainted who do possess a certain degree of charm are unlikely to follow the path of the bard. Bards tend to possess a relatively positive outlook on life, and rare indeed is the Tainted who could be described as "happy-go-lucky."

With that said, there are always exceptions to the rule. One tieling storyteller, called Eyor the Dolorous, was renowned for his extensive knowledge of the saddest songs and most depressing stories ever composed. His mournful

voice was reputedly able to coax tears from a statue, and while his performances were always memorable, he was almost never invited back to perform in the same place again.

One other known exception is the dark-kin bard Mavnir, who is intent upon improving the reputation of the Tainted. He specializes in legends of Tainted who overcome their Infernal nature to do selfless and heroic deeds, as well as other tales of beings that are good at heart despite their ugly appearances.

Cleric

The Tainted, whether evil or good or somewhere between, are not well suited to the life of a cleric. Their first obstacle is in finding a church that is willing to accept them. Despite the superstitions of some individuals, even the most powerful devil kings and demon princes are not gods, and cannot grant true clerical powers to their worshippers. Many evil gods regard demons and devils as competition on some level, and so are reluctant to accept their descendants as worshippers. At the other extreme, the churches of good-aligned deities tend to regard Tainted who profess a fervent belief in their gods with understandable suspicion.

Once they have joined a church, the Tainted still have a difficult road to follow if they wish to be an effective cleric. Priests rely on their own wisdom and good judgment to advise the faithful, while the Tainted are renowned for their impulsive and sometimes reckless behavior. Similarly, clerics are expected to make their faith attractive to others, and "attractive" is not a word normally associated with the Tainted. As a result, those Tainted who do give their lives to a church usually find it a frustrating career.

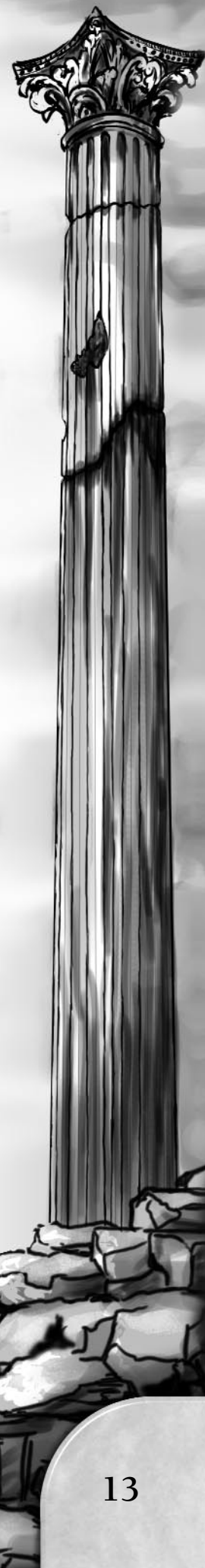
Of course, there are exceptions. If the parents or guardians of a Tainted are particularly strong in their faith, they may raise the child in a very religious environment in an attempt to overcome the evil in his blood. Some cultures include a god or goddess of outcasts or outsiders; such deities are naturally attractive to religious-minded dark-kin or cambions. Finally, there are some churches which are so desperate for members that they will accept just about anyone who seems sincere.

Druid

All of the reasons that make the Tainted unlikely to be clerics also apply to the path of the druid. As a further obstacle, the unnatural aura that accompanies most Tainted is very disquieting to animals, making the way of the animal-loving druid that much harder for the Tainted to follow. A druid who brings an enthusiastic student into his home, only to see his own animal companions growl in anger or cower in fear, is unlikely to have a good impression of the would-be acolyte. Some Tainted who have a particular fondness for animals may study the ways of the druid in order to compensate for their unnatural aura, but these are rare individuals.

Fighter

The Tainted are often blessed with superior hardiness and fast reflexes, both attributes that help them excel in personal combat. Their often-ugly visages are not a hindrance in battle, especially if they wear visored helms. Indeed, some Tainted warriors have been known to use their appearance to their advantage,



surprising and/or intimidating their foes by suddenly revealing their unnatural appearance.

As might be expected, the Tainted make poor cavalry due to their unwitting effect on even the best-trained horses. On the other hand, they do make excellent foot soldiers or archers, although their inner rage often leads to disciplinary problems in more tightly controlled armies or mercenary groups.

Holy Champion / Paladin

Cambions and tieflings almost never walk the path of the paladin; they are simply too close to their Infernal origins. However, despite the obvious irony, Holy Champions and Paladins are not uncommon among the dark-kin. Given the generational “distance” between the dark-kin and the fiend whose blood they share, these Tainted are more easily able to find their way to the path of light. Dark-kin who seek to reject their Infernal heritage instinctively tend towards the opposite extreme, and there is no more complete refutation of evil than that displayed by taking the oaths of a paladin.

As with monks, holy champions usually adopt a strict code of behavior, but have a difficult time adhering to it over the long term despite their best intentions. For holy champions, however, the risk of breaking one’s vows in a momentary fit of rage is far more serious. Successful dark-kin holy champions have usually learned to release their anger during battle, lest it remain bottled up and erupt at an inopportune time. For this reason, many dark-kin holy champions spend all their free time actively seeking out evil enemies to fight against, to ensure that they always have an appropriate outlet for their inherent anger.

Note that Tainted paladins who are using their *detect evil* ability often sense a faint aura of evil around themselves, due to their Infernal blood. While this sensation is disconcerting at first, once the paladin has learned to adjust for it, it has no significant impact on the ability.

Monk

Monks are uncommon even among normal society, but a significant number of the Tainted choose to follow the monastic path at least briefly during their lives. The strict mental and spiritual discipline taught to would-be monks often seems like an ideal solution for those Tainted who wish to control their unnatural rages. Indeed, in many cases the techniques they learn do help them maintain a balanced personality...at least for a time.

The anger in a fiend’s blood is not so easily quelled, however, and eventually most Tainted monks lose control of their emotions, sometimes over the smallest of things. When the inevitable outburst occurs, some Tainted give up on the monastic path in disgust, convinced that they will



never be truly in control of their own emotions. Others redouble their efforts, often exacting self-imposed penances that are far more severe than anything required by their teachers. This may work for a time, but eventually even this tighter grip on their emotions will slip. Eventually, almost all Tainted monks give up their efforts and leave whatever monastery they had joined. Only a few manage to accept the fact that their outbursts of rage are an inevitable part of their nature, to be weathered when necessary, but not obsessed over.

Ranger

As loners who spend a great deal of time far from civilization, rangers represent a very suitable career choice for the Tainted. Many Tainted who are banished from their birthplace, or who flee from such a settlement by choice, become rangers without consciously thinking about it; the skills the Tainted must develop in order to survive in the wild naturally lend themselves to this class.

The Tainted’s unnatural aura can make hunting difficult, as even animals that can’t see or smell the Tainted have a tendency to flee when he comes close. As a result, Tainted rangers tend to focus more on ranged weapons, enabling them to bring down prey from a distance, before it senses them. The aura of wrongness also makes it challenging, though not impossible, for a Tainted ranger to have animal companions; most are totally without companions, human or otherwise.

If they have become rangers in order to survive on their own, the Tainted tend to choose animals as a favored enemy, simply to improve their ability to hunt. Those who reject or despise their own Infernal ancestry will often choose demons or devils (or, eventually, both) as favored enemies. Of course, favored enemies often depend on the particular types of creatures found in the ranger's environment, so any choice may be a viable one.

Rogue

Rogues are often individuals who make every effort to avoid being seen, and who are unpopular among the general public. This same description often applies to the Tainted, which explains why so many Tainted end up on the wrong side of the law. The swift reflexes and exceptional night-vision of many Tainted also serve them well in criminal pursuits.

Their physical abnormalities rarely cause problems for those who attempt to stay out of sight anyway, and a particularly ugly visage may even prove helpful for those Tainted rogues who are closer to thugs than burglars. In the event that their attempts at secrecy fail, however, the Tainted are somewhat worse off than human rogues. Witnesses generally find it rather easy to pick a dark-kin out of a group of suspects ("Yes, officer, I'm pretty sure it was the one with the metallic silver skin and the horns"). For that matter, their appearance often makes them obvious suspects; even if they are innocent of a given crime, law enforcement officials often target them as scapegoats because of their suspicious looks and unsavory reputations.

Tainted rogues sometimes also have problems joining thieves' guilds or other organized crime groups. Such groups are likely to be just as suspicious of the Tainted as honest citizens are, and they are also well aware of the attention which may be drawn by the distinctive features of a Tainted criminal. As a result, Tainted who follow criminal pursuits are generally loners, or perhaps members of small groups, rather than affiliates of a larger organization.

Sorcerer

Tainted sorcerers are relatively uncommon on most worlds. Sorcerers seem to draw their power from the force of their personality, and while the personalities of most Tainted can certainly be described as forceful, they most often lack the control and discipline that sorcerers find necessary.

A few scholars ascribe the rarity of Tainted sorcerers to the theory that only those individuals with the blood of dragons in their veins can manage sorcery. They reason that both dragon-blooded and Tainted individuals are extremely rare, and the odds of any one individual bearing both exotic bloodlines are infinitesimal. The "dragon blood" theory is not widely accepted except among sorcerers, and thus this theory has not been carefully explored.

Persistent rumors say that one sorcerer who was particularly keen to prove this theory summoned a succubus into his laboratory, intending to get her with child and see if the resulting cambion could be taught sorcery. Unfortunately, something apparently went awry while he was negotiating the details of the bargain, as he was found dead (though smiling broadly) the following morning. If the act in question was actually consummated, the whereabouts and abilities of the child (if any) are unknown.

The unnatural aura of the Tainted also makes the summoning of a familiar difficult, since most would-be familiars have a very negative first impression of a Tainted master. If

this initial difficulty is overcome, however, the familiar will eventually grow used to the aura, and will generally be as loyal as any human magician's familiar. Of course, this does not prevent the familiar from making snide remarks about its master's taint.

Wizard

The Tainted seem to have better luck as wizards than as sorcerers. The intense study necessary to learn wizardry is usually accompanied by social isolation, which usually suits the Tainted just fine. Wizards are well aware that the Tainted are not wanted in "normal" society, which means that a Tainted apprentice will have fewer outside distractions and more time to sweep up the lab.

Some wizards also have an interest in learning more about the Tainted, and will take one as an apprentice in order to study him at close range. This behavior is particularly common among magi who specialize in conjuration magic, since they often summon outsiders on a regular basis. By studying the characteristics of a (relatively) non-hostile outsider – their cambion or tiefling apprentice – they hope to gain insights that will help them in their future negotiations with such beings. Unfortunately for the wizards, the Tainted apprentice and the summoned outsider occasionally recognize their similarities and make common cause together. A conjurer who has mistreated his Tainted apprentice may find that his next demon summoning does not go quite as planned because a line of his summoning circle was "accidentally" rubbed out.

As with sorcerers, wizards need to spend extra time and effort to locate a willing familiar, but do not suffer any ill effects once one is found.

Arcanis Glossary

Arcanis: The planet on which the continent of Onara can be found.

Battle of Hope's End: The last battle between the legions of the fledgling Coryani Empire and the armies of Infernals at the conclusion of the Time of Terror. The legions would almost certainly have been destroyed if not for the rising of the Godswall.

Elorii: An ancient people created as a slave race by the Ssethregoran Empire. Five different races make up the Elorii, one of each of the Elemental essences, while the last is said to have been created from the primal life force itself.

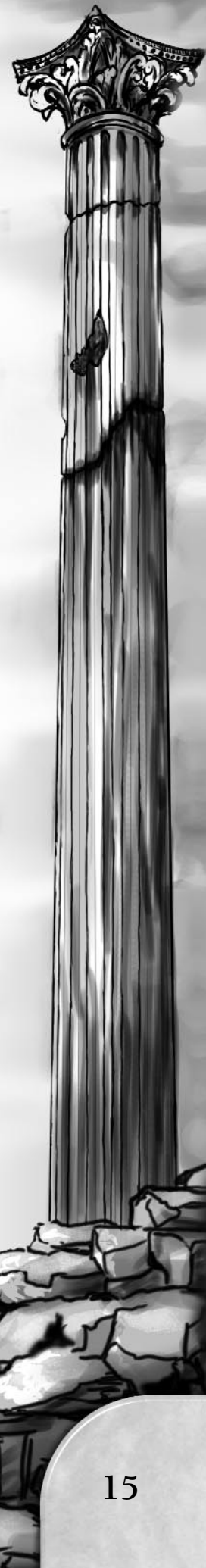
Godswall, or Wall of the Gods: A massive mountain range in the northern portion of Onara, raised (supposedly by the divine intervention of Illiir) during the Battle of Hope's End to imprison the Infernal armies. No one is known to have crossed over the Wall of the Gods in either direction since it was raised.

Illiir: The foremost God of the Pantheon of Man; the Father of the Gods. Illiir is the God of wisdom, leadership, and the sun.

Infernals: A generic term applied to demons, devils and other evil outsiders. Residents of Onara will often use the terms "demon," "devil," and "Infernal" interchangeably, drawing no distinctions between them.

Onara: The largest and most populous continent of Arcanis.

Sarish: The Binder of Demons and Devils; the Maker of Oaths. One



of the twelve Gods of the Pantheon of Man, Sarish and his followers have extensive knowledge of, and power over, the Infernals.

Time of Terror, The: A period of roughly thirty years during which hordes of Infernals, unleashed by an ancient curse, swept across Onara, bringing destruction and fear wherever they went. The age was ended by the raising of the Godswall after the Battle of Hope's End.

Valinor: The divine servants of the Pantheon of Man. Each manifests, and is named for, a certain quality of the God it serves – for example, the Wisdom of Illiir and the Cunning of Sarish are among the Valinor.

Dark-kin on Onara

The Time of Terror left its mark on Onara in many ways; foremost among them is the relatively large number of dark-kin found in the world. The massive numbers of fiends unleashed upon the world took their foul pleasures where they could find them, and their blood has been dispersed far and wide in the ten centuries since the Godswall was raised. While dark-kin still represent only a tiny fraction of the population – most common folk will never meet one in their lifetime – they are still far more common than in most worlds. This does not make them any more readily accepted in most societies, though they are unlikely to be killed immediately at birth.

Coryan

The great Coryani Empire treats its dark-kin much as it does its other citizens, at least officially.

Dark-kin born to a patrician family are often sent away to stay with distant relatives (or someone who owes the family a favor) at a very young age, since no noble family wishes a tainted bloodline to become common knowledge among its peers. Oftentimes, these unfortunates are forbidden to even mention their family name, so as to avoid disgracing their relatives. Since they are unable to rely on their family's reputation and contacts, these dark-kin often gravitate towards careers in the Imperial Legions, where their worth is measured by their combat prowess rather than their breeding. Those with particularly successful lives can sometimes return home to openly claim their birthright, but the majority are destined to die in obscurity. Those born to the Patrician Imperialis are often strangled at birth.

A plebian dark-kin has as much right to an education as any other citizen, and (in theory at least) has as much chance to ascend from the common citizenry to the lofty ranks of the patricians as any other plebian. In practice, however, the unnatural aura and physical unsightliness of most dark-kin makes it considerably harder for them to make their way in social settings. For this reason, most lower-class dark-kin, like their patrician counterparts, tend towards a life in the legions, or in less acceptable career paths (e.g., banditry and other forms of crime).

Dark-kin slaves are treated much the same as any other Coryani slave, though they are sometimes singled out for particular abuse due to their taint.

Milandir

The dark-kin of Milandir are in a somewhat paradoxical situa-

tion. Milandir's dedication to equality gives dark-kin the same chance to prosper and advance socially as any other Milandisian. However, dark-kin are associated with Sarish, the Binder of Demons and Devils, and Sarish is in turn associated with Canceri, the long-time enemy of Milandir. As a result, the natural suspicion which follows dark-kin everywhere is particularly pronounced in Milandir, though those who prove their honor and loyalty to the throne can overcome this suspicion and prosper. Dark-kin tend to have a particularly difficult time in the lands of Tralia; the city and its environs are closer to the border of Canceri than any other part of Milandir, and dark-kin in the area can expect to be treated with mistrust and often outright contempt.

A surprising number of Milandisian dark-kin turn to the Church, attempting to reject or overcome their tainted blood. Others seek to join the Royal Marines, and even those who do not are expected (if male) to be trained with a weapon and fit to serve as conscripts in time of war. Dark-kin knights, from either holy or secular orders, are not unheard of, though dark-kin are even rarer in the knightly orders than they are in the general population.

Several years ago, a guild of dark-kin, known as the Brothers of Light-in-Darkness, was formed in the capital city of Naeraanth. Initially greeted with suspicion by both the citizenry (who viewed it as some sort of Canceri plot, or at best an unsavory collection of individuals) and many dark-kin (who feared that it might be used by the crown to track them and monitor their activities), the guild has begun to prosper over the past year or so.

Dark-kin from throughout Milandir, and even other nations, have come to



JOHNSON

The Betrayal of the Nelgazzi

During the years that the fabled First Imperium held sway over most of the Known Lands and beyond, the Val that ruled elevated certain pure human families to a higher status than their mundane peers. These vassal families took on work that the divine Val did not wish to sully their hands with. Though many tenaciously held on to their status throughout the centuries, none garnered greater infamy than the val'Mehans vassal family – the Nelgazzi.

Tasked with overseeing those multi-planar holdings under the administration of the val'Mehans, the Nelgazzi began spending much time beyond the Mortal Plane of Arcanis dealing with many different races and unique entities. While this commerce garnered new knowledge and goods for the val'Mehans, they turned a blind eye to the family's eccentricities. Of these quirks, the most bizarre was their constant, almost obsessive need to modify their own bodies – the better to serve their masters, they said.

The vulture-like creatures known as the Qu'vaj were renowned for their mastery of Biotechnology, which was said to rival that of the Ssanu of Ssethregore. In exchange for raw materials and slaves from Arcanis, they taught the Nelgazzi the art of grafting pieces and parts of other species unto their own body. For unknown reasons, the Nelgazzi favored the use of Infernals in their new art of body modification.

Within generations, the Nelgazzi looked more demonic than human; their form both terrible and beautiful to behold. Soon, they became the favorite of the Imperial Court, where their grotesque modifications entertained and enthralled the Emperor and his courtiers. Jealousy soon took root in the heart of the val'Mehans, for their ability to summon Infernals for the entertainment of the Court was soon overshadowed by their human underlings. Yet still they honored their age-old agreements and did not move against their vassals.

Not long after this, the val'Mehans family's fortunes began declining with each passing year. Each time they would present a new marvel for the Imperial Court, they were countered, or at times even pre-empted by the val'Ababi. Irregardless of the kind or type of wonder they discovered as they expanded across the Planes, the val'Ababi were there, smug and boastful of their new accomplishments. It was not until one of their most cunning, and it should be said sociopath members, Icsanthus val'Mehans, was able to get a "confession" from a val'Ababi that the truth finally emerged –

the Nelgazzi had been funneling information and goods to the val'Ababi at the expense of their masters.

A bloody and vicious internecine war erupted and flared across the Mortal Planes and beyond. The Emperor allowed this to continue as he reveled in the reports of the exotic battles, but eventually the Vassal War, as it was eventually called, spilled too close to home and caused the death of one of the Emperor's favorites, Azzani val'Ababi. Stepping in, he called a halt to all aggression and in an unprecedented move he transferred the Nelgazzi family's Vow of Servitude to the val'Ababi.

Generations blurred by, but the betrayal still stung the heart of the val'Mehans, but they waited patiently for time to strike. This opportunity finally came in the form of Leonydes val'Viridan and his revolutionary army of the Cleansing Flame. In a stroke of diplomatic mastery, the val'Mehans, who saw that the rule of the Emperor was at an end, not only positioned themselves as key advisors to the conquering val'Viridan, but convinced them that the decadence and heresy, which they so despised, was manifested incarnate in the form of the Nelgazzi. Who else but those degenerate would willingly take the flesh of evil and subsume their own with it?

The val'Viridan needed little prodding to invoke a pogrom against the demonically appearing humans, and within a few weeks the majority were burned on their temple altars, a sacrifice to their Fiery God.

Sated by their bloody vengeance, the val'Mehans were astonished when centuries later, creatures appearing much like the Nelgazzi began appearing after the Time of Terror. At first they stoked the fires of hatred and suspicion amongst the battered and superstitious populous, but they finally discovered that these wretches were not the hated Nelgazzi, but innocents cursed with the burden of primordial evil.

They have thus put aside their rhetoric of hatred and instead accepted these creatures in their state of Canceri, ever watchful for a sign that one of their kind is one of the Nelgazzi returned to exact their revenge upon their former masters. For though the Cleansing Flame was efficient in its purge, the val'Mehans know that a number escaped across the Sea of Lanterns and off to the far west.

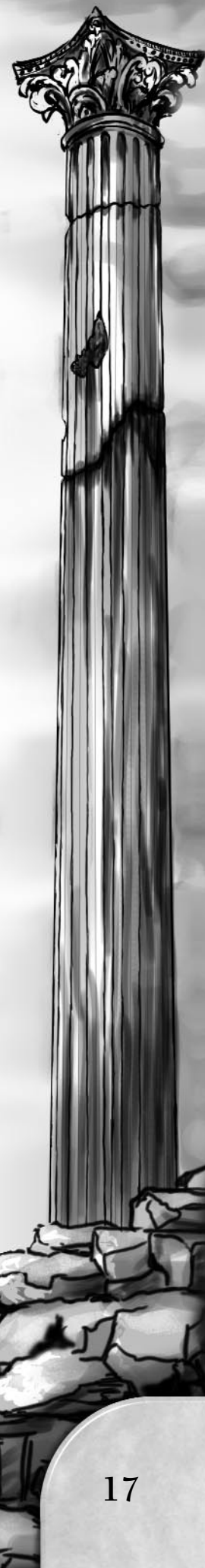
The Vassal War has only been postponed. Its conclusion can only be written in the last drop of blood of one or the other. The val'Mehans intend to be the hand holding the pen.


Naaraanth just because of the guild, in an effort to find the acceptance and kinship they are so often denied elsewhere. There has been talk of starting similar guilds in other cities, but if any exist, they include no more than a handful of members.

Canceri

The Time of Terror was a relatively painless period for Canceri, since the val'Mehans and other followers of Sarish in the area had been in contact with the Infernals long beforehand, and had worked out agreements regarding

what would happen if and when the fiends reached Onara. As a result, the depredations of the Infernal armies were almost entirely absent in Canceri; indeed, many of the more powerful fiends ruled Canceri alongside the val'Mehans for several decades. The rise of the Coryani Empire (and the actions of certain rogue val'Mehans) eventually drove the Infernal armies from Canceri, but their legacy remains.





As in so many other things, Canceri can be divided into three categories with respect to dark-kin. The great majority of the dark-kin in Canceri can be found in the northern lands of the Red March, the region historically controlled by the val'Mehan family. This collaboration with the Infernal invaders has led to a higher number of dark-kin births. The val'Mehan, though responsible for the higher tainted influence in their lands, treat the dark-kin with disdain. Some believe that this is an ancient shame for their betrayal of mankind to the Infernal hordes. Others point to val'Mehan's practice of keeping bound Infernals as slaves, surmising that being a dark-kin is akin to being descended from a dog. In truth, it is a far more ancient grudge, dating back to the days of the First Imperium of Man.

Farther south, the Cold Plains of the val'Mordane are less welcoming to dark-kin. The necropoli are no more comfortable for dark-kin than for any other mortals, and the close association between Sarish and the Tainted often leads the val'Mordanes to regard dark-kin with some degree of suspicion. More interestingly, the undead nobles dwelling in the necropoli seem to harbor a deep and abiding mistrust of the Tainted, for reasons which are not entirely clear. Those dark-kin who do dwell in val'Mordane lands are generally restricted to low-paying, low-prestige jobs, much as they are elsewhere.

Until recently, the lands of the val'Viridan found dark-kin treated much the same as they were in val'Mordane lands. However, with the resurgence of the Sword of the Heavens and the dominance of the Erdukeens, the local dark-kin find themselves in a much worse situation. Most citizens of Nishanpur and the other conquered cities of Canceri are opposed to the rule of the Erdukeens, but their opinions are unknown as long as they keep their mouths shut. Dark-kin, however, have physical taints which obviously proclaim their origin, and suggest their close connection to Sarish. Thus, for most of the Erdukeens, dark-kin are guilty until proven innocent. While they will not be openly attacked or arrested without cause, dark-kin in the Sword of the Heavens' realm must step even more carefully than the average citizen.

The Hinterlands

The various peoples of the Hinterlands react to the dark-kin in different ways, though none of them are particularly welcoming to the Tainted.

The Yhing hir, in particular, scorn and despise the dark-kin. This is probably due to the fact that dark-kin have notorious difficulty in dealing with horses (and other domesticated animals). Since the horse is central to the society, culture, and economy of the Yhing hir, anyone who cannot handle a horse, or who horses do not like, is barely considered human. Horses are also believed to react negatively to the sinister and much-feared Ehtzara sorcerers of the region, which certainly does nothing to improve the reaction which a dark-kin can expect among the Yhing hir, particularly the Vanomir and Khur Gi tribes. Those dark-kin who are born among these peoples often end up apprenticing themselves to an Ehtzara, since they will be hated wherever they go anyway.

Interestingly, a relatively high proportion of these dark-kin end up becoming Ehtzara themselves, which suggests that the "gift" of magical ability is much more common in them than among normal humans.

The Pengik and Hurkomir tribes of the southeastern Hinterlands also place great importance on animals, which they regard as their patrons or totems. Not surprisingly, these folk also

distrust dark-kin because of the latter's unsettling effect on nearby animals. Where the Yhing hir react to dark-kin with disdain, the Pengik tribesmen seem to feel very uncomfortable, almost fearful, around them. Some scholars have theorized that the Pengik are so closely tied to their animal totems that they can sense the taint in the dark-kin as easily as the animals can. The subject has never received serious study, however.

The only place where dark-kin find any measure of acceptance within the Hinterlands is the great city of Censure. The many thieves' guilds of that city can always use additional hands, and other dark-kin often find themselves a lucrative (if potentially short) career in the city's arena. Of the great houses of Censure, only House Brand numbers more than one or two dark-kin among its employees, and none have yet risen high in the hierarchy of any of the houses.

Altheria

Relatively few dark-kin are found in and around New Althré, though the reasons for this scarcity are unclear. Those who do live here, whether natives or foreigners, are treated much the same as any other citizen, though they usually find it difficult to form close friendships with Altherians. The monastic Order of Althares makes a particular effort to make the Tainted feel welcome in Altheria, and as a result, many dark-kin join the Order in order to pass on the kindness they received. Few dark-kin rise far in the hierarchy of the Church of Althares outside the Order, however; while the bias against them is never openly stated, dark-kin within the Church always seem to be passed over when there is a chance to progress into a higher position.

The Western Lands

Much of the area known as the Western Lands is populated by the Undir and the Kio, two races which have a very different reaction to the Tainted. The renowned beauty of the Kio makes the ugliness of a typical dark-kin stand out even more, and while the Kio are not openly rude or abusive to dark-kin, their aloof nature makes it uncomfortable for most of the Tainted to spend any significant time among them. Dark-kin born to Kio parents are almost unheard of.

The Undir, on the other hand, are more accepting of dark-kin, perhaps because of their own (allegedly) non-human ancestors. The brusque and straightforward Undir can hardly be described as welcoming any outsiders, Tainted or otherwise. However, if a dark-kin pulls his weight, keeps his mouth shut, and doesn't cause undue friction with his neighbors, he will eventually find an unspoken acceptance in a typical Undir village.

Of the many cities in the League of Princes, only Blackwand and Whalka have sizable dark-kin populations. Many of the Tainted spend time in and around Fort Tyroch, where their martial prowess is enough to overcome any distaste at their nature. Others seek out the hidden monastery of the Order of the Iron Soul, whose teachings are said to help dark-kin quiet the uneasy rages within their souls.

Finally, an unknown number of dark-kin are said to serve Warlord Ig of Quaaga. Some were born within the various humanoid tribes which comprise Ig's band. Others, while not orcs, have supposedly elected to join the warlord's band in return for a chance at vengeance against the society which spurned them. Some of these dark-kin may be living in the cities of the Western Lands even now, spying for Ig and waiting for their chance to overthrow the rightful rulers of the area.



The Pirate Isles

It should come as no surprise that the Pirate Isles contain a much higher proportion of dark-kin in their population than anywhere else on Onara. The freebooting cities of Freeport, Garundi and Magra seem to act as magnets for the Tainted, and the crew of many a pirate vessel numbers dark-kin among its crew. Indeed, at least one renowned Magran pirate captain, known as Moonseye, is a dark-kin, as is his entire crew. The exceptional night vision of many dark-kin enables Moonseye and his crew to sail and attack at night as easily as they could during the day, and their depredations have given him a formidable reputation. Other captains from Freeport and Censure have begun hiring dark-kin in an effort to help them watch for Moonseye; however, some of these “watchmen” were actually Moonseye’s men, and have led their new employers’ ships directly into his clutches.

The Dwarven Enclaves

Tainted dwarves are extremely rare, but they do exist. Not surprisingly, the reactions of the dwarves to these unnatural children, as well as to dark-kin who may arrive in a dwarven enclave from elsewhere, vary according to the enclave in question.

The dwarves of Solanos Mor, Tultipet and Nol Dappa tend to treat dark-kin much the same: the Tainted are mistrusted and sometimes feared, but not openly attacked or denied any of the rights given to other citizens. Still, they are not made welcome, and very few dark-kin settle perma-

nently in any of these enclaves. Dark-kin are likely to find the warmest welcome in Encali, where Sarish is the inhabitants’ god of choice. While dark-kin are not held in any particular esteem by the dwarves of Encali, neither are they reviled. They are as welcome in Encali as any non-dwarf would be, although this is not saying a great deal. Dark-kin born in Encali are somewhat better off than they would be in a human community; though they will never be treated quite the same as a pure-blooded dwarf, they are treated rather better than gnomes. Dark-kin born in these enclaves have historically been confined to the enclave and forbidden to reproduce, and as a result no new ones have been born in centuries.

At the other extreme, a dark-kin who enters Tir Betoq is literally taking his life in his hands. The Mourners of Glory, as they are known, regard the elimination of any Infernal taint as a holy mission. While Tir Betoqan dwarves traveling outside their enclave will probably not attack a dark-kin on sight, they will certainly spend a great deal of time considering how best to eliminate him, preferably without being caught by local law enforcement. The Tainted are simply considered the enemies of all humanity, and no price is too high to pay in order to destroy them. Within Tir Betoq itself, any dark-kin who cannot conceal his Taint is unlikely to survive his first night. If a dark-kin has ever been born within Tir Betoq, no records show it, and it is likely that the child and all its living kin would have been slain as soon as its existence was known.

Those pitiable souls born as gnomes are unlikely to bear Infernal blood as the dwarven parent is almost assuredly free of such taint. Also, the tolerance for those so evidently cursed

by Illiir is so small, that tainted gnomish progeny will rarely survive until its first sunrise.

The infamous Reavers of Bealak Gempor, of course, will slay a dark-kin as readily as they will a human.

The Elorii Nations

No dark-kin have ever been known to be born among the Elorii. This is due to the unique elemental nature of their souls; even if an Elorii were to couple with a demon, there could be no offspring from such a union. Due to their powerful wards, the Elorii remained largely untouched by the Time of Terror, and only learned of the existence of such beings as dark-kin when they began to emerge from their woodland realms in recent years.

As a result, Elorii who encounter dark-kin often treat them with curiosity more than anything else. The Tainted are not despised any more than any other humans; nor are they loved any more. Those who descend from Infernals mean nothing more to the Elorii than those who descend from the Pantheon of Man. For the Elorii of the Vastwood or Entaris, this means that each dark-kin is judged on his or her own merits, though they begin with the substantial disadvantage of being partly human. Despite this, a number of dark-kin reside within the Foreign Quarter of Seremas, most working in the city’s substantial port. The Elorii of Malfelen, on

the other hand, see dark-kin much as they would any other humans – as archery targets.

Ssethregore

If there are any Tainted among the serpent-men of Ssethregore, their existence – and abilities – are unknown to the outside world. There are no reports of any dark-kin being born among the Black Talon ss'ressen, the only egg clutch about which any details are reliably known.

Ymandragore

Surprisingly, dark-kin are somewhat less common on Ymandragore than elsewhere on Onara. The island's inhabitants were isolated during the Time of Terror, and were thus quarantined against the taint, which affected so much of Onara during that dark period. In the intervening centuries, however, some of the Sorcerer-King's magical servants have dallied with Infernals, and so dark-kin are present on Ymandragore in small numbers. As with all inhabitants of the island, their worth is measured only by their magical ability; their taint means nothing to His Majesty Sorcery.

Rumors in certain quarters suggest that several highly placed members of the Wine Drinkers have become addicted to Tainted blood; its Infernal origin apparently gives it a strongly habit-forming quality. The results of this situation, if the rumors are true, are thus far unknown, though it seems clear that those Dark-kin with the Gift are now in even more danger from the Harvesters than before.

Amongst the Humanoids

Orcs and their kind have a surprising amount in common with dark-kin, since both groups are often regarded with scorn and hatred by the “civilized” races. More to the point, the humanoids recognize and respect power, and power is one thing that the Tainted often possess; this can be an asset or a liability for a newborn dark-kin. Dark-kin children born to humanoids that tend towards lawful behavior – hobgoblins, and some goblins – will often be “adopted” by a clan chief or tribal leader, so that the child can be taught obedience (and closely watched). Such Tainted often become the leader's chief enforcer, and frequently use this position to watch and learn before acting to seize control for themselves. Among the more chaotic groups – orcs, bugbears, gnolls, and some goblins – a Tainted infant is more likely to be killed if discovered by tribal leaders, precisely to keep it from becoming a rival for power.

Other Tainted in Arcanis

While dark-kin are relatively common, tieflings, and cambions are quite rare on Onara. While isolated individuals might exist almost anywhere, only Ymandragore and the val'Mehan lands of Canceri are reliably known to contain these more powerfully Tainted individuals.

Chapter 2

THE SEALED LANDS

“Julis, wake up.”

Julis opened his eyes, but it was still dark. He recognized his grandfather's voice, but it took a moment for him to figure out why he was being awakened in the middle of the night. Had there been an attack? Was the keep in danger? No... his grandfather was waking him alone, quietly, letting the others sleep... and that led him to realize why. At long last, it was time for him to become a man.

Nearly shaking with excitement, Julis dressed quickly and quietly. He was trying to hurry, but also trying to be calm, to approach the situation with the seriousness and maturity appropriate to a man... or one who would soon be a man. It seemed to take forever, while his grandfather waited patiently in the darkness and his mother's breathing echoed rhythmically in the large but crowded bedchamber.

Finally, he was ready. Without a word, his grandfather turned to leave, and Julis followed him, bringing nothing but the clothes he wore. At the door, he turned back for one last look at the room where he would sleep no more, among the mothers and children, but it was dark, and there was nothing to see. One impatient click of his grandfather's tongue echoed softly along the curving stone hall of the Giantskeep, and Julis hurried to follow.

They walked for a while in silence, through the enormous hall-

ways of the Giantskeep. Julis had always felt tiny and insignificant in these halls, their ceilings four times the height of even the tallest man. Empty, as they were tonight, they seemed even larger, and it was with a small sense of relief that Julis followed his grandfather up the long, slow curve of the Southern Stair and out into the cold night.

He had been here before, of course, but the view still took his breath away. They stood a hundred feet above the ground atop the massive walls of the Giantskeep, on a walkway wide enough to ride three horses abreast, with battlements that Julis could only see over by standing on the very tips of his toes. The moon was nearly full, but there was still barely enough light to see a few feet. Here and there on the battlements, red torchlight flared in the hands of sentries, but none of it reached the high wall where Julis and his grandfather stood. The only light came from the countless stars above, an unbroken wave that covered the sky from the northern horizon to where the Wall stood. He couldn't see the Wall at night, of course, but he knew it was there by where the stars stopped.

His grandfather was hobbling away again. Julis followed him; only a short distance this time, to the flat top of a tower. A low fire was burning there, as it had for all the years Julis had been alive, and for many years before that, if the stories were true. The soldier that was keeping the fire nodded once to Julis' grandfather, then moved a little way off into the dark. Julis sat on one side of the fire, his grandfather on the other. They were both quiet for a moment, and then his grandfather began to speak.



"Listen well to what I tell you now, for if the gods bless you with a life long enough, you too will tell it one day, to a child whose father has not even been born yet. Ask no questions until the tale is done, but listen with all your mind and all your heart, for the truth must not be changed when it is told again."

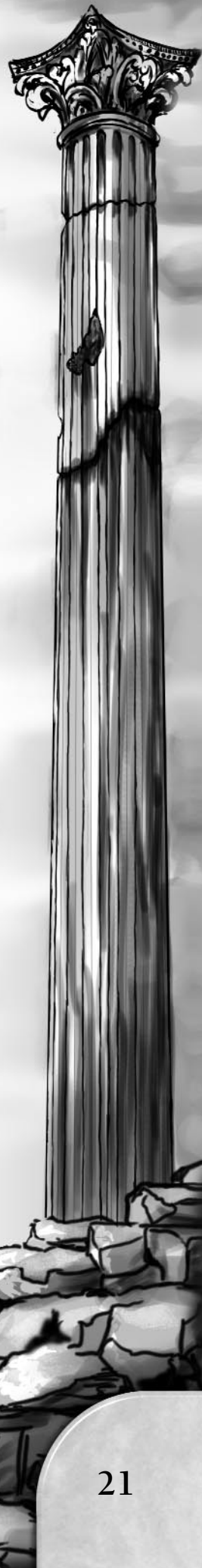
The old man paused for a long while, as though ordering his thoughts. He placed a few more sticks in the fire, making it flare up briefly. For a moment, across the fire, Julis could only see his grandfather's face; the flames obscured the rest of him, and his eyes glittered with the fire's reflection.

"For thirty-five years, the battle against the Dark Ones had been raging," the old man began without preamble. "They had come without warning, shrieking from the sky like a hellish rain to torment and slay all who crossed their path. Many died, and many more would have died had the Emperor – may Ylir praise his name – not gathered the Army of Forty Legions to fight them. Long and arduous was the fight, driving the foul enemy ever northward, ever farther from the lands where they began – where we began, for our fathers' fathers' fathers were among the Emperor's army. We have always fought against the dark, and never will we cease.

"At long last, we reached the Tortured Plains, where the Dark Ones had gathered to make their final stand. Thousands upon thousands they were, filling the Plains as fully as the stars fill the heavens, far more than we could ever hope to defeat. But the Emperor did not despair, for his was the blood of the Valinor. Instead, he devised a cunning plan, in which we were to play a central role."

Julis' grandfather was no longer looking at him; his eyes were focused far away, on or beyond the Wall. It sounded to Julis as though he was speaking from personal memory; as though he was remembering the battle itself, and not merely the story of it.

"When dawn came, the Emperor rode alone onto the Plains, towards the army of evil, and the great devil-king came forth alone to meet him. Every eye was on them...except ours, for we had stolen away, back from the cliffs above the Plains. If any of the Dark Ones saw us, they must have thought us cowards, fleeing from the slaughter to come. But we were not cowards; we were the bravest of the Emperor's legions, the only ones he trusted to take on this most vital mission.



"For days we marched, circling far around the Infernal army, while the Emperor fought the devil-king alone. We marched, men and dwarves together, seeking the place the Emperor had told us to find, where we would prepare our final weapon against the army of the Dark Ones. And then, at last, on the ninth day, we found it, atop a hill where we could plainly see the armies of evil spread out before us from horizon to horizon, as numerous as the stars. All of their attention was focused on the duel between the Emperor and the devil-king; none of them saw us as we prepared to do our duty.

"But even as we began, there was a roar from the assembled Dark Ones, and we saw them surge forward like a vast and bloody tide. Were we too late? Had the Emperor fallen? Was the army of our brothers doomed?"

Julis had unconsciously leaned forward, ever closer to the fire. He barely wanted to breathe, lest he miss one word of his grandfather's tale.

"No. The Emperor, with the wisdom of Ylir himself, had drawn the foul enemy forward, permitting us to work undisturbed. The battle raged for the rest of the day at the very fringes of our vision; only at nightfall did both armies pause to rest, and prepare for the morning. But by then, our work would be done.

"All night we carved and built and watched and prayed, struggling to complete our holy mission in time. And when the first rays of Ylir's light shone down from the rising sun upon our new-made altar, we felt the ground tremble beneath our feet and knew that we had succeeded."

His voice grew hushed. Julis had to strain to hear him over the crackling of the flames; he could almost feel his ears bending forwards to listen to his grandfather's words.

"Even as the army of the Dark Ones began to surge towards the waiting legions, the very stones of the earth surged upwards like tendrils of hungry flame. Demons that were charging across level ground found themselves clinging to a mountainside, or impaled on a sharp spike of stone. Devils flying to the attack flew straight into cliff walls that had not been there an instant before. In the time it would take to draw a dozen breaths, the Wall grew from nothing into the mighty barrier it is today. And there it has stood from that day to this, and there it will stand as long as one of us still remains alive.

"Once the Wall was raised, we came here to the Giantskeep, which had been waiting for us for almost twenty centuries. Here we have made our home, keeping the Dark Ones at bay, preserving the Wall by our rituals, continuing the sacrifice that our ancestors made so long ago. And as long as we are here, and are faithful, the Wall will stand. We are the Legion of Unyielding Courage. We live here and struggle daily against the Dark, so that those beyond the Wall may live in peace. Duty is honor, and now the duty and the honor are yours as well. Rise."

His grandfather got abruptly to his feet, his old joints crackling with the sudden movement. After a moment of surprise, Julis stood as well. While he had listened to his grandfather's tale, the sun had made ready to rise. Even now, the eastern sky was red, the light heralding Ylir's impending arrival. An old saying came unbidden to Julis' mind: If morning skies are red as fire, the day will bring great Ylir's ire. Perhaps there would be a storm – surely that's all it would be. Ylir couldn't be mad that Julis was made a man, could he?

"Stand at the wall," his grandfather said, "and greet Ylir as a man grown."

Feeling proud of himself, but trying to remain humble, Julis stepped to the wall and spread his arms wide, watching the horizon for the first sign of the sun-

disk itself. There...no, wait...there it was. He knew he dared not stare too long at Ylir's glory, but he prolonged the moment as long as he could.

Then he felt the ground shaking beneath his feet.

Confused, Julis turned to look at his grandfather, but the old man was staring southward, at the Wall. So was the guard who had tended the fire; so was everyone else on the battlements, all on the tips of their toes, craning their necks over the mighty crenellations of the Giantskeep. Julis opened his mouth to ask what was happening, but then a mighty roar obliterated all sound. It was louder than anything he had ever heard, louder than anything he could imagine. Clapping his hands to his ears, Julis stared at the Wall in stunned disbelief as it shuddered and shook and began to settle back into the ground.

In the time it would take to draw a dozen breaths, the Wall was reduced to a line of low hills, stretching along the horizon beneath a cloud of dust which stretched for miles into the morning sky. Julis could not see what lay beyond, but he knew that there were plains, and forests, and lakes and rivers there...and people. The very people he and his family had defended for over a thousand years, the ones that the Wall had protected from the vast armies of the Dark Ones. But the Wall was gone now.

Ylir's red glow bathed his grandfather's face as he turned back to look at Julis. The old man's dusty countenance was streaked with tears. "What has happened?" he whispered hoarsely, barely able to speak. "What have we done?"

"I don't know, grandfather," Julis replied. "But I think we'd better go and see."

He took his grandfather's hand, and the two gnomes began making their laborious way back down into the Giantskeep, where an era of a thousand years was ending.

The Sealed Lands and the History of Arcanis

In the world of Arcanis, the vengeful pride of the Sorcerer-King of Ymandragore combined with an ancient Myrastian curse to unleash an enormous plague of demons and devils upon the continent of Onara. For years they roamed about the continent in vast numbers in an orgy of violence, lust, and destruction – a period now known as the Time of Terror. Due to this plague of Infernals, Onara contains a disproportionately large number of dark-kin, though their cambion and tiefling ancestors died out centuries ago.

The only group that could stand against the Infernals was the young Empire of Coryan, but even they could not defeat the armies of evil without divine intervention. That intervention came in the form of the Godswall, a massive mountain range that literally erupted beneath the feet of the Infernals, killing or imprisoning them before they could launch their final assault on humanity's defenders.

As years, then decades, then centuries passed, it became clear that if the Infernals still lived, they had no way to travel beyond the Godswall, and would never trouble the people of Onara again. "While the Godswall stands" became a popular expression meaning "forever," and "when the Godswall falls" meant "never." The Time of Terror became a distant memory, a legendary period of chaos, remembered only when a dark-kin was born to an otherwise ordinary family. The Infernal hordes were gone.

But if something were to go horribly wrong – if the anger of the gods or the arrogance of man managed to open a passageway through the Godswall – what would be found on the other side?

Using the Sealed Lands in Other Settings

By their very nature, the Sealed Lands are relatively easily to drop into any existing fantasy campaign. Any sufficiently large and impassable mountain range could take the place of Arcanis' Godswall as the boundary of the Sealed Lands. If no appropriate mountains are available, a blighted desert, impenetrable jungle, or storm-tossed ocean would do as well – any natural-seeming boundary that could keep mortals out for a thousand years. Keeping the Infernals in is less of a problem, since they are bound in the Sealed Lands magically as well as physically.

If all else fails, the Sealed Lands might be missing from the campaign world entirely until they are somehow brought back. They might have been taken away to some sort of pocket dimension, isolated there until some set of conditions – probably involving an ancient prophecy of some sort – are met. The Sealed Lands might be magically trapped in an ordinary-looking glass bottle, in a massive cavern far below the earth with no connection to the surface, in a bubble of force deep in the ocean, or on a comet which only passes by once in a thousand years. Whatever fits your particular setting and story needs, the Sealed Lands can be tweaked to accommodate it.

Here are some questions to consider when integrating the Sealed Lands with your own campaign world:

Where did all these fiends come from in the first place? Was there a great war with the Infernal, an ancient curse, an open gate to the lower planes, or some other method? Or did the Infernals rule the world until mankind arose to beat them back?

How were the Sealed Lands sealed off? Was it the intervention of the gods, or some mighty mortal magic? What price did the caster(s) have to pay in order to contain this incredibly dangerous threat?

How might they become unsealed again? Anyone capable of sealing off such a large area would certainly have taken provisions to keep it from being unsealed. Perhaps the sealing spell(s) simply cannot last forever, or maybe some group that has been charged to maintain the magic no longer believes in the “ancient legends” and begins to ignore its duties. Or is some demon prince subtly manipulating events to get the Lands unsealed from the outside, possibly using the PCs or their allies as pawns?

Will the Sealing fail gradually, or all at once? Will there be a slow, gradually increasing number of Infernals that escape the bounds of the Sealed Lands? If so, the powers in the campaign may have a chance to figure out what's going on and seal the evil ones away once more. On the other hand, if the seals fail all at once, the physical and political landscape of the campaign world will be changed literally overnight, as a massive new threat appears upon the scene.

What mortal kingdoms had citizens trapped inside the Sealed Lands? Many of the inhabitants of the Sealed Lands as presented in this book are humans, trapped with their fiendish enemies when the Godswall was raised. Your campaign world may not contain the Coryani Empire or the Yhing hir tribesmen; what equivalents can you use in their place? Do the countries they represent still exist, or have they long since faded away into the dust of history?

Why Don't the Infernals Control Everything?

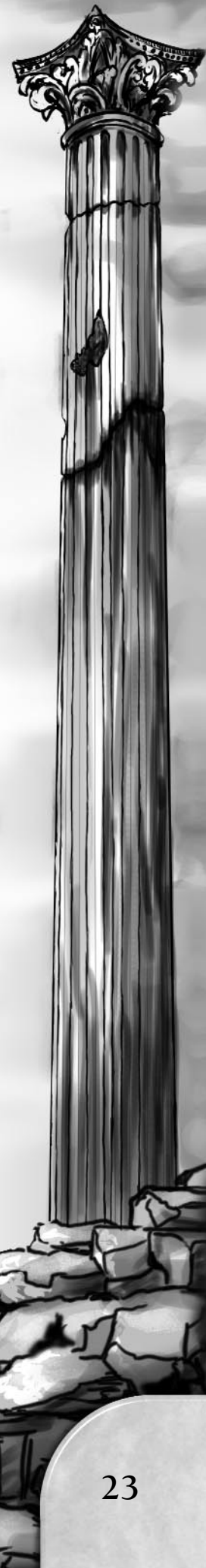
When comparing the power of the average demon or devil to that of the average human, it would be reasonable to expect that every human trapped among the Infernals of the Sealed Lands would have been killed long ago. If there had been an all-out war between mortals and fiends, which would have been exactly what took place. Instead, however, the humans beyond the Wall of the Gods are thriving, though they would certainly prefer to be elsewhere if given the option. Indeed, the mortals beyond the Godswall far outnumber the Infernals there. Are the humans of the Sealed Lands so mighty, to keep themselves alive in the midst of infinitely more dangerous enemies? No; they survive only because the most powerful Infernals want them to.

Demons and devils are immortal unless slain, and even if they are destroyed, their spirits usually return to the nether planes to be born again (albeit as a particularly lowly and miserable being). They need not eat, or sleep, or procreate as mortals do; indeed, all of the basic human drives are unnecessary, and thus nonexistent, among Infernals. As a result, Infernals are extremely prone to boredom. The intricate and tortuous politics of the nether planes have evolved as a result of this boredom; quite simply, the Infernals need something to do. Furthermore, many Infernals actually enjoy being summoned by mortal spellcasters; it breaks up the monotony of their existence and gives them an opportunity to wreak some havoc with no thought of the consequences. And if the summoner makes a mistake and permits the Infernal to escape, the prospect of torturing and destroying the mortal who was haughty enough to summon them is an even more pleasant one.

Once they were brought to Onara and trapped behind the Wall of the Gods, the Infernals no longer had the established hierarchies of fiendish politics to entertain themselves. They could not return home, and could not escape the Sealed Lands to amuse themselves with the limitless supply of mortals on the surface of Onara. As a result, their only source of amusement (other than warring with each other) was the mortals who were trapped with them. The most farsighted among the Infernal leaders quickly realized this, and began developing plans which would keep the Infernals amused while leaving a sustainable population of mortals alive.

In the early years after the raising of the Godswall, huge numbers of mortals were killed by angry (or bored) Infernals. Gradually, however, the ranking fiends began to find ways to keep their minions in check, keeping enough humans alive to ensure a consistent supply of “enemies” for the foreseeable future. In some areas, such as the Lordship of Iron, humans were kept as slaves, providing a self-perpetuating pool of “pets” for the amusement of the Infernals. In other areas, such as among the demonic riders of Tarmalen, the mortals were allowed to remain independent, while the fiends played cat-and-mouse games with them to amuse themselves and keep the mortal population from growing out of hand.

Another important factor in the Infernals' reluctance to openly wage war with the mortals is the fact that they were not summoned to Onara during the Time of Terror, but went there physically through a rift in the dimensions. As a result, their spirits and bodies are both physically present on Onara, and if



an Infernal is killed in the Sealed Lands, it will die permanently. Humans may fear death, but their bravery can overcome that fear because they know that they will eventually die anyway. Infernals, on the other hand, can reasonably expect to live forever; the threat of having their existence permanently snuffed out is far more terrifying for them than it is for mortals. As a result, the fiends of the Sealed Lands are reluctant to enter open combat with mortals (or with each other, for that matter), preferring to rule by intimidation and threats rather than open warfare.

For their part, the mortals may believe that it is their own courage and resourcefulness that keeps them alive, but in actuality they live only by the sufferance of their fiendish oppressors. The humans and their allies treat their conflicts with the Infernals with the deadly seriousness they deserve; for them, the battles are not about amusement, but survival. Over the centuries, the mortals of the Sealed Lands have learned a great deal about avoiding and fighting Infernals, and if the games of the fiends were ever to end, they might not find it as easy to eliminate their mortal opponents as it once would have been. The mortals must simply hope that these hard-won skills will be enough, for if the Wall of the Gods were ever to fall once more, the fiends would have no reason to toy with the mortals any longer, and would probably move quickly to crush them once and for all.

The History of the Sealed Lands

Even before the Godswall arose, the northern portion of Onara had a reputation as a strange and haunted land. Its history is one of blood and terror, and is important for a full understanding of the Sealed Lands as they exist today. Of course, many of the stories that are told of these times have long since become more legend than history, but there is probably at least a grain of truth in all of them.

In the Earliest Days

The story of these lands begins with the reptiles of Ssethregore, as does the story of any part of Onara. The serpents themselves did not dwell in the northlands, as the cold was not to their liking; nonetheless, King Sakhtess would permit no part of Onara to be free of his control. He sent his armies northward – armies comprised mostly of slaves, in this case a mixture of Elorii leaders and goblinoid troops. Tribes of bugbears, orcs and kobolds dwelled there at one time, but ancient Elorii records also speak of another, older race which controlled the northern reaches of Onara. Whatever the nature of these beings, they were exterminated by the armies of Ssethregore, and the orcs and goblinoids enslaved. A Hussma, or Elorii overlord, was placed in charge of the lands, and whatever may have happened under his rule has long been forgotten.

When the Elorii at last revolted against their masters, the Hussma was slain by his fellows, and the northern fringe of the serpent empire collapsed in disarray. A small group of Ssethregoran survivors fled north to found a hidden city known as Valossa and began to rebuild a shadow of their former Empire. Some few Elorii, mostly Osalikenes, settled in the area, but most headed south towards the new capital of Belestor, leaving the land to whichever of the formerly-enslaved humanoids cared to live there. Most of the orcs moved south as well, claim-

ing the unwanted lands at the fringes of the Elorii empire, but vast tribes of kobolds and countless bands of bugbears remained to dwell in the frigid north.

To the south, humans came to Onara and warred with the Elorii, who retreated into the forests and left the rest of the continent to mankind. The First Imperium of Man rose, and while its legions watched the border to keep the northern humanoids from invading, they did not settle in the far north; there was more than enough land in the more temperate climes of southern Onara.

At some time during this period, the giants first appeared on Onara. They arrived quietly, and several different groups claimed parts of the northlands for their own, displacing the smaller humanoids with little difficulty. The largest and most intelligent of them, the Celestial Giants, soon subjugated their fellows, and began to build a large and mighty empire of their own while the greatest civilization mankind has ever built flourished in the south. Meanwhile, the serpent city of Valossa grew great in its seclusion, but was then destroyed in a massive catastrophe which shattered the eastern coast and turned the land around Valossa into what are now called the Pirate Isles.

More centuries passed. The giants engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the Ancient Dragons, mighty and powerful beings that inexplicably ignored the kobolds and other inhabitants of the area while preying on the giants. Farther to the south, Leonydas val'Viridan led his people in revolt against the Imperium, destroying the once-great realm. The Khitani fled the First Imperium when Leonydas' armies approached, bearing the so-called Sleeping Emperor away to the northwestern coast of Onara. The Khitani displaced the western tribes of kobolds which had been driven off by the giants, driving them east and still farther north. As for Leonydas, his kingdom collapsed three decades later, and for centuries southern Onara was in chaos.

The Shadowed Age

After fighting a losing war for centuries, the Celestial Giants finally received divine assistance in their struggle against the Ancient Dragons. In return, they promised to guard and advise mankind after the collapse of the First Imperium. The Valinor of the Pantheon themselves tracked down and imprisoned or destroyed the dragons, though not before most of the giants' cities were devastated by the titanic battles. With their homes in ruins and their new charges dwelling to the south, the celestials abandoned the few intact settlements left to them and made their way south. One group founded a new city at Nol Dappa, in the She'Haulk Mountains, but the others dispersed themselves throughout the southern lands of men.

The lesser giants had no wish to serve the celestials again, so they dispersed to the more distant corners of Onara. Many of the frost giants chose to remain in the northlands they had once called home, or even to travel farther north. Most other giants, however, traveled south to more temperate climes, though their paths quickly diverged from those of their former masters. Deprived of their former subjects, the celestials did not wait long to enslave a new race of minions...betraying their stewardship of mankind in the process. Within two generations, the Celestial Giants had set themselves up as gods over men, imprisoning or slaying those who dared resist them. Illiir soon punished them with the mighty Curse which created the dwarves, but not before many of their human subjects had died, and many more fled.

One such group of refugees, the Skohir, fled from the subjugation of the giants back into the northern lands that their would-be masters had abandoned. Seeking to put as much distance as they could between themselves and the giants, they eventually settled on the eastern shores of the northlands. This rugged shoreline was even then known as the Bleak Coast, but the Skohir were a hard people, and they made their home in this hard land.

The Yhing hir may also have originated as refugees from the giants' cruelty; if so, they escaped in great numbers, and do not appear to have been pursued. Whatever their origin, the tribes of the Yhing hir spent their summers well north of what are now the Hinterlands. The tundra, so cold and unwelcoming in the winter months, was relatively pleasant and fertile in the summer, and the herds of wild horses roaming the steppes numbered in the hundreds of thousands. A few fixed settlements grew up over the centuries, places where trade could be conducted with the Khitani to the west, the Skohir to the east or the myriad city-states which had survived the giants' rule to the south.

West of the Yhing hir plains, the Khitani had remained free of the giants' oppression, and their young but sophisticated empire grew at a slow but steady pace. In the beginning, they expanded into the temperate south, into the Fervidus Hills and the flood plains beyond. Indigenous tribes such as the Voei proved stubborn and tenacious foes, and the pace of southward expansion gradually slowed. To the east lay the warded and menacing Vastwood, and most of the Khitani who tried to settle under its eaves never returned. Thus the Khitani turned to the north, into the colder but still hospitable lands along the Tsangloon River. Only the poor wished to dwell here, so far from Khitan and the other great cities of the empire, but there was room enough for many families who had nowhere else to go.

To the south, the empires of the Tenecians, Eryunellians and Myrantians rose and fell. Great cities such as Khafré and Whon were founded, and others such as Mandragore and Myrantis were destroyed. But in the north, the greatest empire belonged to Auxun.

The Rise and Fall of the Auxunite Empire

Auxun, the man, is thought to have been a Vanomir warlord who began his career by raiding the western lands of the Yhing hir and the more easterly settlements of the Khitani. A cunning warrior and skilled tactician, Auxun had an instinctive understanding of just how much he could take from a given village without wiping it out entirely. This way, he ensured that the targets of his raids would survive for another year, and be ripe for the plucking by the time he returned.

With every year that passed, Auxun's warband grew larger and larger. The villages, knowing that he was coming and that they could not hope to stand against him, began growing food specifically to serve as tribute for Auxun and his warriors. They gathered it together and prepared it for him when the time grew near for him to arrive, hoping that he would take it without bloodshed and leave them with enough food to survive and even prosper a little during the coming year.

While many of Auxun's lieutenants suggested that he take more than the tribute, to teach the peasants that they could dictate what was and was not his, Auxun was wise enough to accept what was given to him. "Why fight when we do not have to?" he told his men. "The villagers have submitted to us, and give us what we demand. If we attack them anyway, they will see no reason not to fight us next year, and they will spread the word to other villages. If ever they grow

unified, they are numerous enough to drive us off; let us give them no reason to unify." The lieutenants saw the wisdom in this, and did as Auxun ordered.

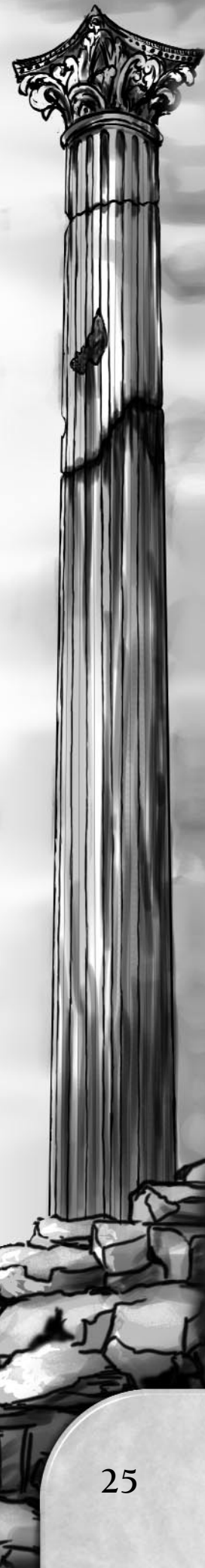
Auxun knew that if his warband grew numerous enough, he could no longer support them by raids alone. If they traveled with him, they and their horses would consume so much of any given village's supplies that the village would not survive another year, which would put an end to the raiding. If he broke his warband into smaller groups, there would not be enough villages to sustain all of them. Auxun realized that unless he took drastic action, his days as the greatest warlord in the northlands would come to an end. But, as we have said, Auxun was a very cunning man indeed.

Auxun's raids began to fall into a regular, predictable pattern, and the people of the Khitani villages soon recognized this. They had sent messages back to Khitan before, but their pleas for help had never been answered; the villages were too poor to waste an army chasing the skilled Yhing hir riders around the plains. But once the messages told the Khitani generals where Auxun and his men could be found next, they decided to put an end to his raiding once and for all. A large host of Khitani soldiers, brilliant in their colored silks and their wicker armor, began riding east. At their head was a young general, inexperienced but confident.

Auxun continued his raids, following his usual pattern, until his scouts reported sighting the Khitani army, who were preparing an ambush for Auxun and his men at the next village they were due to raid. Smiling at the news, Auxun ordered his men to make camp for the night, and let the Khitani scouts see them. But under cover of darkness, Auxun and his men rode away, leaving their tents standing and their campfires burning. They rode west, farther than they had ever gone before, until eventually they reached Kuchon, which was the largest Khitani town for hundreds of miles. Kuchon had never been attacked, and so had very few soldiers; most of those had gone with the army from the capital, because they knew the land. So when Auxun and his riders swept down upon the town as the sun rose, the fight was over quickly.

Even as the masters of Kuchon surrendered to Auxun, he dispatched groups of riders to all the villages he had not yet raided, to collect the food they were owed in tribute and bring it back to Kuchon. They also brought messages, saying that Auxun cared more for the Khitani people than their own Emperor did, and if any wanted to serve him, they would always be welcome. The people who Auxun had preyed on for years scoffed at this, and while they gave up their tribute, none came to serve Auxun. But when he received the news, Auxun just smiled and began to build up the defenses of Kuchon.

The Khitani army waited and waited to spring their ambush, but Auxun and his men never came. After a week, they began moving on to other villages, thinking that perhaps Auxun had simply skipped the village where they lay in wait. They also needed supplies, since soldiers and horses need food to be able to fight. Whenever they reached a village, though, the villagers had no food to spare, since they had already given it to Auxun's men. The army, needing food, took what supplies the villagers had kept for themselves, and left the villagers to starve. Then, once the army had moved on, Auxun's riders returned again, bearing messages of good will. This time, the villagers did not scoff.





When the Khitani army finally learned that Auxun had taken Kuchon, they marched at once to relieve the city. When they arrived, they found the city's defenses redoubled, and all of Auxun's horsemen standing ready to defend it. Beneath the walls, under the watchful gaze of Auxun's men, stood thousands of villagers from all around the region, standing unarmed in the grass between the two groups of warriors.

"Uncivilized savages!" cried the Khitani general towards the walls of Kuchon. "You have preyed upon the people of Khitan long enough! We have three times as many horsemen as you; we have better weapons and finer armor; and we ride with the blessing of the Sleeping Emperor. Release these peasants, give up your horses, and bring us the heads of your leaders, and we will let you flee from Kuchon, never to trouble these lands again."

Then Auxun, standing on the new town walls above the mighty gate he had had constructed, shouted back. "Who is troubling these lands now? We always left your people enough to eat; you have left them to starve. We stand to defend this town; you left it unprotected, just as you ignored the villagers for so many years. If these are your people, then come claim them, and let them show you how much they hate us."

Infuriated by this arrogance, the Khitani general gave the order to charge, despite the advice of his subordinates to wait and make a

plan. As the Khitani cavalry charged, the peasants from the villages ran forward, as though to escape Kuchon and take refuge among their countrymen. But as the Khitani came closer, the peasants all stopped as one, and bent down, and reached into the grass; and when they stood back up, they had spears in their hands and the gleam of anger in their hungry eyes. The Khitani could not stop their charge in time, and ran headlong into the forest of spears. Then, even as they were trying to recover from this sudden and unexpected betrayal, the gates of Kuchon opened and the horsemen of Auxun charged out to finish them off. That night, there was a great feast in Kuchon, where the food from all the villages was fed to villagers, townsfolk and horsemen alike.

From that day on, Kuchon was the center of a growing kingdom, which eventually became known as the Auxunite Empire. The descendants of Auxun were just as cunning as he was, and for over three centuries, the Empire grew and prospered. Much of the land formerly controlled by the Khitani fell under Auxunite control, as did Moratavia and most of Ufilia to the south, and vast areas of the plains over which the Yhing hir rode. The Auxunites were skilled horsemen and dangerous warriors when they needed to be, but they also possessed a gift for cunning (some would call it treachery) that served them well. Auxun himself rapidly assumed an almost mythical status, and the Priest-Kings who took control the Empire in later years worshipped him nearly as much as they did the Pantheon of Man.

The reign of the Auxunites came to an abrupt end, however, three hundred and fifty years to the day after Auxun conquered Kuchon. No one knows exactly what happened on that day, though some legends say that the Sleeping Emperor awoke and whispered a single word: "Enough." However it happened, the city of Kuchon was destroyed overnight, and only a massive crater occupied the place where it had been. The land for hundreds of miles around was burned out and blackened, the trees dead and the waters poisoned. In the south, the conquered peoples of Ufilia and Moratavia rose up under the leadership of the val'Tensen family, driving out or killing their Auxunite overlords while they were still reeling from the destruction of their capital.

The few survivors of the Auxunite Empire fled east to the Yhing hir or west to become slaves of the Khitani, or huddled in their villages and scratched out a living on the barren soil. Rumors, based on fragments of the Auxunites' holy book, said that the Priest-Kings would one day return to lead the Auxunites back to their former glory, but such rumors did little good for those trying to eke out enough food to stay alive from day to day; the tales soon dwindled to myth, and then were forgotten entirely, or almost entirely. For centuries afterward, the home of the former Auxunite Empire was known as the Blasted Plains.

The Time of Terror

In the areas beyond the borders of the Empire of Auxun, life remained largely unchanged during the Age of Shadow. The Khitani prospered under the rule of their Sleeping Emperor; the Yhing hir spent their summers on the cold steppes and their winters on the more temperate plains; the Skohir fished and raided; and the frost giants and bugbears were an occasional menace to all of them. But on the whole, life in the northlands was relatively prosperous and peaceful.

Until the Infernals came.

No man living today knows just how and why the Infernal hordes were unleashed upon Onara (save only the Sorcerer King of Ymandragore, if he is still human enough to be counted). But however they came, they arrived by the thousands in a single instant, and became a plague unlike any the world had seen before. The sufferings of the southern lands of Onara are well known, but those in the almost-forgotten northlands suffered as well.

The val'Mehans of Canceri had long been dealing with the Devil-kings, making deals in preparation for the day when the fiends might come to Onara. When they finally did arrive, the val'Mehans gave them places of honor and respect in the lands of Canceri; in return, that land was spared from the depredations of the Infernals, though it was still subjected to their heavy-handed rulership. Many of the fiends that arrived in and around Canceri were thirsty for blood and terror, and were somewhat disappointed at having to spare Canceri, but there were more than enough nearby targets to enable them to slake their bloodlust.

Among the Yhing hir

Among these targets were the hapless riders of the Yhing hir. The horsemen were mighty and feared warriors among their mortal neighbors, but they had no way to fight the Infernals; their scimitars and shortbows might serve to take down the weakest of the outsiders, but their more powerful foes laughed and shrugged off the attacks as a man might brush aside a fly. A few Yhing hir warriors carried weapons blessed by the spirits, or enchanted weapons gained by trade, but they were too few and too widely scattered to mount any serious resistance. The Yhing hir had no choice but to flee when they could and fight when they

must, hoping that the Infernals would tire of the pursuit before all the tribes were wiped out.

Not long after the Time of Terror began, a tribe of Khur Gi riders were fleeing from a group of three demonic pursuers. The pursuit had gone on for weeks, driving the tribe far from its normal hunting grounds, far from where any help might be found. The fastest riders might have escaped, but they would not sacrifice their women and children to their foul pursuers. The demons, for their part were winged and tireless, and could have pounced upon the tribe at any time. Instead, they followed the tribe, always at the edge of their vision, slaying a few riders each day seemingly at random, feeding off the fear they engendered in the doomed horsemen.

One sleepless night in the terrified camp, a woman came to the Nawal's tent. She was said to talk to the spirits, and they to her, and most people in the tribe thought her mad. No one even remembered her birth name any more; for years, she had simply been called *etza*, "spirit talker." The Nawal had not slept in days for worry over the fate of his people, and still he could find no way to save them. He was in no mood to speak to anyone, but if he could not save them, maybe the spirits could, and so he let her enter.

"You come on a dark night, *etza*," he said to her. "Maybe the darkest that our people have ever seen."

"But not as dark as tomorrow night," she said, her voice wavering. "And that will not be as dark as the night after, and the nights will get darker and darker until one day there is no dawn, and the Khur Gi will sleep in the night forever."

"Is this what you have come to tell me?" the Nawal snapped. "You bring me news that a child could read on the wind. If you have no hope to offer me, be gone."

"Hope?" she said. "Hope is for fools who would be saved without paying the price. There is always a price, and if the price is high enough, anything can be bought with it. Even the life of our people."

The Nawal spoke carefully, for he did not trust the *etza*. "What price do you speak of?"

"Only your life," she said, "and one thing more." She placed a cauldron over the fire in his tent, and told him her plan...though not all of it.

And so it was that when the Khur Gi broke their camp the next morning, riding before dawn in their hopeless flight from the demons that pursued them, the *etza* and the Nawal remained behind, waiting alone in the middle of the wasteland. The demons watched them curiously, but they did nothing, only waited. The sun rose, and climbed high into the morning sky, but still they only waited. Eventually, the three demons hopped towards them. "Why do you not run?" one hissed, and its voice was like water dripping onto a hot baking-stone.

"We are tired of running," the *etza* said.

"We will torture you," the second demon said, and its voice was soft and black as night, "We will pull out your eyes and turn them around, so that you spend the rest of your miserable lives staring into your own skulls. We will peel off your skins and roll you in the sand before putting it back on you, that every movement sends a thousand pains into your bloody flesh. We will drive a thousand needles through your bodies and hang you on a high stone wall to starve."

"Torture means nothing to me," the Nawal said. "I am Khur Gi. All I ask is that you burn my body when you are done, for those who eat

of a Nawal's flesh gain great courage and mighty strength. Such food is not fit for jackals."

"We will kill you," the third demon said, and its voice was as death. "We will open your bellies and hang you by your own entrails. We will each grab a part of you and pull until you burst apart. We will feed you scorpions and snakes and sew your openings shut until they gnaw their way out of you."

"Kill me, then, and stop your prattling," the *etza* said. "Only do not violate me as a man might, for I have only ever loved one man, and he is dead. No other may know me."

And with this the three demons looked at each other, and the same thought came to all of them. Moving as one, they grabbed the Nawal in their mighty talons and ate him alive with their sharp beaks. In nine bites, he was gone, and they looked at the old woman. "His flesh was good, and already I feel the strength flow through me. Let us go south to the cities of men," he said to his fellows as he spat out the bones of the Nawal's arm. "With the Nawal's flesh in us, there is none who can stand against us. We will rule as kings over them, and over all our kind as well."

"No, you will not," said the *etza*, and the three of them looked down at her. "Last night, I fed the Nawal a poison, and now it is in you."

Then the three demons laughed, and their laughter was as brass bells struck with broken hammers. "Foolish woman!" the second demon sneered. "Your poisons are meant for mortal men, and will do no harm to us. But here, we will give them back to you in our own way. You have known only one man, but now you will know our flesh."

And when the three of them had filled her with their vile seed, they stood, full of flesh and lazy with sated lust. "Kill her," the third demon said, "and let us chase down the other riders. They have avoided us too long. It is time for them to die."

But the *etza* only smiled, and said, "No; it is time for you to go." And she said a word of power, the word that the spirits had whispered in her ear when she was born, and the three demons vanished like a summer cloud. She stood then, and picked up the bones of the Nawal, and began walking.

When she returned to her tribe, they grieved that the Nawal was dead, but rejoiced that the demons were gone. Soon she became great with child, and men whispered that her child would be a demon; but she had lain with the Nawal the night before he died. She bore three sons when her time came, and each had the Nawal's eyes and the *etza*'s hair; but as they grew, one had a voice like sizzling water, and one a voice like soft darkness, and one a voice like death. They were the Nawal's sons, but they were more besides.

This, too, was as she had planned, and she began to teach her sons the ways of the spirits, in ways that mere mortals were not yet ready to learn. And thus were born the first Ehtzara.

Among the Khitani

The Khitani, too, suffered the depredations of the Infernal hordes, though they were far better prepared to fight than the squabbling city-states which would one day comprise the Coryani Empire.

One day during the Shadowed Age, the Sleeping Emperor of

Khitani opened his eyes and began to speak. Seven scribes, who were always seated at his bedside to prepare for just such an occasion, began to write even as the first words tumbled from the Valinor's mouth.

"Let there be a decree," he said. "At dawn tomorrow, every consecrated priest of Sarish in Khitan shall report to a weaponsmith rather than a church, and he shall continue to report there every day for one year. He shall let fall seven drops of his own blood onto every bar of steel which is placed onto the anvil, and bless it in the name of Sarish as it is placed into the flames. With every refolding of the steel, he shall call upon the Binder to make it strong, and when any edge is ground, he shall call upon the Oathmaker to make it sharp. When each blade is quenched, he shall let his blood fall again onto the blade; seven drops for a greatsword, five for a broadsword, four for an axe blade, three for a short sword, two for a dagger, one for a spear point, one for an arrowhead. Then the weapon shall be completed, wrapped in purple silk, and stored in the temple of Sarish."

Then the Sleeping Emperor closed his eyes again, and his decree was made law, and all was done as he had commanded.

A year and a day later, the Time of Terror began. As in so many places across Onara, the outlying villages and towns of the Khitani Empire were drenched in blood, echoing to the fierce laughter of the Infernal. The peasants and tradesmen that survived fled towards the capital, Khitan, by the tens of thousands. Implacably, arrogantly, the armies of the damned followed them, and the land was left desolate in their wake. As the fiends approached the Serpent's Wall, the great and winding barrier that surrounds Khitan, the Sleeping Emperor awoke once more and told his people to make ready.

The weapons made that year were brought forth from the temples of Sarish, still wrapped in their purple silk, and blessed once more even as the fiends stormed down upon the borders of the Empire like a polluted rain. The archers on the Serpent's Wall bent their bows and aimed at the oncoming horde, but the Infernals laughed and shouted their defiance, knowing that no mortal weapon could hurt them. Then the arrows were loosed, and they cut through the laughing fiends like so much paper. Even as the creatures in the second rank tried to understand what had happened to their fellows, another rain of arrows came down, and then another, and another. Then the horsemen of Khitan charged from the walls, their lances tipped with the blessed steel of Sarish, their swords ready to slay the things that normal steel could never harm. The fiends were numerous and deadly still, but they had not expected to face death at the hands of mere mortals, and so they fled.

Though their victories were not always so easy, the Khitani pushed their vile enemies back to the borders of the Empire and beyond, driving the fiends away to seek for easier prey. With the Khitani holding firm before them and the warded woods of the Elorii at their back, the Infernal hordes fled. Some fled south, down into the Fervidus Hills and the lands beyond, the softer and less stoutly defended portions of Onara. These, the Khitani let go, for the fiends could too easily defend themselves by ambush among the rocky valleys of the hills. But other Infernals fled east, across the great steppes of northern Onara. The general in charge of the troops here, Chai Tsu, was flushed with victory and pride, and ordered his army to pursue. It was an order he would long regret giving.

Among the Skohir

The Skohir were farther away and less numerous than the Yhing hir, and so were less of a target during the Time of Terror. But no group remained unscathed by the Infernal hordes, and the Skohir were no exception.

A group of Skohir raiders were sailing down the coast to raid a Takomir village. They boasted and bragged of the heads they would take, the women they would rape, and the coin they would bring back with them, but fell silent as they caught sight of the village that was their target. Stealthily, they beached their boat and circled around the village through the sparse woods, so that the villagers would have their backs to the water and be unable to run. Then they crept towards the village itself, trying to get as close as possible before beginning their attack.

The first villager they came upon was a beautiful young woman, small and slender, with flawless copper skin and long, glossy black hair. Her beautiful brown eyes widened when she saw the Skohir, but she did not cry out; instead, she fell to her knees and begged them to aid her. "Please," she said, "there is a madman in our village. He came from nowhere, screaming and waving a machiara in each hand, and he...he killed all the men. Some ran away, I think, but the rest are all dead, and now he is hunting for me. Please, you must help me; I will give you any reward you can name."

The Skohir looked at each other, and then back at the girl; they all knew what reward they would claim from her. With nods and insincere smiles, they promised to save her, then hefted their weapons and crept on into the village. As they walked, they could see the truth in her tale; here and there lay the body of a Takomir man, bloodily slain. Some had weapons, and some had none, but they were all dead. The madman had done most of their work for them; they would have to kill only one man between them, and there would be plenty of time left to loot the village and enjoy the woman they had "rescued."

As it turned out, he saw them before they saw him. He fell upon them with an inarticulate scream, and the first Skohir fell before he could even raise his shield. The madman moved with an inhuman speed, and seemed not to feel their blows; he had a dozen cuts on him before he had even attacked the Skohir, and soon had a dozen more to match them, and yet he fought on. The Skohir dropped one after another, and their confident fighting soon became desperate. In the end, there were too many of them for any one enemy, and the Takomir madman finally fell, though only four of the Skohir were still standing afterwards.

The girl who had warned them had been watching from a distance, and she smiled invitingly when the madman dropped to the ground. "You are all so brave and strong," she said, "and you have saved me. How can I ever thank you?"

"You'll thank us all properly," said the tallest of the Skohir. "That one fought like a demon, and no mistake. But I'll wager your bed will be sweet reward enough!"

"Oh," she said, and put a hand to her mouth; but her lips curved upward in a smile, and she did not blush. "If that is the reward you wish, I will give it gladly. But which of you will claim it? My bed is only big enough for myself and one other."

"Then we shall take turns, my sweetness," said another raider. "A fine girl like you will surely have enough love and to spare for four brave heroes."

She frowned at that, ever so slightly, but even her frown was beautiful, and inspired desire in all the Skohir. "If that

is what you wish, I will oblige you as best I can. But I fear that even one of you strong warriors will love me to exhaustion, and I may not have the strength for more. Who shall go first?"

"I will," said the first Skohir, "for I claimed her first."

"I will," said the second Skohir, "for I'm the eldest."

"I will," said the third Skohir, "for I landed the killing blow."

"I will," said the last Skohir, "for you're all dead men." And with that, he stabbed the first Skohir in the chest, killing him; but his blade caught in the dead man's ribcage. As he cursed and tried to pull it free, the second Skohir ran him through with a snarl. The two dead men collapsed together, and the second Skohir bent to wipe his blade clean on their cloaks. He never stood up, though, because the third Skohir took his head off with one heavy blow of his machiara.

"And that's the end of that," he said, kicking the head aside. "Now come, my pretty, and let's have my reward. That's two men I've killed today, and my blood is up; but I'll wager you can cool me down."

"That I will," she said, and smiled saucily. Paying no mind to the dead littering the ground, she strode over to the last Skohir and into his waiting arms. "Kiss me," she said, and turned her face up towards his, her lips parted for his kiss. Without a pause, he kissed her.

"That's odd," he said. "Your lips are cold. Now I feel cold, too. All over." Then he fell down dead beside his three fellows.

Licking the taste of his death from her cold lips, the woman knelt down beside the Takomir madman. He was not quite dead yet, though his life's blood was pouring out onto the dirt, and he was too weak to move or even speak. "There," she said to him. "You fought so well, my hero; killed everyone in the village, and most of these boors besides. So brave, and so strong you were for me. I told you that I'd be yours once the others were all dead, didn't I? And now they are dead, and I am yours for all the rest of your life. Now give me a kiss."

He did, and died, and the succubus licked her lips again and set off for the next village.

The Battle of Hope's End

When the Time of Terror began, one man, now known only as the First Emperor of Coryan, began gathering his people together after receiving a divine vision from Illiir, father of the gods. He began to reform the ancient legions of the long-lost First Imperium, and as they marched onward, freeing villages and towns from the scourge of the Infernal, more and more volunteers flocked to his banners. The fiendish hordes began to fall back before the might of his armies, eventually gathering together in the north of Onara, past the lands of Canceri where they had once ruled, to the place known as the Blasted Plains. This is where the armies of the First Emperor marched to meet their enemy.

The fiendish army was many times the size of the Emperor's force, and despite their valor and bravery, it was clear that victory by force of arms alone would be impossible. Sending a single legion and a cadre of dwarven sappers to flank the demonic army in a desperate gambit, the Emperor strode forward to engage the leader of the Infernals – the immense devil-king Uhxbtracti – in single combat. If the Emperor won, the Infernal armies

would return to their home plane; if not, Onara would be doomed to an eternity under the cruel reign of Uhxbractit and his foul minions.

Neither the fiends nor the legions could believe that a mortal was capable of standing up to Uhxbractit, yet the duel went on for eight days and eight nights, with neither able to gain the upper hand. Finally, as was their nature, the Infernals resorted to treachery, striking the Emperor with a poisoned dart on the ninth day of the raging duel. Upon seeing their foul tactics, the forces of the Empire surged forward, and the evil army charged to meet them. During the chaotic engagement that followed, a brave sortie by the legions managed to recover the dying Emperor as the sun was setting and the battle drawing to a close for the day. It was clear, however, that without their leader, the forces of good had little hope of survival, much less victory.

What happened the next morning, even as the battle was about to be joined, was the greatest miracle in the history of Arcanis. The very earth itself arose in anger at the fiends' treachery, boiling upward into a vast and impassable mountain range. Though their beloved Emperor had died, ascending to the afterlife in the brilliant light of Illiir, the Infernal army was gone. Those who had not been destroyed by the earthquake were trapped behind the Wall of the Gods.

The Sealing

While the power of Illiir – or whatever power had caused the Godswall to be raised – had indeed saved most of the people of Onara from the ravages of the Infernal hordes, it had not saved them all. Several distinct groups of mortals were trapped behind the Wall with their enemies, and seemed as though they were doomed to remain there forever.

The Legion of Unyielding Courage

The Legion of Unyielding Courage was a force of brave Coryani scouts that had been moving into position to flank the demonic horde when the Wall was raised. The commander of the legion, one Lurio val'Inares, saw the Wall come into existence on the southern horizon, and immediately realized that his orders from the First Emperor were now moot. He ordered his legionnaires to turn around and return the way they had come, hoping to find a way out of the confining ring of mountains.

When they came closer to the Wall, they saw Infernals crawling over it like ants, all seeking a way over, under, around or through the wall. Knowing that his small force would be torn apart as soon as the fiends saw them, he ordered another about-face and began looking for a defensible position. If the Infernals found a way to escape, Lurio reasoned, the legion could follow once their enemies were gone; if not, the fiends would be only too happy to take their frustrations out on Lurio and his men.

A small cadre of dwarves from Solanos Mor, who had made common cause with the Coryani in the face of their common enemy, had accompanied the Legion of Unyielding Courage on its mission. As the legion moved northwards, expecting to be fallen upon by the Infernals at any moment, Matek, the leader of the dwarves, approached Lurio val'Inares.

"General," Matek said, "there is a great fortress north of here which we could hold for months, even years."

"A fortress, in this desolation?" Lurio frowned. "Who holds it now?"

"No one. It has been empty for centuries, though its walls are still as strong as the day it was built."

"Well, who built it? And why was it abandoned, if it was so strong? How do you know of this place?"

A shadow passed over Matek's face. "That I cannot tell you, General, for the shame of my people is great. I will say only that it will be safe for our people and impenetrable to our enemies for as long as there are men alive to hold it."

Lurio frowned again, as though he were trying to read Matek's thoughts by sheer force of will. After a moment, he let out a sigh and said, "Take us there, then. Any hope is better than none."

For a day and a night and another day they marched, waiting for the Infernals to swoop down upon them. The attack never came, though; perhaps the evil ones were still struggling to find a way past the Wall of the Gods. On the afternoon of the second day, they saw the fortress Matek had spoken of, an impressive fortress of white stone. But it was only after they had marched for several more hours and not reached the keep that they realized how impossibly huge it was. The stronghold had been built in an earlier age, and those who built it were giants.

Its walls were of granite, a hundred feet tall at their lowest point; they were still polished smooth and unmarred by the passage of time. The doors were of marble, forty feet high and two feet thick, but at a word from Matek, they swung open with the touch of a finger. The Legion of Unyielding Courage began moving through the gates, gazing with wonder on the massive battlements and the masterfully crafted buildings, but Matek and the dwarves stood outside the gate with their eyes cast down. Even when the last of the legionnaires had entered, they waited.

Lurio said to Matek, "Why will you not come in? The enemy may be close, and mighty though these walls may be, we will need every hand to defend them."

But Matek shook his head and said, "We are not fit to enter. Our ancestors dwelt here once, as shepherds and guardians of mankind; but they failed in their duty. Thus we were cast out from our homes of old, and came to Solanos Mor in penitent shame. How would we dare re-enter such a place before Illiir forgives us?"

Lurio knelt down beside Matek and said, "I do not know the tale you speak of, and maybe it is not my place to know it. But you say that your ancestors were to be the guardians of mankind. The men under my command are few enough, and likely doomed; but if you would be our guardians, then stand beside us on the walls of your ancestral home, and raise your blades beside us. For without you, we are doomed; but your strength may help us withstand the enemy for a while, and maybe you can redeem yourselves in Illiir's eyes."

And so Matek and his dwarves went into the Stronghold of the Celestial Giants, the first dwarves to set foot within its halls in seventeen centuries.

The Horse's Tail

The many tribes of the Yhing hir dwelled upon the plains in the north and east of Onara in the tens of thousands. In the summer months, they rode across the northern steppes; but when winter came, they traveled south in a single, vast caravan to the warmer climes on the shores of the Pale Sea. In the front rode the blooded warriors, the most cunning hunters, those who knew the paths better than any others. In the center, there rode the old, the infirm, the children, and the women, with the younger riders around them in case of trouble. And in the rear were those who followed because they had nothing left to lose, those who called themselves the Horse's Tail.



The leader of the Tail, if there was one, was Himmah, the greatest (or worst) horse thief the Yhing hir had ever known. Himmah was never formally exiled from his people, the Vanomir; he would have been killed for his crimes if anyone had ever caught him. But Himmah only stole the strongest and fastest horses, and he rode them in ways that left even other Yhing hir openmouthed in awe. He dared not join the caravan of the tribes, but neither did he dare remain in the northlands when the rest of the Yhing hir traveled south. Winter was coming, and when the year turned cold the northlands were practically unlivable; beyond the cold itself, winter was when the giants came out to hunt. There were demons and devils to the south, of course, and they were worse than the giants, but the fiends were in the north too. Given the choice of Infernals and giants or Infernals alone, the decision was easy.

Thus, Himmah had gathered the Horse's Tail around him. Most were exiles, those who had committed crimes which did not quite justify killing them. Others were madmen or lackwits, abandoned by the tribes because they were of no use. Himmah was not normally a sympathetic man, but he brought them into his makeshift tribe as long as they could sit a horse. Finally, there were the women; it was said that Himmah stole women's hearts as easily as he stole horses, and more than a few rode with him and stole horses beside him. The riders of the Horse's Tail were not part of the caravan, of course. The rest of the Yhing hir would not care if they followed or stayed, lived or died, and many would prefer that they died. For that manner, many of the Tail cared little for each other. They rode together because together, at least they had a chance to survive without the tribes. They followed the rest of the caravan because they had to go south to survive...but they followed at a distance, lest they tempt the young riders in front of them to end their raids once and for all.

As a result, they were not close enough to be saved when the Godswall arose. It rose towering before them like a sudden storm, stretching implacably across their path as though some magician had conjured it from the air. Some of the Tail were madmen, and thought the Wall just another part of their madness. The fools and lackwits just kept riding, barely even noticing what had happened. But although Himmah and the rest did not know what had happened, they quickly realized that there was no point in trying to cross the Wall. The horses could not possibly cross such mountains, they reasoned, and if the horses could not cross, neither would they.

Instead, they gathered their helpless companions and rode west along the Wall, hoping to find an end to the mountains that had never been there before. Instead, they rode into the main body of Uhxbractit's army, swarming on the Wall like flies on a corpse. The fiends, boiling over with rage at being trapped in their moment of triumph, screamed in fury when they saw the Horse's Tail, and charged straight towards the horsemen with nothing on their minds but death. The fools and the madmen stared at the oncoming Infernals, gaping slack-jawed until the moment of their death. But Himmah and the rest of the Tail rode as they never had before.

Had the horses been any less than the fastest among the Yhing hir, they would never have been able to outrun the horde of Infernals. Had the riders been any less than the most skilled and cunning riders, they would never have managed to escape the cruel claws of their flying pursuers. But both horses and riders were unmatched even among the Yhing hir, and many of them (though not all) escaped after a week-long chase. Shifting directions on a moment's notice, using the blasted terrain to their best advantage, changing to spare mounts at a full gallop, the First Ride of the Tail was the most phenomenal extended feat of horsemanship Onara had ever seen, though there were no witnesses to tell of its glory.

When the last of the Infernals had been left behind, Himmah rode for two days more, for he knew that if they stopped to rest, the demons that had been chasing them might well catch them. Finally, he signaled the Horse's Tail to slow to a walk, and gathered the other survivors to him, and they began to try to decide what to do.

For weeks they rode, seeking a way back to the plains which they knew so well. They struck eastward until they reached the Godswall again, vast mountains where no mountains had a right to be. They followed the Wall to the south, searching for a pass which the horses might be able to travel, but they found none. From time to time, they would encounter small groups of Infernals roaming the land. The Tail would go around them if they could, and flee if they had to. Each time, most of the horsemen would escape, but each time one or two would be caught, and the Horse's Tail began to dwindle slowly but surely in size.

Eventually, Himmah called the Tail to him again. "We cannot go on like this," he said. "Demons are everywhere in these mountains, and even if we could get past them, we have seen no sign that there might be a way over the mountains."

"The mountains grew high in an instant," said Kutasch, one of the riders of the Tail. "Perhaps they will grow small again just as quickly, and we will be able to return to the plains we know."

"That may be so," Himmah said, "but there is no way to tell. We can only choose according to what we know."

"Perhaps the mountains extend over all the world except the plain where we now ride," said a younger rider called Deish.

"That, too, may be so," Himmah answered. "But for as long as we are trapped here, it matters little what has happened on the other side of the mountains, or even if there is another side. If we continue to ride near the mountains, the demons will catch us one by one, and we will die.

Even if we somehow avoid the demons, there will be nothing to eat here, for they have ravaged the land, poisoned the water, and killed the animals. There is no hope in these mountains."

"Then what should we do?" asked Jareena, one of the women who rode with the Tail.

"We must turn away from the mountains, into the great plains. The demons are always near the mountains, so it may be that they will not go into the plains; and if they do, there we can use our speed to our best advantage. In the plains, there will be horn goats and antelopes and all manner of creatures to hunt, for they will have fled from the mountains."

"Then they are smarter than we are," Deish said, and all the Tail laughed. Then they turned as one and rode into the central plains, and they have been riding there for all the years since that day.

The Lost Warriors

With the blessed weapons that the Sleeping Emperor had told them to make, the Khitani army had stood firm against the Infernals as they swarmed towards Khitan. As a result, the western elements of the Infernal army broke and scattered across a wide swath of Onara. Most of the Khitani defenders let them flee, but Chai Tsu, the general responsible for defending the eastern steppes of the Khitani Empire, decided to give chase.

The fastest of the Infernals quickly flew beyond the reach of Chai Tsu's forces, but those who flew slowly or traveled on foot began to fall prey to Khitani arrows and spears. If the fiendish ones had stood and fought, they could have destroyed Chai Tsu's army. However, they were too afraid to stop running, even though their pursuers were mere mortals. The demons and devils knew that enchanted weapons could harm them, but had always thought themselves immune to ordinary steel. Now here was an entire army equipped with what seemed to be magical armaments; how else could they harm the Infernals with such ease? So, not knowing what they faced, the fiends fled, and they died.



The chase went on for nearly a week, east and north into the cold plains on the fringes of the Khitani Empire. Each night, the exhausted horsemen and riders of Chai Tsu's army had to stop to rest, and the tireless Infernals pulled away from their pursuers. From time to time they would come across a Khitani village or a small farming town, and they would attack the peasants mercilessly, enacting their vengeance against those they did not dare fight by slaying those who could not fight back. But when the sun arose, the cavalry leapt into the saddle and was off again, gaining ground with every pounding hoof beat. Each day, the Infernals fled farther during the night, and were caught again later in the day. But each day, they were nevertheless caught, and more of the fiends died.

Finally, when a full day had passed with no sign of their prey, Chai Tsu ordered his men to a halt. "Well done," he told his commanders. "These demons will never again dare to prey on our people. Our soldiers have bought us a thousand years of peace, all praise to the Sleeping Emperor. We will rest here tonight, and then begin the ride home." And so it was done. On their way home, the soldiers passed one of the villages that the Infernals had ravaged, and the villagers cried out for food, for healing, for help rebuilding their shattered homes. But Chai Tsu was proud, and his men were weary, and he ignored the peasants' cries. "We are soldiers," he said to them, "not farmers or carpenters. If not for us, the demons would have killed you all. Be thankful that you have something left to rebuild."

Six days later, as they rode slowly back towards Khitan, Chai Tsu and his army felt a great shaking in the earth, as if a restless dragon were tossing in its sleep below their very hooves. Then a mighty wall of rock literally burst from the ground in front of them, climbing into the sky to a height that seemed as if it would blot out the sun itself. For miles and miles, from one horizon to the other, their way was blocked by the mighty mountains of the Godswall.

Shocked and awed, Chai Tsu pondered for a few minutes, and then ordered his astonished troops to continue riding. Before long, they reached the base of the newborn mountains, and the general ordered his scouts into the forbidding landscape to find a pass back to Khitan. The bulk of the army made camp at the base of the Godswall, and waited, and wondered what had happened.

Eventually, the scouts returned – some of them, at least. They reported that the mountains were impassable, a titanic maze of unclimbable cliffs and valleys that led nowhere. No matter how far they had traveled, they saw nothing but more mountains in every direction, as if all of Onara, except the plain where the army was camped, had been transformed into one vast mountain range.

Chai Tsu and his officers were greatly troubled by these reports, but the general was nothing if not practical. "Very well," he said. "Our supplies are low; I will take most of our forces and visit the towns and villages of this region, to gather food and learn about the lay of the land. A small contingent will remain here, in case the other scouts return with better news. If no route home is apparent by the time we have resupplied, we will begin a systematic search of the mountain range to see how far it

truly extends." And so it was done.

But by the time the army returned to the nearest town for supplies, word of Chai Tsu's treatment of the troubled villagers had spread throughout the countryside. When the general rode into town and demanded supplies for his soldiers, the town elders angrily rejected his demands. "Now you need us, but where were you when we needed you? You drove the demons into our villages, where they raped and killed and burned and stole, and you did not lift a finger to help us rebuild. We need all our crops just to survive, and to feed those that your recklessness has left without crops or homes or fathers or husbands. Be gone from here – you will get no more aid from us than we got from you."

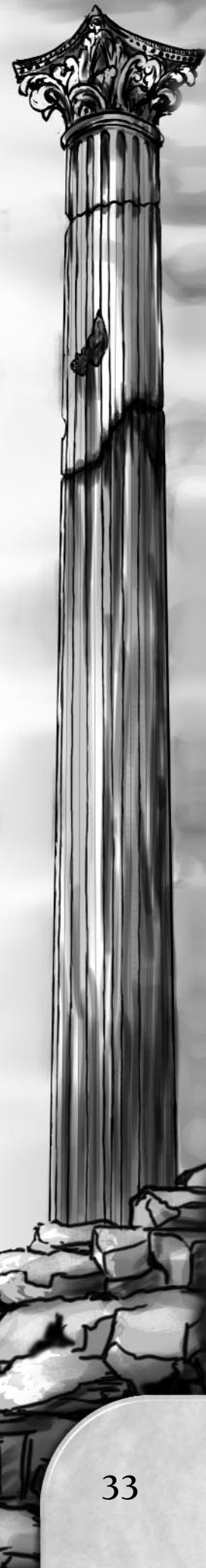
Chai Tsu, seeing the truth of the elders' words, nodded his head sadly. Then he raised his hand and gave an order, and his archers shot the elders and everyone else in the town who did not surrender immediately. His men then gathered up the needed supplies without further trouble. (Thus is proven the ancient Khitani proverb, "No matter what the truth may be, the man with the sword is always right.")

Infernals

The spawn of a thousand Hells followed Uhxbractit to war against the Coryani, and were trapped with him. Demons, devils, half-fiends and other malign creatures that fit no easy category were part of the Infernal army. Even those Infernals that considered themselves superior joined Uhxbractit's forces; whatever their opinion of the Devil-king, it was clear that he was a brilliant tactician, and none of the other Infernal leaders had managed to even slow the First Emperor down. When Uhxbractit lured the First Emperor and his armies to the Blasted Plains, where the full might of the Infernal forces could be brought to bear on the mortals, it was clear that their decision had been the right one.

Uhxbractit's duel against the First Emperor began as a whim, a means for him to crush the mortal armies' morale before the battle even began, thus making their terror and defeat that much sweeter. Once the fight began, though, it was immediately clear that the Emperor had more than mortal power on his side, and the duel would be nowhere as easy or as sure a victory as Uhxbractit had expected. Still, he knew that there were many cunning assassins among his troops, and that they would surely strike to finish the duel before it went on for too long.

Six days into the duel, Uhxbractit's assassins had still not struck, and the Devil-King was no longer sure that he could expect any help. At first, he thought his minions might have thought that he was deliberately playing with the Emperor, but even they could not be so foolish as to assume that he would do so for days on end. Then, as he parried yet another glow from the blessed Gladius of Illiir and launched a savage counter-attack with his own mighty poleaxe, he realized what was going on. His followers, at least some of them, *wanted the mortal to win*. They intended to let Uhxbractit die, and then attack the mortals anyway, conquering the continent of Onara and claiming the leadership of the



Infernal armies for themselves. The thought filled him with fierce rage, and he pressed his attack against the Emperor even harder, but the mortal's defenses would not yield, and Uhxbractit saw no way out of his predicament.

When the poisoned dart did come, on the afternoon of the ninth day, Uhxbractit barely saw it coming. It was cunningly aimed, so as to be almost invisible to the Emperor and his armies; if Uhxbractit had not been immune to such poisons, he might have thought it aimed at *him* rather than at his mortal enemy. Still, the dart flew true, slipping just under Uhxbractit's mighty wing and slamming into the Emperor's thigh, punching through his armor as Uhxbractit's own weapon had been unable to do. The Emperor staggered back, and Uhxbractit immediately pressed the attack, leaping forward with a mighty overhand blow to finish the charade that had gone on for far too long.

The Emperor somehow parried the blow, and as he did, he looked up and met Uhxbractit's gaze...and smiled. "It is done, then," he said quietly. Then, with a mighty roar, the human armies swept forward, and Uhxbractit's own minions charged as well. The battle was joined in full, but the Devil-King simply stood, perplexed, and watched as the Emperor's legions came to his rescue.

When night fell, both armies pulled back to their camps to regroup for the next day's battle, which would surely be the last. Uhxbractit stalked among the assassins, demanding to know who had fired the poisoned dart and why they had waited so long. Perhaps sensing their master's dark mood, none confessed to taking the final shot; they claimed that they were so confident of Uhxbractit's victory that they thought it unnecessary to interfere. Brooding and angry, and unsettled for reasons he could not explain even to himself, Uhxbractit stalked off to await the dawn.

When the dawn came, the Godswall came with it. While his minions raged and screamed, flinging themselves at the Wall in a futile effort to batter it down, Uhxbractit merely stood and watched, speaking no word to any of his generals nor anyone else. When the Infernals had at last exhausted their initial frenzy, Uhxbractit finally spoke. "We are trapped," he said simply. "There is no escape through these mountains, nor will there be any other way out. But one day there may be, for even mountains eventually crumble to dust. There are mortals here within the mountains; we will make them slaves, and claim these lands, and be ready for the time when the mountains fall, when we may take our vengeance."

"Bloated fool!" screamed a great snake-demoness in response. "You who could not even slay a mortal in single combat, you whose incompetence has cost us our victory, wish us to follow you? Never! I would return to the Hells rather than serve one so worthless as you."

Uhxbractit smiled, though there was no happiness in it. "Then return."

The demoness glared at him, then willed herself to the Infernal plane she had come to Arcanis from. But she remained standing on the plains of Onara; whatever mighty power had raised the wall of mountains, it had trapped them here magically as well. As her eyes widened,

other Infernals tried to return home, and there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth when they discovered that none could.

"So you see," Uhxbractit said, "it is as I told you. We will not escape this land except by patience. There will be a kingdom of our own on this miserable world, and I will rule it. Now follow." And slowly, sullenly, they did...most of them, at least.

Effects of the Sealing

In addition to physically sealing off the northern portion of Onara, the Godswall has also isolated the Sealed Lands magically, preventing the Infernals trapped within from either returning to their home planes or escaping to plague the rest of Onara once more. No form of magical planar travel will work into, out of, or within the Sealed Lands. See Chapter 3 for more details on the specific effects of this limitation.

The Years of Chaos

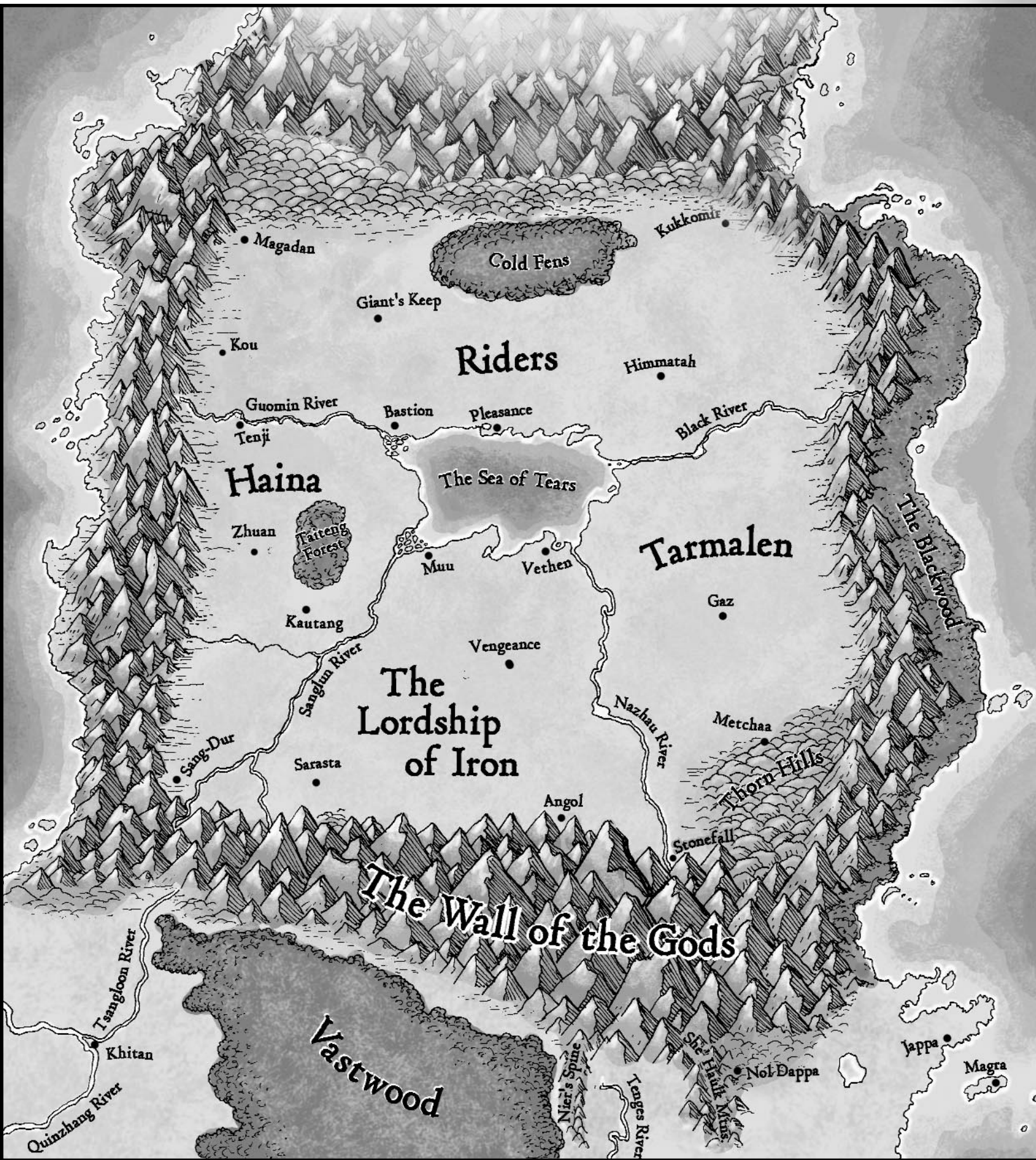
In the years following the Sealing, the Wall of the Gods was like a giant cauldron that could barely contain the frenzied boiling of the warring factions within. The more chaotic of the Infernals, maddened beyond reason at being deprived of their imminent victory, went on a violent rampage against any mortals they could find, and sometimes against each other. Their lawful kin, on the other hand, immediately began settling in for the long haul, making preparations for the hoped-for day when a way was found over, under, around, or through the mountains so they could resume their bloody quest for vengeance.

The mortals, for their part, sought in vain for a way out of the Sealed Lands. When none was found, they found defensible positions and fortified themselves as best they could. Few understood how or why the mountains had risen to seal them in; they could only hope that one day they would fall again.

Centuries of Quiet War

Once it became apparent to all parties that they would be trapped for the foreseeable future, long-term plans began to be made. The Infernals had the advantages of numbers, greater individual power, and immortality, but had no way to replenish their own numbers if slain. The mortal groups, on the other hand, had found strong defensive positions, and could often use the divisions among the Infernal forces to their advantage. Many of the mortals were captured and enslaved by their enemies, while others surrendered and devoted themselves to the Infernal Lords so as to preserve their own lives. Some, however, managed to survive, though they lived in constant fear and unceasing readiness to fight.

Gradually, the kingdoms of the Sealed Lands, mortal and Infernal alike, began to settle into recognizable and consistent groupings. Conflict was still a frequent occurrence, but the borders between the various nations were more or less constant, shifting only slightly over the course of years.



Geography of the Sealed Lands

Climate and Weather

The Sealed Lands exhibit a surprisingly large range of climactic variation for such a relatively small and self-contained area. The central and northern portions of the region are temperate for most of the year, but subject to harsh conditions during winter. Only the salinity of the Sea of Tears keeps it from freezing over during some particularly cold winters. The areas near the Godswall, on the southern, eastern, and western sides of the Sealed Lands, are less subject to bitter cold, largely due to the volcanic activity in the mountains themselves.

Heavy rains (or, in winter, snows) are most common in the western part of the Sealed Lands, and precipitation grows progressively less frequent as one moves farther eastward. When significant storms arise, usually during the summer months, they often remain bottled up in the eastern portion of the Sealed Lands for days or weeks before breaking up and blowing over the Godswall's eastern edge. Thus, precipitation in the western Sealed Lands is more predictable; while rain in the east is infrequent, it is often torrential when it does arrive.

The Wall of the Gods

The most obvious geographical feature in the Sealed Lands is the very thing that defines their boundaries – the Godswall itself. It is a massive ring of unimaginably tall and impassable mountains, their peaks eternally shrouded in clouds. The mountains here dwarf the highest peaks elsewhere on Onara, or the Alps or Himalayas of Earth; the foothills of the Godswall would be mountains elsewhere. The peaks here are simply impossibly high by any rational standard; once the mind of the viewer accepts the fact that they exist at all, divine intervention seems the only possible explanation for their existence.

The height of the Godswall is not the only barrier to crossing it, however. At its narrowest point, the mountain range is over two hundred miles wide. There are no passes leading through it; there are many valleys that seem promising, but they invariably end in a sheer cliff or cul-de-sac, often after a week's travel. Twisting caves, sheer cliffs, and unfathomable crevasses are everywhere in the mountains, and whenever a route appears which seems to lead in the right direction, it invariably leads somewhere far worse. Clouds of ash and dust from the many active volcanos within the range constantly fill the air, drastically limiting visibility and making each breath a challenge.

Nothing grows in these mountains, and there is no drinkable water to be found either; the very snow and ice is foully tainted by the evil that the mountains restrain, and the rivers that flow down from the mountains travel through narrow underground channels until they flow out into the central plain of the Sealed Lands.

The few living things found among the peaks and valleys are demons and devils that headed

into the mountains in search of a way out, but that have instead become lost and trapped in the mazelike confines of the mountain range. Some have been seeking an exit for centuries, and most have gone mad, which makes them even more dangerous, if that is possible.

As a final challenge to anyone seeking to cross the Godswall, the mountains themselves seem to shift from time to time. Valleys that were open and passable during one expedition have vanished entirely a few months later. Some of these changes can be explained by the volcanic activity within the range, but others seem to defy rational explanation, unless one accepts the idea that Illiir is still actively keeping his prisoners trapped.

The Guardians of the Godswall

Very rarely, individuals or small groups of Infernals manage to make their way across the Godswall; no mortals have yet managed to make the crossing. Before the Infernals can leave the Sealed Lands completely behind, however, they must face one last obstacle: the groups of mortals who stand guard over the wall, determined to destroy or turn back those enemies whom even Illiir's might could not contain forever.

Along the southern reaches of the Godswall, small outposts are carved into the mountains themselves every hundred miles or so. They are small, isolated, and without comforts, but they are always occupied by the ever-watchful dwarves called the Mourners of Glory. These are the Sentinel Outposts of Tir Betoq. By patrolling the valleys vigilantly, and watching the passes from their towers with exquisitely-crafted spyglasses, the steadfast guardians of these towers watch ceaselessly for any sign of Infernals passing through the Wall.

If they even suspect that a fiend is close to crossing the Godswall, a troop of warriors moves immediately to intercept it. Knowing the mountains as well as they do their own homes, the sentinels are well-prepared to set ambushes and traps, and they have been relentlessly drilled in the art of fighting against the Infernal. When battle is finally joined, the dwarves fall upon their hated enemy like the thunder of Hurrian, paying no heed to their own survival so long as their enemy is destroyed. Each time they go to battle, the sentinels acknowledge that some of them will not return, but they consider the sacrifice well worth it.

The Blackwood

The eastern portion of the Godswall extends north along the shore of the Pale Sea for hundreds of miles. The mountains here are not as volcanically active as the southern part of the range, but are no easier to travel because of it. The eastern slopes of the mountains have become thickly forested over the centuries, and these woods have an unnatural aura to them which seems quite distinct from the taint that hangs over the Godswall itself. Even the frost giants who dwelled here for centuries, raiding southward like a deadly winter storm, have relocated their homes away from the forests to more hospitable climes.

The few sailors from Jappa or the Pirate Isles who have landed (or, more often, wrecked) on these shores tell stories of feral giants and other, stranger things that they seem unable or unwilling to describe clearly. Persistent rumors claim that one or more of the Ancient Dragons are bound in the so-called Blackwood, but there is no evidence to suggest that this is anything more than a storyteller's fancy.

The Western Cliffs

While the southern section of the Godswall rises from the plains, the western edge runs along the coast of Onara for many miles. The mountains are no lower in this area, and end in sheer, rocky cliffs that plunge straight down into the ocean, without a scrap of beach for a boat to land on. The Khitani are believed to have journeyed up the coast for hundreds of miles looking for a break in the wall without success, though few details are known as to what they may have found. Frost giant raiders are still a significant threat in this area, and the Khitani are believed to be making a concerted effort to eliminate them once and for all.

The Northern Hills

To the north of the Sealed Lands, the Godswall takes on a decidedly different appearance. Rather than the steep, volcanic mountains that characterize the southern part of the range, the northern part of the Godswall is comprised of jagged mounds of stone and ice that rise almost gradually from the frozen steppes. Even the lowest portions of these mountains are perpetually shrouded in a thick, cold mist, making the further reaches nearly impossible to see.

Despite what would seem to be an ideal environment, the frost giants living in the northern reaches of the Godswall seem to shun this area. The only creatures known to live in the area are occasional predatory demons and the so-called "frost worms"; these latter may or may not be the same creature as the massive polar worms which the Yhing hir call *remur-hazh*. Not surprisingly, no detailed study of the local fauna has been carried out to date.

Of the expeditions made into this northern region, none have returned, whether mortal or Infernal in origin. This has led some within the Sealed Lands to hope, however faintly, that there is a way out somewhere beyond the mists, and those who are desperate enough still strike out northward from time to time. If any of these travelers have emerged from within the Sealed Lands, none are known to have reached the civilized lands of Onara.

The Central Plain

There are small woodlands and spreading bogs within the vast ring of land within the mountains, but the majority of the land is one vast, unbroken plain, hundreds of miles across. The passing centuries have given the land enough time to recover from whatever catastrophe turned the Auxunite Empire into the Blasted Plains, though certain barren areas still bear the scars of that ancient disaster, and none of the Sealed Lands are as green and pleasant as they once were.

Herd of *korra*, a small, goatlike antelope, roam the plain in large numbers, and are a staple in the diet of most mortal residents of the Sealed Lands. The land, watered by the major rivers flowing out from beneath the mountains of the Godswall, can also support limited agri-

culture. Winter wheat is the primary crop, and while it has a slightly sour flavor compared to that grown beyond the Godswall, it is sufficient to sustain the human population of the Sealed Lands, though food is often scarce and belts are tight. As for the Infernals, their needs are sustained by far more sinister means.

The Sea of Tears

This large, shallow inland sea occupies a large crater believed to have once been the heart of the Auxunite Empire. Four major freshwater rivers flow out from under the Godswall, and all four flow into the Sea of Tears. Despite this influx, the water in the sea itself is still salty and undrinkable, which explains its common name. This strange phenomenon is usually attributed to the aftereffects of whatever disaster destroyed the Auxunite city of Kuchon, though no one can say so with any degree of certainty.

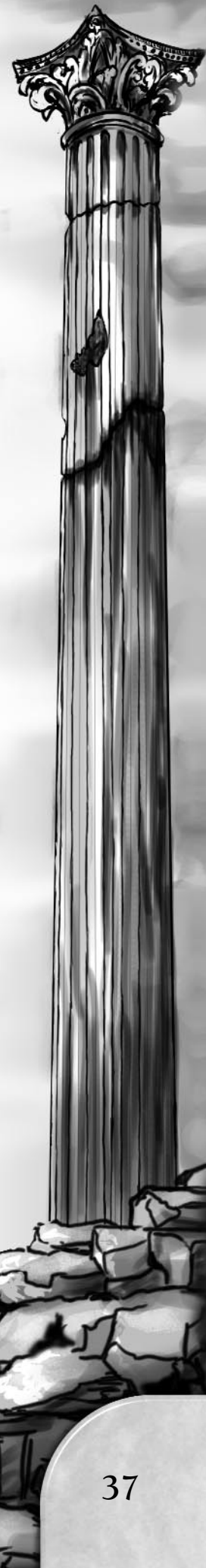
The rivers themselves contain a surprising number of fish, many of which are born blind under the Godswall mountains and then stray into the underground channels that eventually lead out into the Sealed Lands. Their flesh is oily and bitter, but edible, and can even be made relatively tasty if carefully prepared with the proper herbs. Those fish who reach the Sea of Tears usually die shortly after being exposed to the salt water, and can often be harvested simply by skimming the water's surface with a net at the mouths of the rivers. However, the effortless availability of this food source often attracts the large aquatic predators that live in the sea, and those who go fishing often end up on the wrong end of the food chain. The most dangerous predator of all is the enormous demonic creature known as *Sivirimirivis*, though its depredations are thankfully rare.

On certain days when the water is clear and the angle of the sun is right, ruins can be glimpsed in the depths of the Sea of Tears. These are presumed to be the remnants of one or more great Auxunite cities, or perhaps even older settlements belonging to the giants. None of the nations within the Sealed Lands have expended the time and effort to conduct any sort of survey or exploration of these ruins, so their contents and significance are still completely unknown.

The Cold Fens

The northern coast of the Sea of Tears gradually gives way to hundreds of miles of desolate marshland, stretching north and west until the brackish water finally freezes. Hardy, weedlike grasses and reeds are the only plant life to be found here, and no animals dwell in the fens except for tiny, poisonous fishes. A few poor villages dot the edges of the fens, but the interior of the moorland is desolate and believed to be uninhabited, at least by humans.

Occasionally, mortals travel into the Cold Fens – exiled Riders, escapees from Pleasance, Haina explorers seeking a way past the Godswall – but none emerge. If they do not fall victim to the cold, undrinkable waters or the total lack of available food, they are likely devoured by *Buhez* or one of the other monstrous Infernals that roam the fens. If anything of significance or value lies within the borders of the Cold Fens, it will likely remain undiscovered for many years to come.



Peoples of the Sealed Lands

The Lordship of Iron

Capital: Vengeance

Population, Infernal: 65,124

Population, Mortal: 1,892,322 (humans 94%, cambions 5%, dark-kin 1%)

Government: Dictatorship

The largest and most powerful 'nation' within the Sealed Lands is the Lordship of Iron, which extends from the southern edge of the Sea of Tears southward across the entire length of the Godswall's southern side. The Lordship is (and has always been) ruled by Uhxbractit, the same Devil-King who dueled against the First Emperor over a thousand years ago.

The "People" of the Lordship

Nearly two million individuals live in the Lordship of Iron, as Uhxbractit's kingdom has come to be known. The Infernal population, those who followed Uhxbractit and have remained with him over all the intervening years, represent less than four percent of that total. Almost all of these are devils; few of the more chaotic demons can stomach the rigid bureaucratic structure that Uhxbractit has imposed upon his kingdom.

The remainder of the population is comprised of humans, all descended from those that Uhxbractit's forces captured in the weeks and months after the raising of the Godswall. Most of these slaves were themselves descendants of the ancient Auxunite Empire, who had remained undisturbed for so long that they had no thought of defending themselves, and no way to do so even if it had occurred to them. Others were among the Riders of the Horse's Tail who did not ride quite fast enough, or scouts from the Legion of Unyielding Courage who were caught as they attempted to spy on the Infernal hordes. Whatever their origins, the vast majority were slaves now, laboring endlessly for Uhxbractit and his minions. The various races of slaves have interbred over the years, and except for occasional genetic "throwbacks," none of the slaves look particularly like full-blooded Khitani, Auxunites, Yhing hir or Coryani. On the whole, they are a short but stocky breed, and tend towards medium brown coloration in their skin, hair and eyes; some variation in coloration is seen, of course, but does not seem to follow any regional patterns.

The female slaves are, with very few exceptions, dedicated to the practice of breeding more slaves. Those who are too young or too old to bear children are responsible for tending to the pregnant women and raising the children until they are old enough to work. The rest of the women are constantly made available as "rewards" to particularly obedient or productive male slaves; they are only taken "off duty" when pregnant, and then only long enough to give birth. Those women who prove to be infertile are impregnated by Infernals, whose vile seed is

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enough to overcome such mortal infirmities. Understandably, the women consider this fate even worse than their normal miserable lot, and pray to be made pregnant every time they are forced to mate. The Tainted offspring of these couplings are raised separately from the mortal children, and are generally trained to oversee and command the mortal slaves. If these cambions reproduce in turn, their children are usually "thrown back" among the slaves, as their blood is considered too weak for the ruling class of Infernals.

The male slave population is divided into three general groups. The first and largest group, representing roughly half of the male slaves in the Lordship of Iron, is responsible for providing food, water and shelter for all the realm's slaves. While the soil of the Sealed Lands is not particularly fertile, the area along the Sanglun and Nazhau rivers does support enough crops to give the mortal residents of the Lordship an adequate (if rather monotonous) diet. Slaves in the northern ports of Vethen and Muul fish the dangerous estuaries where the rivers meet the Sea of Tears, and a portion of the catch is shipped south in casks of cold water, though a fair amount of every such shipment spoils before it reaches the capital city of Vengeance. The slaves who are not actively involved in raising the food are responsible for milling it, baking it, transporting it, or otherwise making it available and edible to the Lordship's slave population. This group of slaves also includes those who manufacture the tools and clothing needed by the slave workforce.

The second group, comprising only a tenth of the male slave workforce, acts as menial servants to the Infernal rulers of the realm. At first glance, this seems like a much less onerous task than working in grain fields or fishing boats all day. However, the Infernals have very little need for the tasks that mortal nobles demand of their servants – cooking, cleaning, and so forth. As a result, the household slaves of such beings are most often used for the amusement of their masters. Given the fiendish nature of those masters, the specific types of 'amusements' which the slaves are called upon to provide are better left to the imagination, or better still not even imagined. Severe injuries and deaths make turnover in the household slave population high, as might be imagined, but as far as the Infernals are concerned, there are always plenty of other slaves to replace any who fall victim to 'accidents.'

The remaining male slaves are dedicated to working on the endless series of grandiose monuments that Uhxbractit and the other leaders of the Lordship are constantly erecting, expanding, or tearing down and rebuilding. These massive and grotesque structures range from huge statues of Uhxbractit or other Infernal leaders to the immense iron palaces and fortifications that have given the Lordship its name. The work is hot, grueling, and dangerous, and injuries are common. Those who are injured too severely to work, or are too old to contribute to the construction, are taken to the mines, where the vast amounts of iron ore necessary for Uhxbractit's vast projects are produced. Injured, decrepit, or troublesome

slaves are sneeringly said to be “worth their weight in iron,” by the Infernal slave drivers. These slaves are sent to the mines to spend the rest of their lives mining iron ore. At least, that is the official story. The truth is far worse.

A very small portion of the population abased themselves to their Infernal overlords when they saw that there was no hope of escape from their tyranny. They approached Uhxbractit with words of supplication and praise, offering themselves up as their willing servants and prepared to do anything their new “gods” demanded. Considered collaborators and the worst kind of traitors imaginable by the rest of the slave population, the Forsaken, as they have become known, have become the religious caste of the Infernal Lords. Enjoying a position somewhere between slave and freemen, the Forsaken lord their powers and privileges over the rest of the human population, indoctrinating them in religious rites and their duties to their Overlord. Since their inception in the Lordship of Iron, the concept of the Forsaken has spread to the Thorn Hills as well – a present from Uhxbractit as a way of undermining the resolve of the humans throughout the region.

The Blood Iron Mines

There are no significant veins of iron ore anywhere in the Lordship of Iron; as a result, there are no iron mines being worked by gangs of Uhxbractit’s slaves. The slaves who are ‘sent to the mines’ are actually taken into deep cells beneath Vengeance, where special Infernal runes are cut into their skin. Any who ask the reason for the runes are told that they are to protect them in the mines (if they are lucky enough not to get a scaly backhand across the face for questioning their orders). A group of twenty or so slaves is then brought to a “transport room.” They are packed tightly into the room, to the point where they can barely move; since this is a common situation for slaves, they rarely think to question the crowding.

Then the iron walls, ceiling and floor begin to close in, and to grow hotter with the flames of Infernal magic.

The slaves, realizing at last what fate is in store for them, panic; they claw and trample one another in vain efforts to get away from the searing touch of the iron walls, seeking an exit that does not exist. The shrieks of pain and despair are unimaginable, though the Infernals manning the arcane mechanisms seem to enjoy them well enough. The walls, glowing cherry-red by now with the heat, move in closer and closer. The charred corpses of those slaves at the edges of the room are pressed in upon those miserable souls still unfortunate enough to be alive in the center of the cell. The squeezing walls and unbearable heat grow tighter and tighter, until at last the bodies of a score of slaves have been compacted into a scorching mass roughly two feet on a side.

Then a final spell is spoken, and the walls slowly cool and retract, revealing a newly forged ingot of Uhxbractit’s most unnatural resource – blood iron. The ingot, divided into more manageable slabs, is then delivered back to the slaves, who are unaware that they are constructing monuments out of the remains of those who were working beside them only days earlier.

The huge human cost of creating blood iron helps to explain the extensive slave-breeding program that Uhxbractit has created. The larger question, however, is why the Devil-King has such an obsession with the construction of such numerous and massive monuments and

fortifications. The answer is as simple as it is heartless: It keeps the citizens of the Iron Lordship, mortal and Infernal alike, busy.

Motivations of a Devil-King

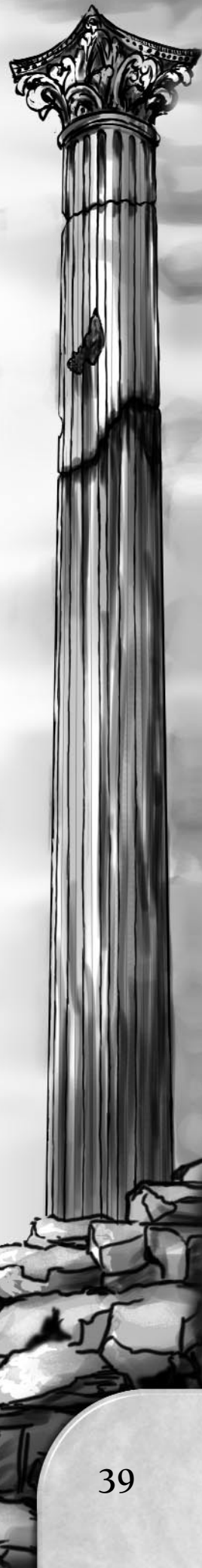
Uhxbractit was quick to realize that his Infernal armies were a disaster waiting to happen. When they first arrived on Onara, the sheer joy of bloodlust and destruction was enough to keep his minions happy. The huge numbers of mortals available provided endless sources of amusement for the fiendish forces, and they were well content. Then, when the armies of Coryan began to gather and fight back in an organized fashion, the Infernals could focus their attention on the ongoing battles. While some powerful fiends might have questioned Uhxbractit’s leadership or his choice of tactics, the enemy was simply too dangerous for them to consider mounting a formal coup against the Devil-King in the midst of the war.

Once the Godswall rose, however, all that was gone. The mortal armies were safe on the far side of an impassable mountain range, and while there were some small groups of humans within the Godswall, they would be quickly destroyed once the furious Infernals turned their vengeful anger on them. And when all the mortals were gone, Uhxbractit would be in charge of a hundred thousand demons and devils with nothing to do. Without a doubt, the Infernals would soon fall on each other, destroying one another in a blood-soaked frenzy until few or none were left. And Uhxbractit, as the leader who had (through no fault of his own) brought them into this divine trap, would likely be the first of their targets.

Intent upon keeping his forces (and his scaly skin) intact so as to someday be able to exact vengeance on his captors, Uhxbractit quickly decided that he needed to give his army a focus. He sent minions out to capture as many humans as they could find, so as to provide breeding stock and ensure that there would always be enough ‘pets’ to keep the simpler fiends entertained. He then began laying out plans to build a kingdom, including great cities that would provide living space and sustenance for the slaves. He ‘rewarded’ his most skilled and ambitious underlings with positions ruling the cities of his empire, which would hopefully keep them too busy to plot his downfall.

These governors spend most of their time haggling over the trade of slaves and slave supplies from one city to another; Uhxbractit has built a bureaucracy which is literally hellish in its complexity, designed specifically to occupy all of his underlings’ time and focus their anger on one another rather than on him. He has also gradually nudged the governors into an unspoken but ever-escalating competition to see whose city can produce the most/largest/most grotesquely impressive monuments, thus using up yet more of their time and resources.

Uhxbractit has been playing this dangerous game for over a thousand years now, and has become very good at it indeed. The slave population is large enough to sustain itself despite the heavy attrition rate, and also large enough that he must have a standing army of Infernal guards to keep them in line. Other Infernals are responsible for supervising trade and transportation between the cities, since obviously slaves cannot be trusted to handle such matters alone.



If significant unrest arises in the Lordship, Uhxbractit diverts the attention of his populace by mobilizing his forces against one or more of the other realms in the Sealed Lands. However, he never seems to actually conquer or eliminate any of them, and this too is part of his plan. Under the current balance of power in the Sealed Lands, the Lordship has enemies (albeit smaller, weaker enemies) on multiple sides. This works to Uhxbractit's advantage, since he can never commit all of his armies to one front without leaving the other undefended. He must also leave large numbers of fiends behind to guard and control the slaves, lest they start a revolt while the Legion's armies are elsewhere. By dividing his forces in this manner, Uhxbractit ensures that his generals can never overwhelmingly defeat any one enemy, despite the Legion's substantial advantages in numbers and power. Thus the balance of power is maintained, and Uhxbractit keeps his unsteady grasp upon the reins of command.



If and when the Godswall is ever brought down, Uhxbractit intends to gather all the slaves together, to be sacrificed *en masse* as part of a tremendous ritual

intended to call the mightiest Infernal powers to bear on behalf of his army. If all goes as planned, every fiendish warrior under Uhxbractit's banner will have his strength increased fivefold through this massive and bloody sacrifice. Then Uhxbractit will lead his armies south once more, in a vast, vengeful sweep into the civilized lands of Onara.

Magical Traditions

The devils of the Lordship of Iron are, of course, inherently capable of using various magical powers. A few of the fiends have taught certain magical abilities to their Tainted offspring, so a small number of cambion sorcerers can be found in the Lordship. In addition, a few particularly devout slaves have managed to keep their faith in one or more gods of the Pantheon alive, and some are pious enough to possess a small amount of clerical power. Not surprisingly, Anshar is the goddess who is most often prayed to by these slaves, since her Suffering aspect is central to their lives. The slave workforce also includes a few bards, who secretly preserve stories of the time before the Sealing and use their powers to raise the hopes of the slaves, however faintly. When discovered, both clerics and bards among the slaves are punished severely, usually with a one-way trip to the iron mines.

Apart from these few enslaved clerics and bards, and a smattering of Tainted sorcerers and wizards, there are simply no spellcasters to be found in the Lordship of Iron. Any slaves who once possessed the Gift have long since died out without passing on their knowledge. If sorcery is truly carried in the blood, there may well be slaves with the potential to be arcane casters, but none have had the opportunity to learn how to channel their powers. Naturally, this is just the way the ruling Infernals like it; being the only ones with magical power at their disposal only serves to further solidify their total control of the population.

The Cities of the Lordship of Iron

Vengeance

Type: Metropolis

Population, Infernal: 22,821

Population, Mortal: 633,132

Ruler: Uhxbractit, Prince of Devils

Power Centers: Uhxbractit, the Iron Council

Industries: Blood Iron, slaves

Vengeance is Uhxbractit's capital, and home to over a third of the Lordship's population, both mortal and Infernal. Located in the middle of the southern plains of the Sealed Lands, far from any convenient water sources, Vengeance occupies a completely impractical site for a city of its size. This, of course, is exactly why Uhxbractit had it built there.

Uhxbractit himself is technically the ruler of Vengeance, but in practice, he leaves the day-to-day government of the city up to the Iron Council. This twelve-member group is hand-picked by Uhxbractit to ensure that the members spend most of their time arguing with one another, scheming against one another, or voting down one another's plans. This leaves them virtually no time to plot against Uhxbractit himself, and if he begins to suspect that such plotting is taking place, the suspected dissidents are usually saddled with several more "urgent projects" that only their close personal supervision can see through. The last time the Iron Council made a significant political decision was roughly the same time that the Coryani Empire conquered Altheria.

Vengeance is centered on Uhxbractit's massive keep, which (not surprisingly) is forged entirely from blood iron. The members of the Iron Council, and several hundred other key (read: potentially dangerous to Uhxbractit) Infernals, reside in the Black Keep where Uhxbractit can keep a close eye on them utilizing the keep's many secret passages. Indeed, there are actually multiple sets of secret passages in the keep. Some are revealed to certain important Infernals as signs of Uhxbractit's trust in them...at least, that's what Uhxbractit tells them. These passages can be used to spy on many meeting rooms, including some of Uhxbractit's own private council chambers. Of course, Uhxbractit is well aware of which rooms may be observed by whom, and carefully chooses what is said where given factions may overhear. The most secret passages are known to Uhxbractit alone, and can even be used to spy on those within the other secret passages!

Several thousand slaves also reside within the keep at any given time, primarily for the entertainment of the Infernal residents. Naturally, many of the Infernals within the keep attempt to coerce some of these slaves to spy for them, via methods ranging from offers of protection to outright intimidation. The slaves generally have little choice but to do as they are told, despite the fact that they are completely unqualified for espionage. As a result, those who they are spying on almost invariably catch them. While some are killed outright, others are coerced into returning false information to those who originally sent them. Particularly clever slaves may be "spying" for a dozen or more different fiendish masters, each of who receives only the information that another fiend wants them to hear.

Beyond the keep, Vengeance is arranged along a strict circular design, with roads forming both multiple concentric circles and the radial connections between them. The city's buildings are almost entirely devoted to slaves, whether housing them, feeding them, breeding them, or enabling them to craft the components of the city's many monuments. Forges are far and away the most common workshops in Vengeance, and the foul-smelling smoke from these furnaces hangs over the city in a thick pall, which only Uhxbractit's keep projects above.

The monuments themselves are distributed about Vengeance almost at random, though they are more common near the city's four gates and near the Black Keep. Some are massive statues of Uhxbractit and other prominent Infernals; the Black Keep itself is ringed by a dozen statues representing the members of the Iron Council, which regularly need to be melted down and reformed when the membership of the council changes. Other monuments include huge, spiked iron obelisks, iron blocks with scenes of violence and torture depicted in

high relief, and abstract, twisted sculptures which suggest foul images to the mind even though they represent nothing recognizable. Rumors among the slaves suggest that the shape and arrangement of these abstract objects are somehow related to a sinister magic that Uhxbractit or members of the Iron Council are planning, although no one other than the Devil-King himself knows about the massive sacrifice that Uhxbractit has planned in case the Godswall ever comes down.

Angol

Type: Metropolis

Population, Infernal: 9,243

Population, Mortal: 108,171

Ruler: Chuhar of the Pit

Power Centers: Chuhar

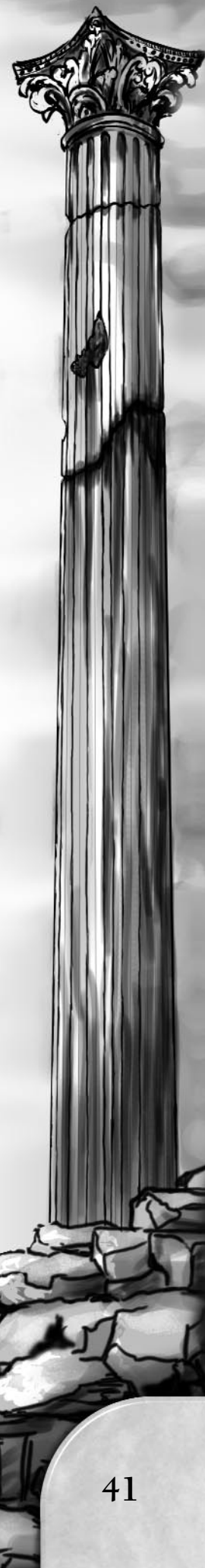
Industries: Stone

Angol is the southernmost city of the Lordship of Iron, and is literally dug into the northern slopes of the Godswall. Vast fields of wheat spread out across the plains below the city, with herds of domesticated korra grazing between them. The scene appears quite mundane, and almost peaceful, until one looks up to the mountains overhead and sees the towers of Angol looming over the fields like a massive stone gargoyle. The fields are also surrounded by a twenty-foot-high stone wall, built with rock quarried from the mountains during the excavation of the city. A single gate guards the road to and from Vengeance, and marks the only break in the wall.

The current ruler of Angol is Chuhar, an ambitious pit fiend who has grown tired of the incompetence and inefficiency of Uhxbractit's reign. Chuhar has set his slaves to dig a tunnel through the Godswall – a ridiculous task for a mortal ruler to consider, but not quite so ludicrous for one who has the potential to live forever. Chuhar's slaves have been carving their way through the mountains for nearly four centuries now, and are perhaps a tenth of the way across the mountain range. Slaves at the far end of the twenty-mile-long tunnels set fires to superheat the stone, then throw buckets of cold water to cause the rock to break off in chunks. There are frequent cave-ins due to the instability of the mountains, and the toxic fumes and the fires themselves kill many more slaves. The heat and the fumes do not bother the lower-ranking Infernals who act as slave drivers and guards, though some of these fiends are occasionally killed when a tunnel collapses. Despite the cost and the incredibly slow rate of progress, however, Chuhar intends to continue digging.

Uhxbractit is aware of Chuhar's tunnel, and has given it his tacit approval. However, Chuhar's reports to Uhxbractit always understate the progress of the tunnels by a significant margin. If he ever manages to complete the tunnel, Chuhar intends to go around Uhxbractit and tell the other Infernal leaders that he will provide them with a way out of the Sealed Lands as long as they pledge their support and their troops to him, rather than to Uhxbractit.

Because of Chuhar's focus on the tunnel, the rest of the city is almost pleasant by the standards of the Lordship of Iron. Most of the fiends prefer to reside in the upper portions of the city, leaving most of the lower city to the



slaves responsible for the city's food supply. These slaves, in turn, have learned that as long as they produce enough food for themselves, the fiends' personal servants and the tunnel workers, they are left largely alone.

Because of the relative ease of the farm workers' lives – which is no worse than that of many peasants in Milandri or Canceri – those who work in the tunnels have grown to despise their fellow slaves who work in the fields. Though opportunities arise only rarely, the tunnel slaves will take advantage of any chance to get farm slaves in trouble. Any farm workers who are caught in these traps are rapidly sent to the tunnels themselves, while tunnel workers who break Chuhar's rules are usually sent to Vengeance to 'work in the iron mines.' The conflict between the two groups of slaves is intentional on Chuhar's part, to keep the workers divided and thus minimize any chance of a slave revolt.

Angol contains relatively few of the monuments that decorate the other cities of the Lordship of Iron, since Chuhar is devoting his efforts to other matters. However, he periodically diverts some workers to build a new monument or modify an existing one, just to keep the leaders of the other cities from growing suspicious.

Muul

Type: Metropolis

Population, Infernal: 8,172

Population, Mortal: 84,123

Ruler: Caneturec the Needle-Eyed

Power Centers: Caneturec

Industries: No significant imports or exports

Where the Sanglun River empties into the Sea of Tears, the city of Muul squats like a fetid, diseased toad. It is the ugliest of all the cities of the Lordship of Iron – a very impressive accomplishment, given the other candidates, but one in which the people of Muul take no pride. Indeed, there is very little about Muul that gives its residents, mortal or Infernal, anything about which to be proud.

The current governor of Muul is Caneturec, an insectoid devil of unknown nature who is so impossibly thin that he appears like nothing so much as a stick insect stretched to a height of ten feet or more. Caneturec is possessed of a great deal of analytical intelligence, but very little common sense, and he has bought into Uhxbractit's vision of the Lordship of Iron with all of his cold, black heart. His every waking moment – and there are those in Muul who wonder if Caneturec ever sleeps at all – is dedicated to squeezing the maximum efficiency out of all his city's inhabitants.

Caneturec has calculated to a fine degree exactly how much food each slave should need in order to survive and continue working, and the slaves who are responsible for providing the food are given only enough resources (seed, fishing nets, etc.) to produce exactly that much food and no more. Any incidents of inefficiency, accidents, inclement weather, or anything else going

wrong mean that some slaves will be underfed, or starve completely. By Caneturec's reasoning,

the slaves who failed to produce enough food should be the ones who suffer. As

a result, the farming and fishing

slaves often see their hard-

earned food going to

other work-

ers, while they themselves are left to starve. Unsurprisingly, this leads to a tremendous amount of discord among the slaves; however, any who attempt to revolt or "go on strike" are quickly and ruthlessly put down by Muul's numerous, and vicious, Infernal guards.

As a result, the slaves of Muul lead desperate and miserable lives, in which every grain of wheat is hoarded like a diamond and a scrap of dried fish is worth more than gold. Only the foulest and most rotten scraps of food are will not be eaten, and those are used as fertilizer for the city's precious crops (thus explaining the city's renowned stench). Food theft is common, despite the fact that groups of vigilante slaves usually beat such thieves to death if they are caught. Whatever food the thief may have been carrying is usually divided up among the vengeful mob and hoarded away; meanwhile, the thief's death is noted on Caneturec's daily reports, and one less ration of food is delivered to the affected area the following day. There are persistent rumors that some groups of slaves resort to cannibalism in order to keep themselves fed, but no one is entirely sure.

Slaves work, eat and sleep in shifts, to ensure that every building is being used at all times for maximum efficiency. The buildings in which the slaves live are crude, drab, crowded huts, constructed with the smallest possible amount of resources and labor so as to be just barely livable. The city's monuments – Caneturec is an enthusiastic participant in Uhxbractit's sculpture competitions – are forged on anvils battered from centuries of use, using worn out tools that are too costly to be replaced until they literally fall apart.

The Infernals dwelling in Muul are little better off than the slaves; Caneturec will not permit anyone in his city to avoid pulling their weight. A strict hierarchy puts the lowest-ranking devils in charge of groups of slaves, where they must constantly oversee the workers and often do manual labor beside them to ensure that quotas are met. Several of these weakest Infernals then report to a slightly more powerful fiend, and so on. Those who regularly fail to meet their quotas, no matter their rank in the bureaucracy, are subject to rapid demotion; as a result, the slightest mistakes are savagely punished from above, which in turn leads to even fiercer abuse to those ranking lower in the chain of command.

Naturally, the Infernals and mortals of Muul despise Caneturec fiercely, and plans to kill him or remove him from power are constantly being hatched in the darkened alleys of the city. However, Caneturec has two things going for him: he is extremely powerful as an individual, and he has the unwavering support of Uhxbractit, who feels that Caneturec is exactly the sort of individual he wants running his cities. As a result, Uhxbractit has a large number of spies operating in Muul, all of whom are dedicated to infiltrating and stamping out any plots against Caneturec.

Recently, Muul has been the subject of several raids by agents of the Haina, the small nation of Khitani descendants located west of the Sanglun River. Late at night, Haina infiltrators slip over the city walls and lead one or more barracks full of slaves back out of the city. Needless to say, this infuriates Caneturec, and the punishments inflicted on those Infernals set to guard the walls are fearsome. The slaves continue to work hard, but they go to bed each night secretly hoping that the mysterious figures in black silk will rescue them. What they do

not know, however, is that when the slaves rescued from Muul are taken to the lands of the Haina, they are made slaves there as well. Still, life as a Haina slave is far better than life in Muul.

Sarasta

Type: Metropolis

Population, Infernal: 10,323

Population, Mortal: 96,102

Ruler: Meliol the Cunning

Power Centers: Meliol, the Penitents

Industries: Grain, slaves

Like the other cities in the Lordship of Iron, Sarasta is ruled by devils and populated by slaves. However, a visitor who was unaware of its nature could easily mistake it for any “normal” city elsewhere in Onara, at least until he encountered his first Infernal roaming the streets. The slaves of Sarasta seem quite content with their lot; they work hard, take care of one another to the best of their ability, and accept whatever misfortune their Infernal masters inflict upon them with a stoic tranquility.

This placid behavior is the result of a philosophical movement spread among the slaves of Sarasta by a group calling themselves the Penitents. The Penitents believe that Illiir is inflicting all of their sufferings on them because of their lack of faith – or perhaps their fathers’ impious behavior, or some unspecified sins committed by an even more ancient ancestor. Whatever the reason, they feel that Illiir is punishing them, and that if they submit meekly to the cruelties that their Infernal masters inflict, they will be redeemed and freed, either in this life or after passing through Beltine’s cauldron. At least in theory, the Penitents feel no hatred towards their fiendish captors; the Infernals are simply acting as the agents of Illiir in inflicting his just punishment upon their sinful selves.

The Penitents first appeared roughly a hundred and fifty years ago, following the teachings of a slave named Temeria. Temeria was a female slave in the breeding houses of Sarasta, a miserable and wretched existence by any measure. Like most women in her position, she initially bemoaned her fate, weeping and cursing at the gods who had placed her into this shameful life. Then one night, as she slept sore and exhausted in the ragged cot that was her only shelter, she claimed to have had a vision of Illiir, or perhaps one of his Valinor, lifting the roof off the building she was in and picking her up in his mighty hand. She could never recount the exact words that her divine visitor said to her, but from that day forward she accepted her destiny with a remarkable serenity and grace.

Seeing that she wept no more, the other women in the breeding house asked why, and she explained to them that Illiir had told her to accept what was happening because it was the only way that she could be forgiven for the crimes that she and her fellow slaves had committed. While the other women did not believe her at first, Temeria’s calm demeanor spoke for itself, and more and more of the slaves began emulating her placid acceptance of her fate. Soon the men who came to the breeding houses began following Temeria’s lead as well, and the movement soon began spreading like wildfire. Temeria was eventually reassigned as a personal slave to Meliol, the governor of Sarasta; when he learned of who she was, and her devotion to Illiir, he had her publicly tortured to death – a fate that she accepted with a smile, thus prov-

ing the depth of her devotion and winning her still more followers. Though it frustrates the efforts of the Forsaken to convert many slaves to their fold, today, nearly every slave in Sarasta is a Penitent, which makes the lives of their Infernal masters significantly easier.

This, of course, was the whole reason that Meliol created the movement in the first place. “Temeria” was a *polymorphed* erinyes who was “transferred” into the city’s largest breeding house specifically to begin spreading the philosophy of placid acceptance. With the careful use of her *suggestion* and *charm* abilities, she set the cult of the Penitent in motion, and then allowed herself to be “tortured to death” via a mixture of *polymorph* and illusion magic. Since then, the Penitent movement has been largely self-sustaining, although Zan (the erinyes who originally played the role of Temeria) has occasionally returned to the slave workforce in a different disguise to provide another shining example of the benefits of non-resistance.

With the threat of a slave revolt drastically reduced, Meliol needs relatively few guards, thus giving his Infernal citizens much more free time for recreation. This is, of course, rough on the slave population, but they rarely complain about their treatment. Meliol is thus considered one of the more attractive cities in the Lordship of Iron, and its Infernal population has increased significantly over the last century. The leaders of some other cities in the Lordship have attempted to spread the Penitent philosophy to their own slaves, but it has so far failed to catch on outside Sarasta.

Vethen

Type: Metropolis

Population, Infernal: 13,806

Population, Mortal: 108,243

Ruler: Arch-General Zalanadère

Power Centers: Zalanadère, Khalea

Industries: Fish, grain

Vethen, like Muul, is a port city on the edge of the Sea of Tears, located where the Nazhau River meets the sea. It is, however, a generally cleaner and more tolerable place to live than Muul, though it is by no means pleasant. Vethen is located on the most troubled border of the Lordship of Iron, where raids and skirmishes with the riders of Tarmalen and the demons of the Thorn Hills are common. Thus, the city has necessarily developed a strongly military mindset.

Zalanadère, a cornugon of immense size and formidable skill in battle, currently rules Vethen. He is well aware that “his” city is in a tenuous position, and spends almost all of his time devising new tactics to effectively defend it. The day-to-day government of the city is left to his assistant, Khalea, an ambitious but loyal erinyes. Zalanadère allocates only a minimal amount of resources to Uhxbractit’s nonsensical monument-building program; he would ignore it entirely, but is aware that Uhxbractit has been looking for an opportunity to replace him as governor. While Zalanadère would be somewhat relieved if he were no longer responsible for defending the city, he is convinced that he is the only person who can adequately protect Vethen, and his pride will not let him relinquish control of the city.

Those monuments that Zalanadère has built generally serve a dual purpose as defensive structures. Abstract sculptures outside the city are spaced to as to delay and redirect Tarmalen cavalry, while the blood iron statues that loom over the city's formidable wall can also be used to pour boiling oil down on attackers. The city wall itself is constantly being built up to present a more formidable obstacle to would-be invaders, and is now over forty feet high. As a result, Vethen itself is relatively safe from assault.

Where Vethen is most vulnerable is along the Nazhau River, where an extensive series of mills is responsible for grinding the grain that provides the city's slaves with their daily bread. Individual mills are often subject to attacks by the Lordship's enemies, and while the loss of a few mills does not put a serious dent in Vethen's food production, it grates at Zalanadère's legendary pride. Zalanadère has instituted regular patrols down the length of the river, but he simply does not have the necessary troops to keep all of the mills safe all the time. He has even considered arming the slaves to enable them to defend themselves, but does not dare risk doing so for fear of an open revolt.

In desperation, Zalanadère has begun recruiting among the Infernals elsewhere in the Lordship of Iron. He has dedicated extra slaves to the amusement of his fiendish soldiers, and has had large and (by Infernal standards) comfortable housing created for those who serve him. He has also emphasized the many opportunities for battle that can be found near Vethen, which appeals to many of the more bloodthirsty fiends that have been idle for too long. Many Infernals from other cities, particularly Muul, have begun relocating to Vethen, swelling the ranks of Zalanadère's already formidable armies. Uhxbractit and Caneturec are both watching this development carefully, and Uhxbractit has already begun quiet discussions with Zalanadère's lieutenant, Khalea, about taking over the city if anything "unfortunate" should happen to her leader. The loyal Khalea has reported this to Zalanadère, but the governor is not entirely sure what to do about it yet.

The Riders

Capital: Himmatah

Population: 22,418 (humans 97%, dark-kin 3%)

Government: Democracy

The Riders of the Horse's Tail had a difficult start in the Sealed Lands, nearly being captured or destroyed a dozen times as they looked for a way past the mountains of the Godswall. Eventually, they gave up and fled to the central plains along the northern and eastern shores of the Sea of Tears, where game was plentiful and Infernals were rare, at least at first. There they hoped to live the nomadic lifestyle that they and their Yhing hir kin had enjoyed outside the Wall. As opposed to the hundreds of thousands of Yhing hir riding in the Hinterlands, however, there were little more than a hundred Riders, and their future looked very dubious indeed.

The lands around the Blasted Plains had always been considered uninhabitable by the Yhing hir, perhaps due to ancient legends of the disaster that destroyed the Auxunite Empire. As a result, the Riders were somewhat surprised to see how far into the Plains they were able to go and still find drinkable water and grazing space for their horses.

Himmah, the leader of the Riders, was doubly pleased to discover a small valley in the rocky hills north of the Sea of Tears, which seemed like an ideal place for his people to make a temporary camp. The valley opening above was a narrow crack, but the valley floor opened out into a wide, flat space with plenty of space, pools of rainwater and even a narrow band of grass for grazing the horses where the sunlight from above made it to the surface.

The valley was such an ideal base that the Riders should not have been surprised when they came upon an inhabited village in a box canyon at the far end of the valley. The villagers, descendants of the long-lost Auxunites, were naturally startled as well; they had heard the rumbling as the Godswall arose, but did not know exactly what had happened. When strangers arrived for the first time in centuries, the villagers could not help but associate them with the earthquake.

Himmah was quick to take advantage of this confusion, and his followers soon caught on and began to follow his lead. While the villagers did not understand the Yhing hir language, and the Riders in turn could not comprehend the debased form of Auxunite that the villagers spoke, Himmah had a gift for gesture. He was able to convince the villagers that they were... gods? Spirits? Nobles? Frankly, Himmah was never quite sure what the villagers believed, but it didn't really matter, since they treated him and his riders with respect and deference.

Himmah originally intended to spend only a few days, perhaps a week, in the village before moving on. However, it quickly became clear that the Riders had stumbled upon a perfect place to make their home. Since the Riders' numbers were so small, every child and foal would be crucial to the group's long-term survival. In a village such as this one, children and horses could be raised without risking them on the open plains, and the Riders themselves could hunt and raid without fearing for their offspring. In return, the Riders could offer the villagers protection from the many wolves and other predators that had been displaced by the raising of the Godswall, and had followed the herds of korra into the central plains. It seemed like a perfect match.

Laboriously, Himmah began trying to learn the language of the villagers, and to teach them his own tongue. While neither effort was completely successful, the villagers were enthusiastic students, and within a few months a pidgin had been developed to allow at least some degree of intelligent conversation. Himmah spent days conversing with the tribal leaders while the rest of the Riders were out hunting wild korra or tracking down troublesome wolves. Eventually, he called the Riders together and announced that he had worked out a deal with the leaders of the village, and that while the small settlement had never had a name, the Riders would henceforth call it home.

New Blood

For years after that, Himmah, the Riders, and the villagers enjoyed a relatively peaceful existence. The Riders would range far over the plains to hunt, or sometimes for the sheer joy of riding; after a few weeks, they would return to the village bearing hides, and meat, and whatever news they had managed to glean from their travels. The population of the village swelled, strong and swift horses were bred, and while life was simple, it was also peaceful... almost peaceful enough for the Riders to forget about the hordes of Infernal monsters that they shared their new land with.

That ended abruptly when a small hunting party of Riders was set upon by a group of demonic horsemen. Trusting in their magnificent horses and their own exceptional skills, the Riders turned to flee, but the black, fire-wreathed horses of the demons took flight and 'ran' them down from the air. This was just the first of many encounters with the demon riders of Tarmalen, a group of renegades from the Lordship of Iron who were evolving into a fiendish mirror image of the Riders themselves. Between the might of the demons themselves and the speed and flying ability of their nightmarish mounts, the Riders could not hope to stand against the Tarmalens. Himmah pulled his followers north and west, away from the Infernal newcomers, but he was determined that his people would not spend the rest of their lives cowering in their village.

On a moonless night, Himmah and a group of hand-picked horse thieves stole silently up on a camp of Tarmalen riders. While the demonic riders were 'entertaining' themselves with a pair of slaves they had captured earlier that day, Himmah and his men approached the unfettered hell-horses. Black as sin, with manes and tails of flowing orange flame, the huge and intimidating creatures snorted sulfurous smoke and left fiery hoof prints wherever they stepped. Himmah and his men had a secret weapon, though, the same device that had made them the most successful (and most hated) horse thieves among all the Yhing hir. They carried special bits, made of cracked and yellowing old bone, which would render any animal docile when placed in the beast's mouth. Looking at the long, sharp fangs of the Tarmalen mounts left the Riders rather doubtful of their success, but Himmah refused to be dissuaded.

The hunt was an almost complete disaster. The 'horses' were frightfully intelligent and terrifyingly strong, and their smoky breath and flaming hooves left most of the hunting party either dead or dazed enough to be easy prey for the pursuing demons. Himmah himself had one of his hands bitten off as he shoved his bit into the mouth of the animal he was 'riding,' but the magic in the bit subdued his mount enough that he was able to fly it back to the village. The wound festered, and Himmah died less than a week later, but his sacrifice proved to be a turning point for the Riders, because the nightmare he had brought home was a pregnant mare. The breeding program that began with that mare and her colt would eventually become the critical factor that kept the Riders alive.

Judicious crossbreeding with the best of the Riders' horses led to a strain of animal with tremendous speed, stamina, and courage; while unable to fly, and not as fierce as a true nightmare, the Riders' 'hell horses' are far more dangerous than any normal horse. Their speed, combined with the Riders' exceptional skill, has enabled the Riders to keep their patrols out of the demons' reach except when ambushed. More importantly, it has enabled them to keep the location of their home village (now named Himmatah in memory of Himmah) a secret.

The Riders themselves need an influx of new blood as well, but this is usually not difficult to find. A few slaves that escape from the Thorn Hills or the Lordship of Iron are gathered up by traveling Riders and brought home to Himmatah. More often, young men and women from the Legion of Unyielding Courage or the city-state of Bastion run away to join the Riders, entranced by the free lifestyle that the horsemen live, which contrasts so strongly with

their own rigid and inflexible communities. Neither Bastion nor the inhabitants of the Giantskeep care for this practice, but there is little that they can do about it.

Magical Traditions

Shamans, and to a lesser extent druids, are the primary spellcasters found among the Riders. Each of the ten tribes has at least one shaman and often several assistants or apprentices; the druids, on the other hand, tend to live alone in isolated but cunningly concealed wilderness homes. A single family in Himmatah has a long-standing tradition of wizardry, but they have always kept their arcane powers hidden from the general population for fear of superstitious reprisals. Only members of the family, and those who marry into it, learn of the family's potent but dangerous secret. Clerics and sorcerers are unknown among the Riders, though on rare occasions, a young Rider may leave his people to live among the Legion of Unyielding Courage and become an acolyte of Illiir, or perhaps to worship Sarish among the people of Bastion. These clerics will occasionally return to Himmatah to proselytize for their newfound faiths, but the Riders will have none of it, and generally ignore the would-be missionary until he dies or goes away again.

Himmatah

Type: Small city

Population: 13,302

Ruler: Mayor Dimash the Old

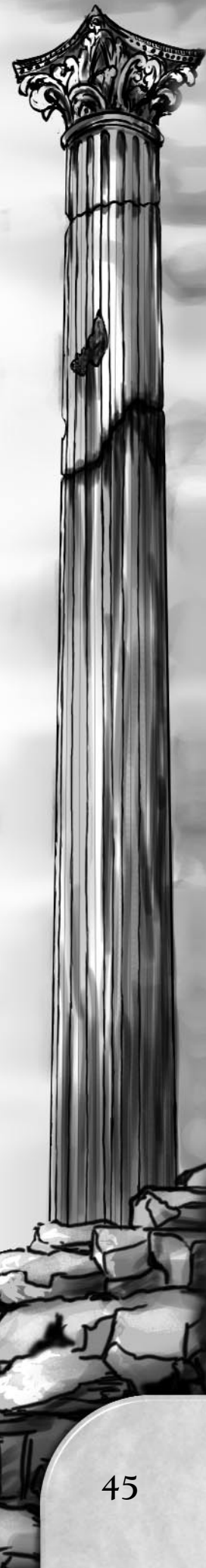
Power Centers: Dimash, the Riders' Council

Industries: Horses, iron

Himmatah is now a large, thriving town, which has expanded into an extensive series of tunnels dug into the valley walls surrounding its original location. The original excavation of these tunnels led to the discovery of several sizable iron deposits, which have been mined extensively. When the mines are played out, the tunnels are converted to storage or residential space, since the city can afford to grow no larger on the surface without being visible from outside the valley. Despite the expansion into the tunnels, the city is extremely overcrowded, which is having increasingly negative effects on its food and water supplies and its crime rate.

Roughly ten thousand people reside in Himmatah permanently, with another few thousand representing transient members of one or more of the Riders' sizable nomadic bands. The traveling bands conduct trade with the Legion of Unyielding Courage, and occasionally with the people of Bastion or the outlying villages of the Haina, though in the case of the Haina they are as likely to raid as to trade. They also hunt wild korra, defend against small groups of demons or frost giant raiding parties, and keep enemies away from the central portion of the plains where Himmatah is hidden. Periodically, they return to Himmatah to trade, resupply, and exchange news of the outside world.

The chieftains of the ten nomadic bands and the mayor of Himmatah form the Riders' Council, the ostensible ruling body of the Riders. In practice, the chieftains rule their own bands with near-absolute control, and the Council's decisions are only closely adhered to in Himmatah itself. However, individual riders are free to move from one band to another, and a chieftain



who is too despotic a ruler will rapidly find his people deserting him. Most of the chieftains appoint a younger son or other representative to serve on the Council in their stead, focusing their own attention on leading their own riders across the steppe. Those chieftains who do serve directly on the Council are generally too old or injured to ride, and retain control of their own bands in name only.

Dimash the Old, the current mayor of Himmatah, is not quite as old as his nickname suggests. However, he is quite set in his ways, and has blocked several recent attempts to have another permanent settlement constructed for the Riders. Several younger and less conservative politicians are hoping to fill Dimash's role when he dies, and rumors suggest that one or more of them may be seeking to accelerate that process.

Tarmalen

Capital: None

Population, Infernal: 7,713

Government: Loose confederacy with strongly anarchist tendencies

When Uhxbrectit first began forging the Lordship of Iron in the first days after the Wall of the Gods arose, many of the Infernals had no desire to follow the leader who, in their view, had failed and thus trapped them on this miserable world. While some of the devils that opposed Uhxbrectit made an organized plan to break off and form their own kingdom (see the Thorn Hills), many of the more chaotic and undisciplined Infernals simply left. Many of these demons simply scattered to the distant corners of the Sealed Lands, where most of them prey on mortals and Infernals alike to this day. However, several thousand of the less powerful demons traveled together in a loose pack, striking out north and east from Uhxbrectit's realm with no clear direction in mind. Accompanying them were several hundred nightmares, which had no interest in remaining confined by the walls of Uhxbrectit's cities.

The demons had no goal and no sense of what they would do, trapped on the world of men with no summoner's orders and no obvious targets. Drifting aimlessly, they contented themselves with destroying whatever small villages or other settlements they came across, or with torturing any wildlife that strayed across their path. But these victims were helpless and few in number, and despite the efforts some of the demons made to prolong their "entertainment," none of their prey lasted more than a few days, and soon the fiends were bored and aimless once more. They began to fight among themselves with ever-increasing frequency, and while this was a pleasant enough distraction for a while, the self-proclaimed leaders of the mob began to sense that they needed some sort of larger goal in mind. Leaving the main body of their fellows behind, these fiends began to fan out across the Sealed Lands in search of a new diversion.

Eventually one of the demons, a cunning creature called Kutcharg, stumbled across a small group of Riders. Using his powers to approach them unseen and unheard, Kutcharg learned that this small band was only a tiny fraction of a large group of humans, who dwelled in a hidden valley far to the north. The demon quickly realized that a large and distant group such as this could produce an endless source of entertainment for his brothers, so long as they

were not destroyed and thus lost forever. Skulking back towards the main body of the demons, Kutcharg began to formulate a plan.

When he returned, Kutcharg strode into the center of the demonic camp (if such a disorganized mass could be termed a "camp") and bellowed for silence. As usual, many of the demons completely ignored him, but enough of them at least quieted down to the point where he could be heard. "Brothers," he said, "I bring you a new challenge!" That got the demons' attention; they had had nothing to do for many days but torment one another, and tormenting a demon is not nearly as entertaining as tormenting a mortal.

"There is a group of humans some distance to the northwest of here, riding on horses. They are few in number and lacking in power; they will be no challenge for us to defeat."

"Then where is the challenge, fat fool?" bellowed a gross, ape-like demon. "You babble nonsense."

"The challenge is this," Kutcharg continued. "You, or some few of you, must defeat them in an even match – there are eight of them, so there must be no more than eight of you. They have no magic, so you must defeat them without sorcery. Only your claws and fangs against their swords and spears. Is that enough of a challenge for you?"

"But what if they kill us?" whined a quasit shrilly.

"Then you will be dead, coward," Kutcharg snapped back. "We are the fiercest and foulest beings on this world...will we be afraid of a few humans?" As he had expected, the demons were infuriated by the suggestion of cowardice, and they all clamored to take part in the 'challenge.' The nightmares, too, desired to take part, for they had been bored beyond words as well. The arguments over who would get to kill the humans were long and violent, and the decision of who would be permitted to take part took several days.

In the end, Kutcharg selected eight demons and eight nightmares to hunt down the Riders, so as to make a "fair fight" against the eight men and eight horses of their prey. To further limit the demons' combat prowess, Kutcharg insisted that they remain mounted during the entire hunt, as their prey would. The demons agreed, though they had no intention of really following the rules; they had left the Lordship of Iron to avoid senseless rules, so why should they follow more now? Once the selections were made, Kutcharg told the "hunters" where their prey could be found, and they set off with wild whoops of bloodthirsty glee. Kutcharg, and more than a few other demons, followed invisibly to watch.

Not surprisingly, the battle was bloody, one-sided and brief. The mortal horses could not even come close to matching the speed of the nightmares, and even those demons that bothered to follow the rules of the challenge easily overmatched the terrified Riders. The victorious demons amused themselves briefly with their vanquished foes, but their blood was up after the "battle," and soon enough the captives were all dead. Kutcharg realized that his plan had potential, but he would need to limit the demons even more if he did not want all the Riders wiped out within the year.

As the demonic horde wandered further north, more and more small groups of Riders were spotted, providing additional opportunities for "challenges," which quickly became the most popular pastime among the demons. The Riders began to refer to the demons and their nightmarish mounts as *tar ma len*, which roughly means "death on hooves" when translated from the Yhing hir.

Since there were far more demons than prey, the process of choosing who got to take part quickly became a sophisticated problem in and of itself. The demons soon began competing with each other to see who would dare the most potentially dangerous attack. A group of four demons might agree to hunt a group of ten Riders; then another group would offer to make the attack with only two, and then a solitary demon would offer to take all the Riders on himself. If multiple demons offered to make solitary attacks, the question then became which of them would attack with the most limitations on his conduct. One demon might agree to use no magic; another would reply that he would use no magic and would also attack with only one claw, and so on.

Even so, the mortals were clearly overmatched. The nightmares always insisted on taking part in the hunts, and the mortal horses simply could not hope to outrun the fiendish steeds. Eventually a nightmare stallion, half joking, suggested that things would be more even if the mortals, too, had access to nightmares, and while the nightmares were mortified at the prospect of being ridden by mortals, Kutcharg and the other demons thought it an excellent plan. A few nightmares agreed to give the mortals a chance to capture them – a new form of challenge, in their minds – and a succubus slipped into one of the Riders' camps to arrange for the nightmares to be "found."

To everyone's amazement, one of the mortals actually succeeded in capturing one of the nightmares, thus enabling them to help even the odds, albeit by a fractionally small amount. The hell-horses which the Riders have managed to breed from their single captured nightmare are incapable of flight, but their land speed nearly matches that of the nightmares, thus adding a bit more sport to the appallingly one-sided hunts of the demons.

The Games Must Go On

Over the succeeding centuries, the demons have continued their "games" with the riders, and also occasionally amuse themselves by attacking the outlying portions of the Thorn Hills or the Lordship of Iron. The Infernal kingdoms, however, pose a much more significant threat, and so most of the demons' attention is still directed towards their mortal prey.

The Tarmalen, as they are now known, have evolved a violent and nomadic lifestyle which is ironically reminiscent of the Yhing hir who once roamed this land. Roaming the western plains of the Sealed Lands, they keep a sharp lookout for any Riders, escaped slaves, or other potential prey which represent a new source of 'sport.'

There is very little that could be called a government among the Tarmalen. The fiends generally travel together, mostly because none of them wants to take a chance on being left out of a chance to 'play' with any prey which might be located. Various complex systems for deciding who will take part in any particular 'challenge' have been proposed, tried and implemented, but the demons rarely care enough to follow the rules for any significant period of time, and before long, the system reverts back to "whoever is strongest gets to hunt."

The one rule which is generally followed is the one stating that none of the demons will follow the Riders back to their homes; there is simply too much risk that someone will lose control and the humans will be wiped out, thus ending the "challenges" forever. The Tarmalen have come to see the wisdom of this approach, though

the fact that Kutcharg literally tore the first demon to violate this rule in half may have contributed to their cooperation.

Recently, some among the Tarmalen have ventured far enough north to encounter the settlements of the frost giants, and plans are underway to develop a new set of challenges with these considerably more dangerous foes. If the 'games' with the giants are successful from the demons' standpoint, it is entirely possible that the Tarmalen will shift their focus from the Riders to the giants. This may mean that the Riders have a chance to find a respite from the demons' endless raids; on the other hand, it may mean that the Riders are no longer necessary for the demons' amusement, and may be destroyed once and for all.

The Thorn Hills

Capital: Metchaa

Population, Infernal: 18,441

Population, Mortal: 51,534 (humans 72%, dark-kin 11%, tieflings 10%, cambions 7%)

Government: Oligarchy

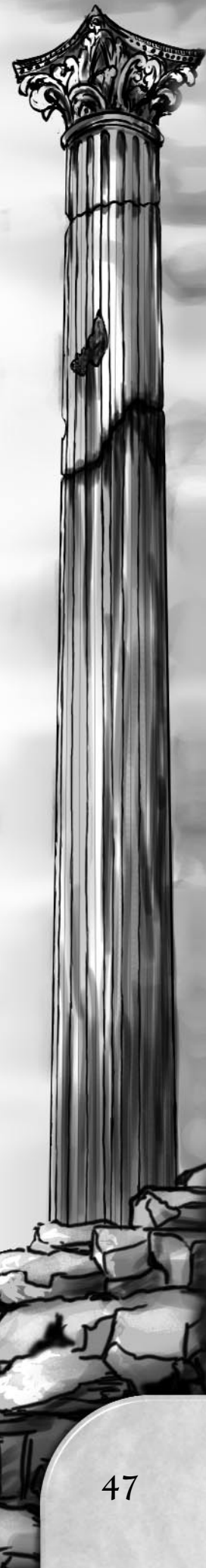
A large portion of Uhxbractit's armies revolted against the Devil-King's leadership shortly after the Sealing, and established their own confederacy in the foothills of the Godswall. Today, the fiends of the Thorn Hills represent an independent realm engaged in a constant war with Uhxbractit and the Lordship of Iron, a war that never seems to result in any significant gains for either side.

Uncivil War

When Uhxbractit began creating the Lordship of Iron, most of his Infernal followers went along with his plans. The Devil-King seemed to know as much about what had happened as anyone, and more than most; and since they seemed to have few alternatives, why not see if he could lead as well in peacetime as in war?

Others, however, were not so sanguine about the prospects of life under Uhxbractit. Hamaimon, a powerful devil prince in his own right, quickly surmised that many of Uhxbractit's plans were intended solely to keep the majority of the Infernals too busy to make war on each other. He considered confronting Uhxbractit with his suspicions and blackmailing him with the threat of revealing the truth to the Infernal hordes. However, he correctly guessed that the Devil-King would be more likely to kill him than share power with him.

Thus, instead of confronting Uhxbractit, Hamaimon contacted a few other powerful Infernals whom he felt he could trust at least slightly, and suggested an alternative course of action. As a veteran of the dangerous currents of Infernal politics, Hamaimon knew well that he needed to be subtle in his words, and carefully feel out those who might be amenable to his plans. Eventually, he selected three other powerful fiends to take part in his power play: Shanness, known as the Source of Darkness; Ghashmet, the Lord of Red Ice; and Tulemigantzi, the Eater of Lightning. All three were powerful and two of the three were quite cunning, but Hamaimon thought that none of them was quite as powerful or cunning as himself. More to the point, each could see that they would gain more from allying with Hamaimon than they would from remaining under Uhxbractit's control.



Over the course of several years, the quartet made their plans, sought out their most loyal sub-commanders, and devised tactics for how best to stand off Uhxbractit's armies. They carefully selected the site for their new home; they wanted a location close enough to the Lordship of Iron to be quickly reached once they broke with Uhxbractit, but distant enough and defensible enough to avoid being recaptured. They knew that Uhxbractit and his followers would have the advantage of numbers, but with clever tactics and the selection of appropriate terrain, they could make the battle costly enough that Uhxbractit would find it easier to let them go. Eventually, they selected an area known as the Thorn Hills in the southwestern corner of the Sealed Lands. The terrain was rocky and defensible, but there were enough flat areas deeper within the hills that slaves could grow enough crops to support themselves. The Nazhau River also served as a natural boundary between the two realms, and would serve to further slow any pursuing armies.

At last, all was ready. Tulemigantzi and Ghashmet were poised to command the southern and northern portions of the rebel armies, respectively, and Hamaimon and Shanness went to the city of Vengeance to confront Uhxbractit. When they arrived, the massive Devil-king stood on the balcony of his titanic keep, looking down upon his city, or what he could see of it through the thick clouds of forge-smoke that smothered Vengeance in constant night. "What is it?" he said to the rebels without turning around.

Shanness stepped boldly forward. "We are leaving, Uhxbractit. We are leaving your so-called Lordship, and taking twenty thousand of our followers with us. We have grown tired of your nonsensical bureaucracy, your ridiculous monuments, and the mockery you have made of our lives and our traditions. We should never have followed you in the first place; that mistake is now rectified. We are leaving, and you cannot stop us without seeing your precious kingdom ripped apart."

"Fine, go," Uhxbractit said, waving one huge talon dismissively.

"Your blustering threats will do you no – what?" Shanness stopped, obviously caught off guard by Uhxbractit's response.

"I said, go." Uhxbractit sighed, letting a small cloud of his poisonous breath drift away on the wind, then turned around to face his rebellious underlings. "The Lordship dominates this land now. The few scattered bands of mortals that dwell in the distant corners are no threat to us, and I could crush them in

a matter of days if I did not need them to remain as a distraction

to my less perceptive subjects. Your departure will be most helpful; already, many loyal devils have been kept busy for months infiltrating your mutinous forces. When you actually break free from the Lordship in your bloody revolution, you will provide a new enemy for us to focus our attention on – an enemy comprised of equals, and betrayers to boot, so that all my people can freely and wholeheartedly hate you. With your help, both of our kingdoms will be able to keep our populations busy while we get on with the business of governing and planning for the future."

Shanness, bewildered, looked at Hamaimon. *He always was a little slow to catch on*, Hamaimon thought. "So you wish us to go, but you wish us to go as enemies," he said aloud to Uhxbractit. "We cannot simply depart peacefully, or all your other citizens would see our example and desert your cities as well. But by rebelling in war, we further help to distract your people from the truth, which is that their existence here is devoid of all meaning."



Uhxbractit smiled. "You understand completely, I see. Good. I suspect that future relations between our kingdoms will be much smoother because of it."

Shanness had finally gathered what few wits he had. "I do not understand at all. Uhxbractit is our enemy, the very one we are staging this war to escape from. If he wishes us gone, then we must defy him by staying. If we remain here, as an underground insurgent force, perhaps..."

Hamaimon shook his head, and then turned back to Uhxbractit. "All rebellions must start with some heinous act of cruelty, must they not? Some deed so bloody and vile that those who have been pondering the revolution in secret can no longer stand by to watch, but must act."

Uhxbractit looked at Hamaimon, and nodded his head with a feral grin. "We understand each other once again. Good luck, Hamaimon." Then Uhxbractit gestured idly, and his massive poleaxe appeared in his hands, its blade crusted with the blood of centuries. With a short, powerful swing, he drove the blade full into Shanness' belly, and a spurt of black, viscous blood spewed forth in place of the nonsensical arguments the devil had been making moments earlier. Using the vicious hook on the back of the blade, Uhxbractit hauled Shanness towards the window, wondering aloud about how many weeks a rebel leader should be publicly tortured before being permitted to die.

Hamaimon smiled grimly, and went back to tell his allies about the bloody and vile deed Uhxbractit had done to their brother. The rebellion was not long in starting.

Strange Bedfellows

The relationship between the Lordship of Iron and the Thorn Hills has been an extraordinarily strange one since the beginning, even by the standards of Infernal politics. Uhxbractit and Hamaimon enjoy a bizarre symbiotic relationship in which each denounces the other publicly in the vilest of terms, but both are engaged in frequent magical communication in order to develop a joint strategy for their ongoing conflict. Very few Infernals actually die in the continuing series of skirmishes and raids which constantly occur along the Nazhau River, though many slaves perish at the hands of one side or the other. Thus, each side is in constant need of more slaves, thus creating the need for ever more raids in a self-perpetuating, vicious cycle.

The other leaders of the Thorn Hills kingdom, Tulemigantzi and Ghashmet, are unaware of the true nature of the relationship between Hamaimon and Uhxbractit. Understandably, this often makes Hamaimon's job extremely difficult. However, Hamaimon's decisions in the past have proven his remarkable ability to predict and counter Uhxbractit's strategies, making him the de facto leader of the governing triad.

Daily life in the Thorn Hills is, for the most part, rather similar to that in the Lordship of Iron. The slaves in the Thorn Hills do not spend any of their time building monuments or decorations; instead they are put to work forging massive war machines to use in the unending conflict with the Lordship. The slave population is also a considerably smaller portion of the total population in the Thorn Hills than it is in the Lordship, so comparatively few slaves can be spared for 'entertainment' purposes. The rebels were able to bring only a small number of mortal slaves with them, and despite their frequent raids against the Lordship of Iron, those numbers have not increased enough to suit Hamaimon and his fellow rulers.

As a result, the devils of the Thorn Hills have begun to institute their own slave-breeding programs, which have led to a large number of Tainted in the population. Those with the Taint are placed into the armies of the Thorn Hills, and are considered full citizens after serving for a decade or so. If a given bloodline weakens enough to start producing apparently mortal offspring, those individuals are put back into the slave population; those dark-kin that seem to spontaneously appear in later generations are made slave overseers, but are not given any real responsibility and cannot become citizens. The Corrupted have also found a place here, as Hamaimon has seen the wisdom of having such a caste under his thumb.

Magical Traditions

As in the Lordship of Iron, sorcerers are far and away the most common form of spellcasters in the Thorn hills. Most are cambions or tieflings who lack the inherent magical abilities of their ancestors, but have enough of a gift to be taught. A few weak clerics manage to maintain their faith among the slaves, but there is no other significant magical tradition to be found.

Metchaa

Type: Large city
Population, Infernal: 6,147
Population, Mortal: 17,172
Ruler: Hamaimon
Industries: Iron, weapons

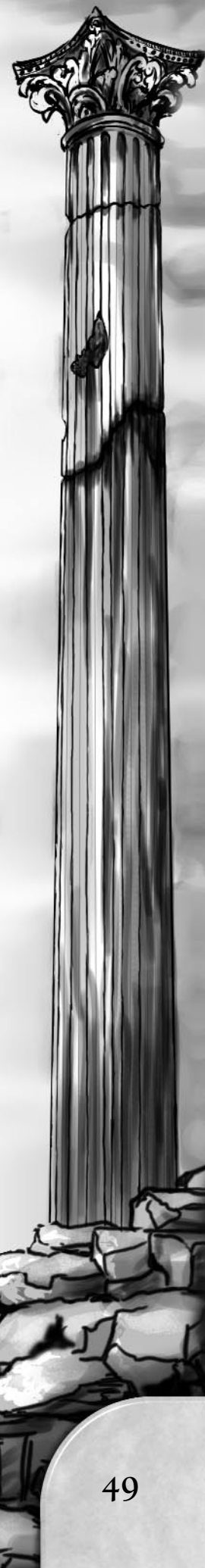
Metchaa, the capital and largest city of the Thorn Hills, is a grim and foreboding place, both for its slaves and their Infernal masters. All of its populations' energies are dedicated to preparing for and waging the constant, low-level conflict with the Lordship of Iron. Complex war machines and sophisticated fortifications are constantly being built in preparation for the "inevitable" day when the border skirmishes erupt into open warfare. Hamaimon makes frequent visits to the city's countless forges and armories, exhorting the slaves and their fiendish overseers alike to greater efforts. Meanwhile, the fortifications rust unused, and the war machines rust in their great storage bays, ready for a war that will never come.


Fortunately for the slaves of the Thorn Hills, Metchaa sits upon a huge deposit of natural iron, eliminating the need for slaves to be expended in the creation of blood iron.

Gaz

Type: Large city
Population, Infernal: 4,810
Population, Mortal: 11,304
Ruler: Tulemigantzi, the Eater of Lightning
Industries: Weapons

As the northernmost city of the Thorn Hills, Gaz is doubly threatened: both the Lordship of Iron and the riders of Tarmalen border the city's environs, and both raid the surrounding slave settlements on a regular basis. As a result, Tulemigantzi has begun to construct a second wall around the city, encompassing all the outlying settlements with staunch fortifications. The construction has been going on for decades, and good progress is being made, but there is a great deal of work yet to be done.





Tulemigtantzi has long been frustrated at the inability of the Thorn Hills' armies to gain any significant ground against the Lordship of Iron, despite the skilled strategies devised by Hamaimon. He has begun to feel that the problem is simply a lack of numbers, and has decided to take matters into his own talons by training and equipping some of his personal slaves for war. Of course, most mortal warriors will have difficulty even harming a devil, so Tulemigtantzi has begun a quiet program of gathering as many enchanted weapons as he can find by whatever means he can. He has also begun investigating the possibility of obtaining Sarishan steel armaments from the Haina, the only people in the Sealed Lands who know how to forge that substance. Tulemigtantzi is well aware of the risk involved in arming large numbers of slaves with weapons that can harm their masters as easily as their enemies, and has not yet determined how he intends to keep the newly-armed slaves in check. He is confident that he will find a way, but has decided not to inform the other rulers of the Thorn Hills until his plan is complete.

Tulemigtantzi is also conducting covert operations against the Tarmalen by means of a spy in the court of the jarl of the Kukkomir frost giants.

Stonefall

Type: Large city

Population, Infernal: 4,315

Population, Mortal: 9,225

Ruler: Ghashmet, the Lord of Red Ice

Industries: Weapons, fish

Stonefall is built where the Nazhau River tumbles down from the Wall of the Gods into the open plains of the Sealed Lands, and the constant torrent of muddy water which cascades from the sheer cliffs is what gives the city its name. Like Metchaa, Stonefall is a city dedicated to war, but unlike its eastern neighbor, Stonefall sits on the front lines. Lordship forces from Angol are a constant nuisance, and the fortifications of Stonefall see a great deal more use than those of Metchaa. Gigantic stone and iron ballistas are mounted on the city's walls, representing a potent threat to any enemies who stand in one place too long on the western bank of the Nazhau.

When not under attack, Stonefall is a relatively pleasant place by the standards of the Sealed Lands. The water coming from the Godswall is cold and relatively clean as one gets farther from the mud churned up by the falls, and fish caught in the river provide a welcome addition to the slaves' otherwise bland diet. Furthermore, the devils of Stonefall are well aware of the importance of the slaves to their war effort, and deliberate mistreatment of slaves is kept to a minimum.

Stonefall's position at the source of the Nazhau has led Ghashmet to consider various ways in which the river could be used as a weapon of war. The city of Vethen is too far downriver to be affected by poison, and the slaves of the Thorn Hills rely on the river for sustenance as well. The fast current of the river makes warships impractical; too many slaves would be

required to row the ship back upriver after sailing to the attack, and there are not enough slaves in the Thorn Hills to be callously discarded in suicide attacks.

Currently, Ghashmet is toying with the idea of sending

underwater infiltrators into Vethen to wreak havoc, but has made no concrete plans yet.

Stonefall is also the site of a massive temple, built at the urging of the Forsaken. Within, unholy rites venerating the Infernal Lords extend for days on end during the "Holy Days" established and presided over by Ghashmet himself.

Bastion

Capital: Bastion

Population: 1,012,302 (humans 92%, vals 8%)

Ruler: Xabal

Government: Autocracy

The city-state of Bastion, centered on a ruined Auxunite city that has been restored by its inhabitants, is a staunch fortress against the Infernals. However, the strict religious discipline enforced within can be as harsh and unforgiving as any devil.

The mountains of the Godswall were created by the will of Illiir himself, and thus were far mightier than any Infernal could ever hope to be. Still, Uhxbractit and his minions were known to be cunning and treacherous, and if they were to be trapped in the north of Onara for all time, they would need to be watched to ensure that they did not find some way to escape. Thus, the Valinor known as the Patience of Sarish was set to watch over the lands within the Godswall, to ensure that the Infernals remained forever within their prison.

The Patience of Sarish was not there to punish or command the Infernals; indeed, most of the fiends never had the slightest inkling of his presence, even when he walked among them in disguise to see what treachery they were up to. His role was merely to ensure that the armies of Uhxbractit remained where they had been set. There were humans trapped within as well, and that was unfortunate; but the Patience of Sarish was not there to help the humans, either. So he watched, and he waited, and the centuries passed.

Over the years, the Valinor saw what the Infernals did to each other and to the unfortunate mortals trapped with them. He saw their treachery and their cruelty, their bloodlust and their greed. The vile sins he observed piled one upon the other in an unending litany of evil perpetrated by the Infernals, and nowhere was the slightest hint of remorse or the tiniest glimpse of hope. And as the Patience of Sarish observed the Infernals for year after year, decade upon decade, he did what a Valinor should never do. He began to hate.

He hated Uhxbractit and his thoughtless cruelty. He hated the blasphemous lies of Meliol and the merciless precision of Caneturec. He hated Hamaimon's limitless lust for power, Kutcharg's untiring thirst for pointless vengeance, and Sivirimirivis' never-ending hunger to inflict blood and pain. He hated all of them, and he desired nothing more than to crush them, punish them, torment them as they tormented every living thing that crossed their path; but the word of Illiir said that his role was only to watch and wait, to keep them in this miserable pit of blood and filth and torture and death until the end of all time. And so, though he would never have dared to even form the thought into words, the Patience of Sarish began to hate Illiir as well.

Some seven hundred years after the Sealing, the Patience of Sarish was traveling through the streets of Tuvulem, a small and semi-independent city on the west-



ern fringes of the Lordship of Iron. No one in the city, mortal or Infernal, saw him for what he was; their eyes passed over him without seeing, or simply accepted him as an expected part of their world. Thus he was free to observe. In theory, he was observing the Infernals to ensure that they were not planning some cunning means by which to escape their imprisonment. In truth, though he would never admit it to himself, he was looking for further evidence of the fiends' cruelty, stoking the fires of his own growing rage, as he had for centuries.


He found the cruelty he was looking for, of course, as he might have done in any city or town anywhere within the Wall of the Gods. Wherever he might have looked, he would have seen the Infernals taking a savage glee in inflicting pain, misery and suffering on their slaves and their fellow fiends. His hate was strong enough that he would probably have found evidence even if there was none to be found, but when looking for sins among the Infernals, one need never fear that there is nothing to find.

On this particular day, it was a simple thing, as so many of the fiends' torments were. A boy, perhaps seven years old, was staggering back after a day in the fields, reaping the meager harvests that would provide food for himself and his fellow slaves. His face and arms were red and blistered from the sun, and the stiffness in his gait spoke of long days of labor and short nights of restless sleep. And this pathetic boy, old before his time and with no hope of bettering his life, spotted a half-rotten apple lying in the gutter, where it had fallen from some cart on its way to the storage houses. It would be no more than a few bites, and the boy would have to be careful to avoid the foulest of the brown spots. But it represented food, an unexpected treat, probably the only bright spot in the boy's week, if not his year.

As he bent to pluck the apple from the gutter, a passing devil saw him and barked a callous word in the Infernal tongue. A small ball of flame, no bigger than the boy's fist, flew from the fiend's hand and struck the apple, obliterating it in an instant and singeing the boy's fingers. The boy, startled and terrified, fell back on his rear, and tried to simultaneously crawl for cover and suck his burned fingertips. The devil simply laughed.

What harm would it have done, the Patience of Sarish thought to himself, to let the boy have it? No fiend would have eaten it, and if no slave took it, it would have rotted uselessly in the gutter. Would an apple have somehow made the boy a threat, giving him the strength to throw off his chains and destroy the thousand Infernals that dwell here? No. The sole reason for what the devil did was to deny the boy what might have been a tiny, brief flicker of pleasure in his otherwise miserable life. Just to inflict yet more pain, for no reason at all. Hasn't the boy suffered enough?

Almost without realizing it, the Valinor found himself approaching the devil who had thrown the flame. It was crossing the street now, laughing so hard that its yellowed spittle ran into its grimy, wiry beard. Towering over the cowed child, it reared back one clawed leg to kick the boy, who closed his eyes in anticipation of yet more pain. And then, surprising even himself, the Patience of Sarish realized that his own patience had run out. He could stand no more.



He spoke a single word in the First of All Tongues, and the devil melted where it stood before its brain even had a chance to realize what it had heard. All along the street, demons and devils of all sizes and shapes were screaming, or frozen in terror, or clawing at their own useless eyes with taloned hands, or simply destroyed in an instant. Even as the word crossed his lips, the Valinor knew that he had gone too far, he had contravened the orders that defined his very existence. His role was only to observe, never to act. But he had acted, had done that which could not be undone, and whatever happened, he would never again be the Patience of Sarish. Even now, his master would know what had been done, and would be stripping all power from the Valinor that dared break his rules – the rules of the Binder, that none dared defy. If he was to do anything, then, if he could make the loss of his own divinity make some small difference in this wretched place, it would have to be done quickly.

Rising into the sky above Tuvulem on the wings of his own will, using the powers that Sarish had entrusted to him, the Valinor encompassed all the city within his field of vision. Beyond Tuvulem, the Sealed Lands stretched for hundreds of miles, and millions of wretched souls suffered far worse torments every moment of every day. He could not save them all; but he could save these. Looking down at the city that had cost him his immortality, he spoke again, louder this time. The mortals, the slaves and servants of the city's foul masters, heard only thunder, loud and close in a cloudless sky. But the demons and devils of Tuvulem heard nothing at all, for they were dead before the echoes of the word had died away.

With that word, the last of Sarish's power was truly gone from the Valinor, and he fell to earth. He did not die; *perhaps*, he thought, *Sarish wishes me to have a lifetime to reflect on my sin*. In the centuries since, that has always been the fallen Valinor's explanation for why he yet exists. But sometimes, late at night, another possible reason dances around the edges of his consciousness, another thought that he dares not put into words: *Perhaps I still live because Sarish believes that what I did was right*.

Claiming a Home

When he came to after destroying the inhabitants of Tuvulem, the former Patience of Sarish found himself surrounded by awed former slaves. They were grateful beyond words that their tormentors had been destroyed, but were also terrified of what anyone who could wield such power might do to them. As he slowly sat up among the wreckage of the building that had cushioned his fall, he saw one of the braver slaves – *no, not slaves any longer, just men*, he thought to himself – approach him. The man, scarred from a lifetime under the Infernals' whips, seemed somewhat less frightened than the rest, as if nothing in the future could be so horrible as what was in his past. "Who are you?" he asked simply.

The question gave the Valinor pause. He was no longer the Patience of Sarish, and that had always been his name as well as his purpose. He had no identity apart from his divinely appointed role, but he supposed he would need one now. "What should I be called?" he asked the man in return.

Most of the newly-freed slaves flinched and covered their ears as he spoke, as if expecting to be torn away by the force of his words as the Infernals had been. But that power was no longer his; it never had been, if the truth be told. He had simply been allowed to use it, until he abused it.

The scarred man did not flinch, but merely looked the fallen Valinor up and down for a moment. "I would call you Xabal," he said. The word, the Valinor knew, was Auxunite in origin, and translated roughly to "roaring star." *It will do well enough*, he thought.

"Then I am Xabal," he said, "and you are free." The people began to murmur excitedly to one another, but their joy was tinged with the apprehension of what might come next. As painful as it was, slavery was at least predictable; these humans had never had to make a significant decision in their lives. "But you will not remain free for long if we remain here. The monsters that ruled this city are gone, but more will come, and they will punish you for what has happened here, though it was not your fault. If you wish to live free, gather up all that you can carry and follow me."

Xabal led his people – for he was clearly now their leader, whether he wanted to be or not – to a ruined city he had passed through before, an Auxunite ruin on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Tears. A fierce, predatory demon called Buhez the Foul had come to lair amidst the crumbling ruins there after the Sealing, and no one cared enough about the ancient wreckage to risk entering the monstrous fiend's territory. Xabal knew that it was the only place nearby where he could hope to house his new-found followers without drawing more attention from Uhxtractit and the other Infernal rulers of the region. He only hoped that he could destroy Buhez, or drive it away, without the power of Sarish to draw upon.

When they at last reached the city, Xabal instructed his weary followers to wait outside, and they gladly took the opportunity to rest while Xabal entered the ruins alone. He walked along the cracked cobblestones and among the ruined buildings, and when the huge, toadlike shadow began following him, he paid it no mind. Eventually, he reached the dry, lichen-coated fountain that marked the center of the city, and he turned around and waited. Soon Buhez peered out from behind a crumbling wall. One of its bulbous eyes was as big as Xabal's head. The other was bigger.

"Are you afraid?" it grunted.

"No," Xabal said, calmly.

The demon shuffled forward, thick marble paving stones cracking beneath its tremendous weight with each lurching step. Its talons, encrusted with dried blood, twitched in the wind as though anxious to kill, and its mottled black tongue scraped over sharklike yellow teeth. It was easily close enough now to pounce on Xabal before he could react. Xabal had seen it pounce before, and had seen the black and sticky stain that was all that remained of the man it had pounced on.

"Are you afraid now?" it croaked.

"No," Xabal replied.

Buhez moved forward again, and Xabal could feel the ground vibrating as its clawed feet plodded forward. It was close enough to touch, now, had he wanted to do so. The rancid stench of week-old death poured from the demon in oily waves, and thick globules of its poisonous

sweat dropped to the ground and dug steaming holes in the marble, hissing as they went. Its mouth was open wide enough to swallow Xabal whole now, though it did not intend to let things end so quickly.

“Are you afraid *now*?” it hissed.

“No,” Xabal said, staring the demon directly in one vast, yellow eye. “It is you who should be afraid, for I serve him who bound you once and will again if you hinder me.” The lie came easily to his lips. “Sarish is my master, and he has given me power over such as you. Your size and your poison and your treachery will avail you nothing against me, for I know your name.”

“Everyone knows my name,” it burred. “I am Buhez the foul, eater of giants, bringer of fear, the stalker in the darkness that admits no dawn.”

“Not that name,” Xabal said, and told Buhez his true name.

The demon snarled and recoiled, but did not strike. “What do you want from me?”

“This place,” Xabal answered. “Begone from it, and come not here again on pain of unending torment. I care not where you go, but this city and a hundred miles on all sides of it are forbidden to you forevermore.”

Buhez half-closed one eye, and squinted down at Xabal. “What does the Binder want with such a place as this?”

“That is not your concern. If you wish to see how important it is to Sarish, then linger here and see his wrath when he is disobeyed. There is a town to the south of here called Tuvulem; those who lived there could tell you about the anger of Sarish, if any were still alive to do so.”

“Tuvulem, you say?” Buhez grinned, and its grin was terrible to behold. “I know it.” And it opened its third eye, and looked across the miles to Tuvulem, and saw what Xabal had done with the last of the power Sarish had given him. Its gray-green skin turned pale. “There is more to this than you let on.”

“The ways of Sarish are not to be explained to such as you. Now go, and come here never again, or face the fate of Tuvulem.”

Buhez stood and growled, but it did not dare risk the anger of Sarish. With a last muttered curse, it turned and crawled from the city, the shadows gathering around it as it went. And Xabal went to bring his people into their new home.

A Holy Place in an Unholy Land

In the centuries since Xabal and his followers claimed the ruins and began to rebuild them, the renamed city of Bastion has turned into one of the few bright places within the Sealed Lands. Demons and devils are unknown within its demesne, and it is far enough away from the Lordship of Iron and the Thorn Hills that the leaders of those evil realms have no interest in seeing it destroyed. The riders of Tarmalen sometimes pillage the outlying settlements of the region, but Xabal’s small army is well-trained and well-disciplined, and the demonic riders are usually driven back to look for easier prey before doing too much damage.

Xabal’s original band of followers has grown considerably in the comparative safety of Bastion. New blood is rare, though; those few slaves who manage to escape one of the Infernal kingdoms usually try to make for Bastion if they have heard rumors of it, but very few survive the

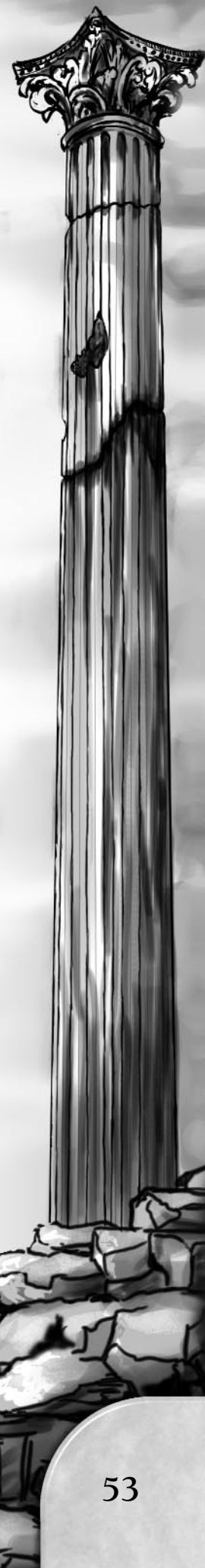
journey. A few Riders or Haina who do not fit in among their own people come to Bastion, but it is not a very welcoming place for outsiders due to the strict religious discipline that Xabal enforces.

Xabal has seen no sign of Sarish’s favor or disfavor since his fall, but is dedicated to – indeed, some would say obsessed with – proving his worth and somehow regaining some measure of the Binder’s approval once more. As a result, the city is filled with temples to Sarish and the other members of the Pantheon, and daily church attendance is an unspoken obligation of every citizen. Prayer is a constant theme in the city; every morning, evening, meal, business transaction or social interaction has one or more prayers associated with it, and they echo constantly in every corner of the city. Bastion is one of the few places in the Sealed Lands where clerics and paladins can be found in large numbers, and probably has a higher number of priests per capita than any other city on Onara.

Bastion is also home to another group of individuals who are extremely rare within the Sealed Lands – vals. When Xabal exhausted the last of his power in Tuvulem, a small fraction of it apparently entered into some of the human inhabitants of the town, and they have since grown into a minor val bloodline, the val’Vasik. (Some hushed rumors in the alleys of Bastion suggest that Xabal actually fathered the first of the val’Vasik in a more directly physical manner, but such things are not openly spoken of.) The val’Vasik act as governors and administrators of the city, attending to things that Xabal himself cannot manage; they also comprise most of the senior priests within the city. Despite, or perhaps because of, the living presence of their progenitor among them, the val’Vasik tend to be humble and self-effacing, acting as shepherds towards the human population of the city rather than their masters. They are probably closer to the vals of the First Imperium than any other group on Onara – in attitude, if not in power.

Dark-kin, on the other hand, are nonexistent in Bastion and its environs. Xabal’s hatred of all things Infernal remains as strong as ever, and he will not suffer a Tainted being to live within his lands. If any are found, they are quickly (if mercifully) put to death, and their relatives (if known) are forbidden to reproduce again lest the Taint spread to another generation. Such laws are difficult to fully enforce, though, and despite Xabal’s best efforts, a few dark-kin seem to crop up in every generation. The more zealous of his followers willingly give up their Tainted children and voluntarily abstain from any further efforts to reproduce. Many parents of dark-kin, however, cannot bring themselves to sacrifice their own offspring, and more than a few newborn dark-kin are bundled away in tiny blankets and given to passing Riders to raise.

Life in Bastion is generally far more pleasant than it is elsewhere in the Sealed Lands. Although many of the city’s inhabitants sometimes chafe under one or more of Xabal’s strict laws (which strictly limit everything from alcohol to gambling to the singing of songs that are not hymns of praise to the Pantheon), most also readily acknowledge that an ascetic life in Bastion is far better than the life of a slave in the Lordship of Iron. The people of Bastion work hard, keep their faith, and obey the laws of their leader with some grumbling but little



actual resistance; many rulers elsewhere in Onara would be glad to have such citizens.

All able-bodied men are expected to serve several years in Xabal's army or Bastion's formidable navy, which basically controls the Sea of Tears for the simple reason that none of the other kingdoms bordering the sea have any reason to contest that control. Skirmishes against the Lordship of Iron, both on land and water, take place intermittently, but both sides seem to be using the battles to keep their troops fresh and alert rather than making any serious efforts at conquest.

Xabal's realm is largely self-sustaining, and conducts little trade with other kingdoms within the Sealed Lands. The Riders occasionally trade some of their mundane horses with the people of Bastion – Xabal will not permit hell-horses within his domain – and receive excess crops in return. The Haina are not well-liked in Bastion, and while some isolated trade goes on between outlying villages of both realms, there is no official interaction between them. This distrust of the Haina appears to originate from Xabal himself, and while his reasoning has never been explained, the people of Bastion seem to have accepted his opinions of the Haina at face value.

The town of Pleasance is the one place that Xabal hates more than any other, and if he dared, he would march to destroy it. But he knows that his people, no matter how virtuous and loyal they might be, would fall to the wicked temptations of Pleasance if they were ever to go there, even if they were marching to war. Knowing that that which is forbidden is always the most tempting, Xabal does not even forbid his people to go to Pleasance, because that would just make them more eager to go; he simply avoids any mention of it at all. As a result, there is still a trickle of curious souls who leave Bastion for Pleasance and never return, but the numbers are far smaller than they might be.

Magical Traditions

Clerics and paladins are common in Bastion, due to the city's potent religious tradition. Most are dedicated to the service of Sarish, though all the city's temples give proper respect to all the deities of the Pantheon. The only other gods which have a significant clerical following within Bastion are Illiir, Beltine, Saluwé and Larissa (the latter only in her aspect as the divine prophetess and the mother of Sarish, not her more sensual aspects). Arcane casters are unknown in Bastion; there have simply never been enough (any) wizards or sorcerers to begin an arcane tradition.

The Legion of Unyielding Courage

Capital: Giantskeep

Population: 9,839 (humans 98%, gnomes 2%)

Ruler: General Philedas Paulis

Government: Military oligarchy

When the Godswall arose, among those trapped by it were the members of the Legion of Unyielding Courage, a Coryani scout legion that had been sent out to flank the Infernal forces during the Battle of Hope's End. In the days immediately following the Sealing, the legion and the dwarven sappers accompanying them found their way to a vast, sealed fortress that had once been home to a group of Celestial Giants.

The members

of the legion made their way into the keep, intending to use it as a place to make a final, brave stand against their enemies. Today, a thousand years later, they still survive in the fortress that has become their prison.

The First Assault

When the legion first arrived at the great white fortress they called Giantskeep, they immediately began to prepare for battle. The armies of Uhxbractit had apparently not seen them yet, but they knew that it was only a matter of time before they were discovered. The battlements of the keep were still in excellent condition, untouched by the ravages of time, so little work needed to be done in that regard. However, there were weapons to be sharpened, ammunition to be laid out, and supplies to be distributed. General Lurio val'Inares and the other commanders of the Legion forces made a quick tour of the fortress to understand how it was laid out and decide upon the best places to deploy their troops. Scouting parties were deployed to keep an eye out for incoming Infernals, and foragers crept out of the keep to look for nearby sources of food or water. Trees from nearby woodlands were cut down and dragged back into the keep to be cut into javelins, and the unit chaplains set up a makeshift altar and consecrated it to Illiir, the legion's patron. When all was in readiness, the tense legionnaires waited for the horde of fiends to come screaming down on them, preparing to sell their lives dearly as they faced death with honor.

And then they waited some more, and then some more again after that. The first night passed without incident, then the second and the third. Uncertain as to what might be happening in the south, General val'Inares sent scouting parties to investigate what the Infernals were up to. While the scouts were out, a more thorough search of the keep was made. The legionnaires discovered a vast spring-fed cistern of clear, pure water beneath the castle, as well as a titanic kitchen containing what appeared to be a magically inexhaustible larder. The makeshift sleeping quarters, a large room where the soldiers had hurriedly flung their blankets, were moved deeper into the fortress. The dwarves began breaking some of the giant-sized furniture down and using the pieces to make more appropriate furnishings. In short, the legion took the time to settle in for what seemed likely to be a somewhat longer stay.

The scouts, meanwhile, had made their way down towards the Godswall, where they encountered elements of Uhxbractit's forces as they prepared to lay down the foundations of the city of Vengeance. The scouts immediately sent messengers back to the keep to inform the General of their findings, but the majority of the group remained in place to learn more about the Infernals' plans. Unfortunately, they were spotted by Uhxbractit's own scouts, and though they fought bravely, they were quickly overwhelmed. Most died with their gladii in hand, but a few were captured and questioned before being put into Uhxbractit's growing slave pool. Thus the fiends learned the location and the nature of Giantskeep.

Uhxbractit immediately sent a strike force of his own to observe and, if necessary, destroy the keep and the legion occupying it. The runners sent by the legion's scouts arrived first, but even as they were hurrying through the gates of the keep, the wings of a horde of approaching Infernals darkened the southern sky. General val'Inares, convinced that the end had come at last, drew his gladius and roared to his men from his post

atop the gatehouse. "Let them come, for in Illiir's name, they will never cross these walls so long as one of us still lives!"

Those were the last words out of the General's mouth; moments later, a devil's spear, still steaming from the heat of its wielder's hand, pierced him through the chest and pinned him to the battlements on the gatehouse wall. Even as his life's blood spilled out, he reached out and took the legion's banner from his standard bearer, raised it on high, and wedged the banner pole between his body and the wall so that it would not fall even when he had breathed his last. Only when the banner was secured did he allow himself to die.

The Legion of Unyielding Courage lived up to its name that day. The soldiers did not quail at seeing their leader die so bravely; indeed, it only increased their determination to sell their lives dearly. Perhaps it was that determination, or the prayers of the legion's chaplains, or some remarkable property enchanted into the very stones of the Giantskeep itself; no one truly knows. But something blessed the soldiers of the legion that day, and it was as though the weapons of the Infernal hordes could not touch them. The legionnaires' swords gleamed like silver and cut like diamond that day, bleeding demons that had thought themselves immune to mortal steel.

For their part, the fiends seemed unable to establish any sort of a foothold within the Giantskeep. Unexpected crosswinds gusted up from nowhere, causing the flying Infernals to slam into each other or into the walls of the fortress. Other fiends simply stopped in mid-charge, pulling awkwardly away from the castle walls at the last minute. Those attackers who did make it to the walls seemed to be very uncomfortable, and fought without organization or any visible sense of tactics. Though they inflicted significant damage on the defenders, the Infernal forces soon retreated in disarray and fled back towards the main body of Uhxbractit's army.

The soldiers of the legion, while exhilarated by their victory, knew that they had not seen the last of the Infernals. Leaving scouts on the walls at all times, as they would for the next ten centuries, the legionnaires began tending their wounded and burying their honored dead.

The Passage of Years

When Uhxbractit learned of his troops' failure to destroy the last legion in the Shield Lands, he was disappointed, but not overly so. He had already begun to visualize the future of the Lordship of Iron, and suspected that he would need an ongoing enemy to focus his follower's attentions on. The Legion seemed like an ideal choice, since they were not numerous enough to present a serious threat to the forces of darkness. If their numbers increased too much, they would have to expend beyond their single fortress, and whatever magic seemed to be protecting Giantskeep would probably not work beyond its walls. Thus, the legion represented a small but constant enemy that served Uhxbractit's purposes well as long as they remained alive.

The legionnaires, for their parts, did not completely understand just how they had managed to ward off a large force of fearsome Infernals. A wizard or scholar might have recognized the effects of an *antipathy* spell that had somehow been integrated into the walls of Giantskeep, but the legionnaires had no such experts among them. Still, they knew that the keep was a stout, defensible position that could easily hold all of them and all the supplies they could conceivably need for years to

come. While they remained ever watchful for more Infernal attacks (which were intermittent and sometimes costly, but which never significantly threatened the keep), they began transforming Giantskeep into a home.

While the stone the keep had been constructed from was remarkably hard and durable, and apparently magical as well, the dwarven sappers seemed to have an almost supernatural understanding of the stone, and proved adept at carving it. The interior walls of Giantskeep were so thick and so sturdy that the dwarves could carve stairways, tunnels, and even entire rooms within the walls without risking a collapse. They also constructed sturdy wooden platforms inside some of the tremendous rooms in the keep, thus effectively creating two or three levels of rooms in what had originally been one giant-sized chamber. Giantskeep was gradually transformed into a maze-like warren of passages capable of housing far more individuals than there were residents.

As the years passed and it became clear that they would be dwelling there for the foreseeable future, the legionnaires began thinking about their own mortality. General val'Inares' dying words, which had already achieved the status of prophecy among the legionnaires, said that the fiends would never cross into the keep as long as the defenders lived. But most of the legionnaires were human, and could not be expected to live more than fifty years, seventy-five at the most. The dwarves, though naturally long-lived, were trapped far from the Heartstone of their enclave, and would soon begin to wither away without exposure to its rays. After extensive discussions and much debate, it was decided that the only solution was for the soldiers to create their own successors, in the form of their children.

For the human legionnaires, this was a difficult decision; the few female soldiers in the legion had fought and bled beside their male counterparts for years, and it was difficult to suddenly begin thinking of them as potential mothers. The women themselves were also upset at being pulled back from the front lines, but it was clear that there was no other choice. Even with all of the legionnaires agreeing to do their duty, there were not enough women to sustain the keep's population. Daring raids into the Thorn Hills and the Lordship of Iron managed to rescue some female slaves to expand the breeding pool, and occasional desperate members of the Riders exchanged their girl-children for weapons or supplies. The population dipped sharply in the early years after the Sealing, but slowly began to rise again after the first century or so had passed.

For the dwarves accompanying the legionnaires, however, matters were not so simple, because every last one of the sappers was male. There were no female dwarves among the rescued slaves, and as the dwarves grew older, it became clear that none would be found. Even if another dwarven child were somehow born, without exposure to a Heartstone it would wither away and die before reaching adulthood. Eventually, only one dwarf was left alive, an old but hearty veteran named Empet. After the last of his fellows had died, Empet began to dream of his kinsfolk; first the fallen sappers who had crossed into the Sealed Lands alongside him, then his parents and grandparents, and then farther and farther back in time until he dreamed of the Celestial Giants who had build Giantskeep.

And when the Giants in his dreams put the last stone in place in their mighty fortress, they turned to Empet and said, "You must not be the last of our blood."

When he awoke, Empet racked his brains for a solution. He had been going on slave rescue missions personally for years, looking desperately for some sign that there were other dwarves in the Sealed lands, a lost enclave with a Heartstone that could somehow keep him alive. Despite all his efforts, though, he had found no trace of other dwarves on this side of the Godswall. Empet knew that there was one sure solution for passing down the blood of the Giants, but he was ashamed of it, and tried with all his might to find another way. In the end, though, there was none, and in his heart he knew it. And so, before he grew too old, Empet went to the women's quarters and found one who would listen to his tale, who accepted what needed to be done as her duty. And so, begging Illiir's forgiveness, Empet sired the legion's first gnome.

When the child was born, Empet came to look upon her. A pink-skinned little girl, she was, whose asymmetrical face and twisted limbs filled Empet's heart with pity and shame. Before the war, before the Godswall, he had often thought of raising a family of his own. But to create something like this, an abomination before the gods, with a woman he did not love... he had done it for the sake of the legion, for the soldiers he had fought beside for decades, and for their children yet to come. But he could not bring himself to accept what he had done.

He kissed the deformed little girl – *his daughter*, he forced himself to admit – and whispered to her, "You must not be the last of my blood." He then turned to the girl's mother, whom he had not spoken to since the night they had both done their duty. "Tell her," he said, gruffly. "When she is older. She must not be the last." The mother nodded, not speaking, and Empet walked heavily up the stairs towards the battlements.

The following day he was killed in a demon raid. Those who fought beside him said that they had never seen him so fierce, so heedless of his own safety. He killed three of the creatures himself before finally succumbing to their claws and ravenous teeth, and was buried in a place of honor within Giantskeep, for he was the last of the dwarves. But, in a tiny sleeping baby with one oversized eye and a grotesque, misshapen body, Empet's blood – the blood of the Celestial Giants – lived on.

The Passage of Centuries

A culture built by soldiers has strong points and weak points. The members of the Legion of Unyielding Courage (and every adult resident of Giantskeep is considered a member of the legion, save a few recently rescued slaves who have not yet taken their oath of service) are extremely knowledgeable about military matters. Their combat skills are unmatched, their tactical knowledge extraordinary, their courage and endurance nearly superhuman. On the other hand, their knowledge of history, culture, and anything else that does not immediately contribute to their survival is sorely lacking.

The craftsmen of Giantskeep forge exceptional swords and armor, but would struggle to make even the crudest statue. Their musicians have memorized dozens of bugle calls, but would find it nearly impossible to accompany a simple melody. The residents of

Giantskeep are all illiterate; the chaplains possess a single, timeworn volume of excerpts from *The Illuminated Perfection*, but for generations they have been reciting it from memory rather than actually reading the text. As a result, all of the legion's history has been passed down by oral tradition, and has taken on the status of legend. Rather than being the unwitting victims of the Godswall's appearance, the legionnaires now believe that they were the ones who caused the Wall to be raised originally. Their legends describe a desperate mission and a powerful ritual, in which the original legionnaires willingly sacrificed their own freedom in order to save the rest of Onara from the Infernal hordes. To this day, the chaplains perform daily rituals, which they believe ensure that the Wall will remain standing. Indeed, the continuation of these rituals is now seen as the primary purpose of the legion, and the reason that the Giantskeep must always remain defended.

Those members of the original legion whose names are still remembered have become legendary heroes. General Lurio val'Inares is now known as Lurio Godsblood; there are no Val in Giantskeep, and there have been none for centuries, so the understanding of the Vals' divine origin has been garbled over generation after generation of retellings. Illiir (or "Ylir," as his name has been corrupted to over time) is the only god of any importance; the others have been reduced to minor characters in Ylir's story, or even forgotten entirely. Ironically, General val'Inares' own patron, Anshar, is completely absent from the legion's legends.

Paradoxically, the legionnaires are so wrong in their beliefs that some of them have become right again. Some believe that the dwarves built the Giantskeep overnight when the legion first came beyond the wall, and it is commonly believed that the fortress was built to such a tremendous scale because that is how big the dwarves that built it were. The gnomes are believed to be the children of these giants, and are accorded special status and honor in the legion because of it. The gnomes' tiny size and deformed bodies are simply considered to be outward manifestations of the power resident within their blood. The Elorii are strange, malicious fairy creatures spoken of in almost-forgotten myths, and few of the legionnaires believe that they ever really existed.

Today, the members of the Legion of Unyielding Courage are mostly ignored by the other nations within the Sealed Lands. They are too small to represent a significant threat to any of their neighbors, and the formidable physical and magical defenses of Giantskeep would make any attempts to eliminate them far more costly than it would be worth. Uhxbractit keeps a watch on Giantskeep, occasionally sending a small attack against the fortress if his Infernals are restless or if the legionnaires are causing an excessive amount of trouble. The spells on the walls of the fortress have not yet failed, so most of the attacks have only been minor skirmishes. However, the frost giants of Magadan have recently taken a keen interest in reclaiming "their" ancestral home, and the legionnaires may be hard pressed to hold the fortress against a concerted giant attack.

The legionnaires themselves still go on occasional raids to rescue slaves from the Lordship of Iron or the Thorn Hills; however, they are very vulnerable when outside the walls of Giantskeep, and a large proportion of these missions end in the death or capture of the entire raiding party. As a result, the raids are becoming less and less frequent as the legion's focus shifts towards protect-

ing the fortress itself and “preserving the Wall” with their rituals. They conduct some trade with the Riders; while the never-empty larder in Giantskeep produces plentiful food, it can become a bit monotonous, and fresh game from the Riders is a welcome change. In return, they provide the Riders with a variety of well-made weapons and armor, and will also sometimes heal their wounded. The intermingling between Riders and legionnaires also helps “new blood” circulate in both groups, thus helping keep both populations from becoming genetically stagnant.

Magical Traditions

There are no arcane casters among the legionnaires of Giantskeep, nor have there been any since before the Godswall was raised. The only clerics among them are priests of Illiir, but all of the domains that Illiir grants are still known to the legion's chaplains. Druids are also absent from Giantskeep, and rangers are very rare, but a substantial percentage of the legionnaires are paladins.

Pleasance

Type: Large town

Population, Infernal: 702

Population, Mortal: 8,131

Ruler: Geliesera the Temptress

Industries: Temptation

On the northern shore of the Sea of Tears lies the town of Pleasance. It belongs to no kingdom and swears fealty to no lord, human or divine. It has a reputation of being a place where anything one desires can be found, where the cares of a painful, strife-filled life in the Sealed Lands can be cast away for a time, where memories of pleasant times can be brought back to life. And for those who visit it, Pleasance is such a place. But as always, no pleasure can be had without its price.

The most comely and tempting of Infernals, the erinyes and succubi, made up only a small portion of the armies of the damned. There were plenty of them on Onara during the Time of Terror, drawing men and women into sin and debauchery when they might have been working together to defeat the forces of evil arrayed against them. But when the First Emperor began rallying his legions together and the frenzied destruction of the Time of Terror gave way to direct warfare, the allure of the fiendish females was no longer so useful. Many succubi and erinyes returned quietly to their home planes when the war broke out, while others remained contentedly in the great cities of Onara, being ministered to by a succession of devoted lovers. Indeed, a few remain in southern Onara to this day, unnoticed except by those whose lives they ruin.

But a few of the temptresses were driven north with the rest of the Infernal armies, and were trapped behind the Wall of the Gods with their kin. Some remained with Uhxbractit, or immigrated to the Thorn Hills; others ride among the Tarmalen, or spend their time enticing unsuspecting villagers among the Haina or the Riders. Some, however, were not content with such meager pleasures as they could find among slaves and peasants, and a small group gathered together to do something about it.

Gathering with them a suitable group of slaves (those who were attractive, healthy, and easily manipulable), a contingent of succubi and erinyes made their way to a small town on the north shore of the Sea of Tears, accompanied by a group of Infernal bodyguards. The men of

the town, who had dwelled in isolation for generations after the Auxunite Empire fell, were only too glad to welcome these beautiful “refugees” into their homes – and their beds. It was only a matter of weeks before the town was completely under the temptresses’ control.

Once that was accomplished, the Infernals began reshaping the town to fit their needs, filling it with far more brothels, alehouses and gaming dens than its population could possibly support. The elders of the town knew that they should have been concerned about the transformation their home was undergoing, but none could bring themselves to say no to their new mistresses. Finally, when all was in readiness, the Infernals began spreading rumors about the town, which had been renamed Pleasance. Passing Riders, escaped slaves, Haina traders, nearby villagers – all seemed to hear, one way or another, of a town where one could find a welcome relief from the painful torments of everyday life. And slowly at first, then in an ever-increasing flood, they came to see for themselves.

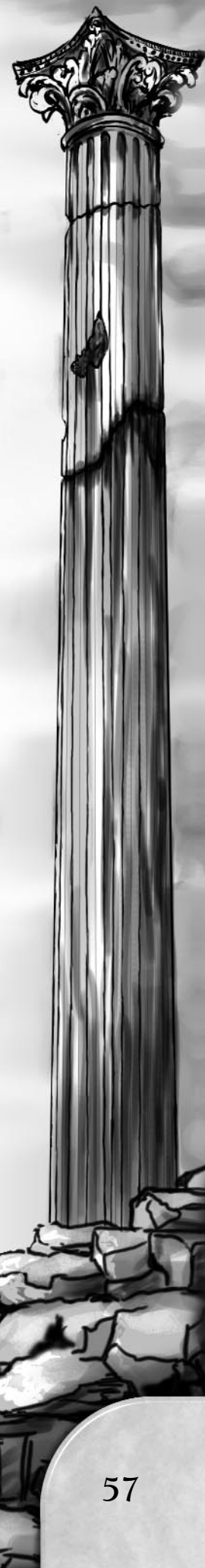
When they reached Pleasance, they found a lantern-lit town where the ale flowed freely in the streets, where the women (and men) were beautiful and willing, and where the war against the Infernals was a distant memory. In their hearts, most of them knew that nothing this good would come without a price; but by the very nature of temptation, even those who know that what they are doing is wrong tend to do it anyway.

And if the statuesque beauty, more perfect than any woman you have ever seen, much less spoken to or held – the woman who has been staring into your eyes all night, laughing at your stories and gently caressing your thigh with the nails of one exquisite hand – if that woman were to ask you for a “simple promise,” or encourage you to scrawl your name on a contact you couldn’t even focus your eyes enough to read, how many of you would refuse, knowing the infinite pleasures that awaited you if you only said yes?

Thus did the travelers fall into the exquisite trap that was Pleasance.

Every night, travelers – never too many, but always some – wander into the festive streets of Pleasance, discovering that all the stories they have heard about it are true. Pleasure is a way of life, and no vice is too extreme for the town’s jaded and joyous inhabitants. Gambling, alcohol, drugs, sex, all are there for the asking and easily obtained, and a visitor’s first night in Pleasance is invariably a blissful and exhilarating one. But when the dawn comes, everything changes.

In the morning, the bleary-eyed revelers are roused from their beds by their Infernal mistresses, whose sweet eagerness to please has been replaced by a shrill and cruel superiority. Whipped – often literally – into action, the mortals, now bound by the thoughtless oaths that lust drove them to speak the night before, are driven through the town, cleaning up the refuse from their own wanton partying, making everything spotless and perfect for the next night. They are fed from the last of the leftover scraps, if there are any, and flung into dank holes to snatch a brief rest if they finish their duties quickly enough...which they never seem to manage.





Finally, after a day of backbreaking labor and endless physical and mental abuse, the newcomers are informed that their conditions need not be so miserable; if only the town had a few more inhabitants to help share the load, no one would have to work so hard. If only the poor, hard-working darlings were able to entice more visitors to the town, their conditions would be *so* much more pleasant. And, bound as they are by their oaths and their helpless, unending lust for their mistresses, the new residents have no choice but to try.

Thus the rumors of the town's wondrous festivities continue to spread, and when the next night's visitors enter the spotless, lantern-lined streets of Pleasance, there are a few more happy citizens, grinning, eager to please, willing to do *anything* to make the newcomers feel welcome in their wonderful, perfect little town...

The population of Pleasance never seems to grow, though. Perhaps it's because, despite all the sex and debauchery, there never seem to be any children born in the town. Those mortal women are discovered to be pregnant are "tended to" by the succubi and erinyes, and are back on the streets that same night, with only the memory of blood and the taste of unshed tears to remind them that they were with child that morning.

There are also very few old people in Pleasance. A few are personable enough, or have enough useful

skills, to continue working in the town, serving drinks or dealing cards, but in most cases, when a citizen of Pleasance is no longer young enough to be desirable, they tend to vanish. The Infernals, if asked, smile and say that the older folks have gone to help spread the word about Pleasance, to attract more new visitors. And perhaps that is true, but few of those who are left behind tend to believe it.

In game terms, the town of Pleasance is under the effect of a *mind fog* spell every night from sundown to sunup. The contracts signed by the unwitting visitors have the effect of a *geas* spell, binding them to remain in the town and serve their new mistresses or face the terrible wasting sickness that comes from breaking their oaths.

The Haina Empire

Capital: Zhuan

Population: 271,530 (humans 99%, dark-kin 1%)

Ruler: General Gaoxin Yu

Government: Militocracy

The Khitani soldiers of Chai Tsu had set out in pursuit of their Infernal enemies with only a small amount of supplies, and when there was no immediate sign of a way back to Khitan, their first priority was to gather more. This was accomplished with the (often unwilling) help of the villagers and townsfolk who dwelled in this distant eastern arm of the Khitani Empire. The villagers themselves were poor and simple folk, which is why they had originally settled so far from Khitan and the other great cities of the Empire; this cold and rocky province, called Haina, was simply the best land they could manage. After Chai Tsu and his forces made bloody examples of those villagers who were unwilling to share their foodstuffs with the army, the other peasants agreed to supply the army; the Khitani peasants have always been practical people.

With his army's immediate needs for food and shelter resolved, Chai Tsu called for local hunters and trappers, men who knew the terrain around the villages where he and his men were now trapped. He assigned each of his scout platoons one of the locals as an advisor, and advised them to scour the area for any sign of the Infernal forces that had led them into this trap. Other scout groups were sent back to the Wall of the Gods, where they were instructed to travel along the mountains in both directions, seeking a way out. Chai Tsu would remain in the town of Zhuan, where he would direct the raising of fortifications in case, as it appeared, there would be no easy way for the army to return to its homeland.

When the scout units began returning, none of the news they brought was good. The mountains extended for hundreds of miles with no sign of a break, or of anything that might even be usable as a pass. To the north, fierce giants dwelled; to the east, the land across the river was occupied by great armies of Infernals, far more than there had been in the attempted invasion of Khitan. To the northeast, a huge lake or ocean was found, full of

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fierce sea monsters and far too large to contemplate crossing without ships. In short, they were in the midst of a dangerous land, with no apparent way home and no signs of friendly support.

General Chai Tsu was also a practical man, and he accepted this continuing influx of bad news with stoic grace. There was no way to reach Khitan, or to send word there; for that matter, there was no way to tell if Khitan even still existed, or if the newly arisen mountains covered the entire world. There were enemies, or potential enemies, on all fronts, and only Chai Tsu's army and hordes of peasants to defend against them. There was really no choice; Chai Tsu would have to assume control of this area, governing it as an independent province until such time as Khitan made its presence known again. Of course, so long as there was no word from Khitan, Chai Tsu would be the absolute ruler of this land, which did not bother him much.

When Chai Tsu announced his decision to his sub-commanders, it was met with general approval; obviously, there was no other way to proceed. However, when the new order of things was announced to the population, they did not see it the same way. The peasants had lived in these lands for centuries, with little interference from Khitan; a few small taxes were paid in the name of the Sleeping Emperor, and occasionally a patrol of soldiers would come through searching for bandits, but by and large the people governed themselves, and they were content to do so. Chai Tsu's plans, which involved taxes and laws and levies and fortifications and drills and obedience, were not at all welcome. But as long as Chai Tsu had the army in his control, there was little the peasants could do but obey...and Chai Tsu knew it.

The common folk grumbled, but they obeyed. Towns were fortified, and even villages had palisades built to provide some measure of defense. Young men were drafted into the army, leaving the women and children to take up their slack in the fields and workshops. Of course, that meant there was no one to take up the slack for the women and children in the homes and kitchens, which meant that the comfortable home life that the Haina peasants had enjoyed for generations was turned into a quarrelsome, uncomfortable turmoil.

After a few years had gone by, the fortifications were done, the army had grown to a sufficient size to defend all the Haina towns and villages, and things seemed ready to settle down. But Chai Tsu was not yet finished. Now that the essentials were ready, and the Haina could withstand an attack if one came, it was time for a palace to be built. There was no sign that the mountains would ever fall again, and no word from the rest of Khitan; it seemed that Chai Tsu would be less of a provincial governor and more of an Emperor in his own right. And if he was to be an Emperor, he would need an appropriate palace, so the orders were given.

The Haina peasants, of course, were unhappy with this. Working for their own defense, even though there was no sign of the attacking enemies the General always talked about, was one thing; building a palace for the General's ego was quite another. But the General controlled the army, and the army had the swords, and so the peasants could do nothing but begin clearing the ground for the General's palace in Zhuan, the town that Chai Tsu had chosen as his capital.

That night, though, as the General slept in the bedroom in the castle that would serve as his home until his palace was built, he was awakened by a noise. His soldier's instincts brought him instantly awake, and he reached for the Sarishan steel sword that was always at his bedside, but it was not there. He reached for the silken cord that would summon servants and guards, but that too was out of his reach. Then he heard a soft, calm voice speaking, as if it was right next to his ear.

"General," the voice said, "I apologize for disturbing your rest, but we must speak."

"What? Who are you? Guards!" the General yelled in response.

"I fear that your guards will not be here soon, General," the voice said. "As for who I am, think of me as an advisor. I am here to help make sure that you live a long and prosperous life as the ruler of a happy people."

"I need no help from one who will not show his face. Guards!" But the guards did not come.

"But you do need help, General," the voice said. "Your orders to build a palace are making your people unhappy. They are willing to build defenses to protect themselves, to fight in their own defense, to share their food with your soldiers. But a palace serves no purpose but as a monument to one man's vanity."

"Vanity!" the General growled. "I will show you vanity, you coward; you can watch the building of my palace from a place of honor, impaled in the center of the courtyard. GUARDS!" But still, the guards did not come.

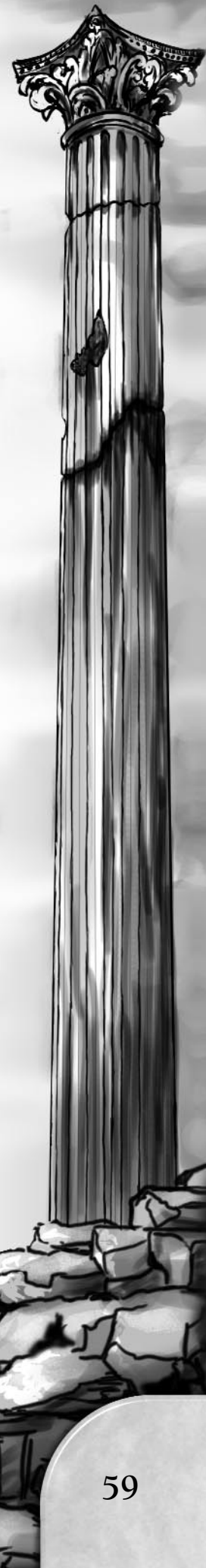
"I urge you, General, reconsider. The people have worked hard for you; let them rest a little, to work for their own benefit. Perhaps, in a few years, they will love you enough to build a proper palace for you. But now, they only fear you."


"As they should," said the General. "As *you* should. And as you will, sooner than you think." But the voice did not answer, and when the General managed to get his bedside lamp lit, there was no one there at all. His sword was laying where it had always been. A few minutes later, his guards rushed in, saying that they had seen a suspicious figure in black trying to climb in over the walls of the castle, but that they had chased him away.

The following day, the General called the people of Zhuan together. "I am told," he said, "that some among you are unhappy to be asked to build my palace. Is this true?" But the people looked at the swordsmen and the archers and the cavalrymen flanking the General, and they said nothing.

"Good," the General said. "Then, since you are happy to build my palace, you will finish it quickly. To ensure that this happens, none of you will be allowed to return to your homes until the palace is complete. The sooner you begin, the sooner you will finish, and then everyone will be happy. That is all." And the General left, and the people grumbled to one another and set to work finishing the preparation of the ground where the palace would be built.

That night, the General died in his sleep. All of his doors and windows were locked, and the castle guards saw and heard nothing all night; but when the servants went to dress the General in the morning, his own sword had been driven through his heart. It took three strong men to get it out.





The following night, the General's second-in-command – now the General – had a visitor in the night, a soft-voiced man who he could never quite get a good look at. After a brief discussion, the new General agreed that a palace was really quite unnecessary, and that he and his successors would be quite happy to dwell in a small apartment within the castle and let the people expend their efforts to their own benefit. The following day, the new General announced that the palace would no longer be needed, but that since the land had been cleared, it would be made into a park for everyone in Zhuan to enjoy. The park still exists today; it is known as the Gardens of Humility.

In the centuries since that day, some of the Generals of Haina have occasionally decided that they would be better off as Emperors, or that they needed a palace, or that they were not being shown enough deference by the common people. And at those times, the Generals receive a soft-spoken visitor in the night, who explains why things are really better as they are now. Some Generals agree, and live long and prosperous lives; some disagree, and are usually succeeded by a much more humble successor. And the common people of Haina are happy.

Where Men Reign

The Haina represent the only significant mortal kingdom in the Sealed Lands. Their military skill, and knowledge of Sarishan Steel make them a potent military power, and while they have neither the numbers nor the desire to expand their empire by further conquest, their borders have remained secure since the time of the Sealing. Roughly the western third of the Sealed Lands is under Haina control, and fiendish incursions into that territory are rare and quickly suppressed.

The Haina population is generally divided into three categories: military, commoners, and slaves. The military patrols the borders, builds and repairs fortifications, forges its own weapons and armor, breeds and trains its own horses, and is generally responsible for providing for its own needs apart from food. The commoners raise food and produce those crafts that are not strictly military in nature (clothing, shelter, tools, and so forth). The slaves perform the most menial and unpleasant tasks for both of the other groups, and are generally treated fairly well as long as they perform their duties. With the exception of a few Haina criminals, the slave population consists of foreigners rescued from the Lordship of Iron or captured Rider bandits. Slaves represent only a small percentage of the overall Haina population, and are more like a pleasant luxury than a significant part of the economy.

The General of the Haina army is nominally the leader of the kingdom, and is solely responsible for levying taxes, passing laws, and other civil duties. He normally keeps an advisory board of various sub-commanders and regional governors to help him rule, and these individuals are also from the military segment of the populace. There is no formal representation of the commoners in the Haina government. However, the passage of particularly excessive taxes or undesirable laws is inevitably followed by a polite visit in the night by the mysterious figure known simply as the Black Silk Wearer. No one is entirely sure if this is a single individual or part of a group, or if the

Wearer who visited General Chai Tsu is somehow still alive. Whatever his nature, the Black Silk Wearer conducts a polite and friendly discussion about the undesirable nature of the new legislation, and the offending law is usually repealed promptly – either by the General that passed it or by the one who succeeds him after his untimely death.

Despite significant efforts, the Black Silk Wearer has never been caught or identified. Even the Haina commoners do not know his identity – at least, so they all say – but since his actions in the past have always benefited them, they are content to let him remain a mystery. Apart from using his influence on the ruling Generals, the Black Silk Wearer has also been seen “advising” regional governors, local mayors, and even prominent businessmen who are overstepping their authority. The deaths of certain particularly troublesome bandit chieftains have also been attributed to him.

The Haina are a strongly male-dominated society; women are expected to bear and raise children, keep their homes clean and their families fed, and not much else. They are certainly not permitted to serve in the military, and as a result, there are no real options for social advancement for Haina women. Those women who are unable to accept this strict social role usually leave Haina lands entirely, though their prospects in the rest of the Sealed Lands are not much better. If they are not captured and enslaved by the demons of the Lordship of Iron, they are often entrapped in Pleasance or forcibly “adopted” among the Riders. Those who make it to Bastion or Giantskeep have brighter prospects, but the road is a difficult and dangerous one.

Dark-kin and other Tainted are very rare among the Haina; a few descendants of captured slaves, or of those who fell victim to Infernal rapes in the last days before the Sealing, show Tainted blood, but the Haina have managed to keep their bloodline pure for the most part. Those dark-kin who are born are allowed to live, but are sterilized before reaching puberty. Most of the men end up in the military, while the women are usually doomed to lives of menial labor.

The Haina largely keep to themselves; they are always suspicious and ready to defend themselves against foreign aggression, which makes it difficult for foreign traders to get a foothold in their markets. Some ambitious Haina merchants have made efforts to establish trade routes with Bastion, Giantskeep or those groups of Riders who are less inclined towards banditry. However, the Haina have more or less all the resources they need, so their potential trade partners have very little to offer in return.

Magical Traditions

The Haina have a long and distinguished tradition of wizardry, dating back to the soldier-magi who accompanied Chai Tsu's army on its pursuit of the Infernal hordes before the Sealing. While those wizards obviously did not have access to the great magical libraries of Khitan after the Wall of the Gods was raised, they did an excellent job of recording their knowledge and training future generations to use it. Wizards are exclusively found among the Haina military; any commoners, or even slaves, who appear to have arcane potential, are immediately drafted for magical training. In almost all cases, this is an improvement over their previous roles in society.

original

Bards are also relatively common, serving as heralds and chroniclers for the military. However, except for a few rare dark-kin who spontaneously manifest magical powers, sorcerers are unknown among the Haina.

In the realm of the divine, clerics are common among both the military and the common people. Hu-Lyan (Hurrian) is a popular deity among soldiers, while Beltine and Saluwé are the most highly regarded by the common folk. As with all other aspects of Haina society, the priesthood is male-dominated; thus, the Haina are the only people on Onara who are known to have male priests of Saluwé.

Druids and shamans are not exactly common, but are certainly known among the common people of the Haina. Some suspect that the shamans of the Taiteng Forest know a great deal more about the Black Silk Wearer than they let on, but no one has managed to get them to admit anything.

The Cities of the Haina Empire

Zhuan

Type: City

Population: 8,901

Ruler: General Gaoxin Yu

Power Centers: The General, the Black Silk Wearer

Industries: Silk, Sarishan steel

Zhuan is the first town that General Chai Tsu and his armies came to after being sealed behind the Wall of the Gods, and thus became the de facto capital of the new Haina Empire. It has grown only slowly over the years; the Haina, as a people, do not enjoy big cities, and tend to spread out into numerous smaller villages rather than concentrating all their population in a few large settlements.

Like all of the major Haina settlements, Zhuan is well-fortified, and built around a large, imposing, and very defensible castle. This is where the General lives, in a small suite of rooms that seems quite humble for such a powerful individual. Of course, after hearing the story of Chai Yu and the Black Silk Wearer, the modesty of the suite is quite understandable.

The settlement is built in roughly a figure-eight design, with the castle and the Gardens of Humility forming the two "hubs" from which the rest of the city radiates. Only about a third of the city is actually protected by walls, but the palace includes significant underground chambers, which can supply storage and living space for the entire population of Zhuan and many outlying villages as well.

Kautang

Type: Town

Population: 6,241

Ruler: Commander Denzhi Kai

Industries: Weapons

Kautang, located on the eastern side of the Haina Empire near the Sanglun River, is the center of the Empire's military operations. The town is very close to the border of the Lordship of Iron, and skirmishes with fiendish patrols are common. Kautang's fortifications are extensive and in very good repair, and its soldiers are the most elite veterans in the Empire. Over the years, the military has represented a larger and larger proportion of Kautang's population, and now relatively few common folk are left in the city. Most foodstuffs and other non-

military supplies are imported, and the town is more of a fortress than a settlement.

Because of the small civilian population, slaves are in high demand in Kautang, which is why Commander Kai recently began raiding the Lordship city of Muul to obtain more slaves. His soldiers take credit for the raids, and they do escort the captives back to Kautang, but the actual infiltration and "rescue" of the prisoners are conducted by the Black Silk Wearer. Kai is one of the few Haina who know that the Black Silk Wearer is not a single man, but a group of skilled spies and assassins who have lived among the common people of the region for centuries. He has provided the Wearer with supplies, information and other resources in exchange for their help, and has sworn to keep silent about what he knows, since he knows his life would be forfeit if he ever revealed the Wearer's secret.

As a result, the Wearer has a much more significant influence in Kautang than in other Haina cities. To date, this influence has been beneficial for Kai and his people, but he is concerned that the Wearer may eventually begin using their leverage with Kai to their own advantage. Historically, the Wearer has always seemed to work for the betterment of the common people, and for now, Kai can only hope that this trend continues.

Kou

Type: Town

Population: 4,171

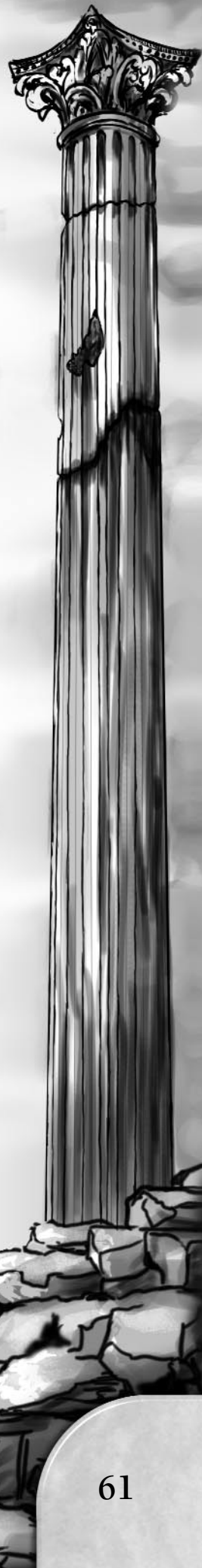
Ruler: Commander Pow-lin Kou

Industries: Foodstuffs

Kou is the northernmost town of the Haina Empire, and is surprisingly large for a settlement in such a cold and inhospitable climate. Kou's secret is a handful of hot springs that well up beneath the town, which are warm enough to keep the streets free of snow even when ice is thick on the surrounding lands. These springs also enable Kou's residents to grow a diverse variety of luxury foodstuffs, including many that cannot even be grown in the southernmost parts of the Sealed Lands. Fruits and vegetables from Kou are in high demand among those who can afford to import food, and the city's farmers are a prosperous and generally happy lot.

Commander Kou, who is a distant descendant of the town's founders, is a shrewd and likable man, and has never yet passed a law which has led the Black Silk Wearer to pay him a visit. He has maintained good relationships with the Riders who travel this far west, and trade between Kou and distant Himmatah is relatively brisk. Some of the more ambitious Rider traders have begun asking about a large quantity of Sarishan steel weapons recently; though neither the Riders nor the Haina realize it, these weapons are ultimately intended for the fiendish rulers of Gaz in the Thorn Hills. Even if he were to somehow find out the truth, Commander Kou would probably proceed with the trade; the Thorn Hills are on the opposite side of the Sealed Lands from the Haina, and the weapons would most likely be used against the Lordship of Iron, which is a much more direct threat to the Haina people (though not directly to Kou).

Kou's main problem at the moment comes from the frost giants living north of the town. While neither the giants nor the Haina are making any



aggressive efforts at expansion, skirmishes between the two groups have been on the rise of late, and Commander Kou has begun renovating and rebuilding many of the town's fortifications, which have not been needed in many years.

Sang-du

Type: Small town

Population: 2,344

Ruler: Commander Do-zhen Li

Industries: Fish, gems, jade

Sang-du, built in the foothills of the Godswall near the Sanglun River, is a small and peaceful town of artisans and fishermen. Shortly after the Wall of the Gods was raised, local farmers discovered a substantial vein of high-quality jade which had been uncovered by the shifting of the earth. As exploration of the site continued, other sources of gems and precious stones were found nearby, and it soon became apparent that Sang-du had, by sheer chance, been built atop an extraordinarily rich collection of natural resources.

Unfortunately, the Sealed Lands are not a region in which many people can afford luxuries, and the gemstones, while beautiful, did little for the town's economy; there was simply not enough demand for them. Still, many jewelers and sculptors migrated to the town, making artworks for their own pleasure even if they were never able to sell any, and even the common villagers often craft jewelry or small sculptures as a hobby. If the Wall of the Gods were ever to fall, the astounding artworks produced in Sang-du would make the city one of the most famous – and wealthiest – settlements in all of Onara. At the moment, it is a simple farming and fishing town, in which the humble hut of a goatherd may be decorated with jade statuettes set with sapphire eyes.

Commander Li is an older man, an experienced veteran of conflicts against the Lordship of Iron. At the moment, he is happy to be “retired” in the quiet confines of Sang-du. While his patrols occasionally skirmish with Lordship forces on either side of the Sanglun River, neither side seems to have a strong desire to escalate the conflict into open war.

Tenji

Type: Town

Population: 5,233

Ruler: Commander Feng-ji Tang

Industries: Fish, Sarishan steel

The town of Tenji is built across the Guomin River, with the two halves of the town connected by an extensive series of elaborately carved wooden bridges. Fishermen pack the bridges during the day, leaving barely enough space for wagon traffic to squeeze past them. At night, the bridges of Tenji provide a romantic view of the Godswall, the river, and the sleeping town...as long as one can ignore the smell of fish.

Commander Feng-ji Tang is not a well-liked ruler, and his often-harsh policies are at odds with the town's placid and quaint appearance. Many of the city's common folk wonder why the Black Silk Wearer has not yet paid the Commander a visit; in fact, he has, and his warning was ignored. Since that time, however, Tang has avoided a return visit from the

Black Silk Wearer by moving constantly from one room in the castle to another, by using numerous body doubles and secret passages to mask his movements, and by vastly increasing the number of guards around his personal quarters. The commoners know none of this, of course; they only know that Tang's behavior is not being punished, and many have begun to whisper that the Black Silk Wearer has failed them.

Tang, meanwhile, is well aware that the Black Silk Wearer is on his trail; he has already lost several body doubles to assassination attempts meant for himself. His men are conducting extensive undercover investigations in hopes of identifying and capturing the Black Silk Wearer before the mysterious assassin strikes again; in the meantime, the Wearer and the Commander are playing an extensive, life-or-death game of cat and mouse.

The Frost Giants

In the northern reaches of the mountains on both the east and west sides of the Sealed Lands, bands of frost giants have survived centuries of hardship, and show no signs of dying out soon. They have endured the reign of the Celestial Giants, the expansion and destruction of the Auxunite Empire, and the raising of the Godswall, and have become, if anything, more resilient as a result.

The frost giants of the Sealed Lands are divided into two distinct groups, and if there is any interaction between them, the other inhabitants of the Sealed Lands have seen no sign of it.

The Giants of Kukkomir

Capital: Kukkomir

Population: 8,523

Ruler: Jarl Lunt Oddvarsson

Power Centers: The Jarl, Rimesmith Brander

Government: Monarchy

The northeastern corner of the Sealed Lands, where the northern reaches of the Wall of the Gods meet the icy, fog-shrouded northern hills, has been home to frost giants since long before the Sealing, since the time known to mankind as the Shadowed Age. While the First Imperium of Man was crumbling into decadence and chaos, the jarls of the frost giants ruled over cultures which, while often aggressive and cruel, were capable of incredible feats of architecture and craftsmanship. Legends say that the Kukkomiri giants discovered many ancient artifacts in the oldest, northernmost ice – items which, if some of the more outlandish stories are to be believed, predate even the Ssethregorans. These alleged artifacts may have something to do with the fact that the giants absolutely refuse to travel into the central portion of the northern hills, but no one has yet managed to find out the details of this aversion.

For centuries, the frost giants of Kukkomir had been fearsome coastal raiders; like oversized versions of the Takomir, they struck fear into the coastal settlements of the Hinterlands whenever their ships were sighted. With the raising of the Godswall, however, the giants were divided; those on the eastern side of the newly enlarged mountain range continued their fierce ways (as they still do to this day), while those trapped on the west had to adapt to a new, land-locked existence. For decades after the Wall of the Gods was created, there were no significant human or Infernal settlements anywhere near the Kukkomiri, so the giants had to work out their aggressions by raiding each other. These internal conflicts kept

the giants busy for centuries, much to the benefit of the Riders, the Tarmalen, and the other inhabitants of the Sealed Lands who were gradually expanding northwards.

Inevitably, though the giants and the smaller inhabitants of the Sealed Lands collided. The Riders were the first to fall afoul of the Kukkomiri, losing many of their number before survivors managed to warn them of the newfound dangers in the northlands. The Riders are able to outrun the giants from horseback, but the giants have historically used their knowledge of the terrain to set up cunning ambushes, and every winter, several Rider patrols are lost to giant attacks. The giants perform no more than a perfunctory looting of the bodies; it appears that their primary motivation lies not in garnering loot, but in the sheer joy of battle.

The demons of Tarmalen, obsessed as they have been with hunting the Riders, have also come far enough northward to conflict with the giants in recent years. When a hunting group of Tarmalens fell into an ambush intended for the Riders, the battle was far more difficult and bloody than either side was expecting. After several violent clashes, the survivors of both forces limped back to their homes to tell stories of the strange new enemies they had encountered. Both the demons and the giants reacted to the news enthusiastically, and conflicts between the two groups have increased significantly. Neither side seems to be trying to wipe the other out; the demons enjoy the challenge of fighting enemies which are far more dangerous and competent than the Riders, and the giants likewise see the battles as a way to prove their martial prowess. The Riders are more than happy to let the Tarmalen and the Kukkomiri fight it out, and spend most of their time trying to avoid being caught in the middle.

One of the few sorcerers among the Kukkomiri, a venerable giant known as Rimesmith Brander, has recently begun taking a much more active role in Kukkomiri politics. He has begun urging the Jarl to begin a major campaign of raiding against the Tarmalen. The Jarl, a cunning but somewhat conservative leader, is not yet convinced, but public opinion among the various tribal leaders is strongly in favor of the campaign. Unbeknownst to any of the giants, "Rimesmith Brander" is actually a gelugon spy from the Thorn Hills, who killed and replaced the real Rimesmith several years ago. Having ingratiated himself into Kukkomiri society, he is now beginning his real mission, as assigned to him by lord Tulemigantzi of Gaz: using the giants as a weapon to distract and harry the Tarmalens so that the Thorn Hills can concentrate on the war against the Lordship of Iron. The gelugon, using his *polymorph self* ability to full advantage, has also fathered several children among unsuspecting frost giant women, and although none have yet grown to adulthood, the prospect of a fifteen-foot tall cambion is a terrifying one.

Magical Traditions

Spellcasters are not particularly common among the Kukkomiri, but they are certainly present. Clerics are the most common spellcasters, though their selection of deities is often surprising to those who do not understand frost giant culture. Nier is the most popular deity for Kukkomiri warriors; while the giants hate and fear fire, and the Fire domain is almost never seen among Nier's frost giant priests, Nier's use of flames as a weapon only serves to underscore his deadly and destructive nature in the minds of his giant followers. Althares is the

other deity who sees a great deal of worship among the Kukkomiri; he is the patron of crafters and smiths, and the skilled frost giant craftsmen of Kukkomir venerate him in that aspect. Yarris was once the preeminent god among the Kukkomiri, but since they were landlocked by the raising of the Godswall, he has fallen out of favor, and is now somewhat disparagingly referred to as "the old sea-father."

Sorcerers are the only arcane casters found among the Kukkomiri, though some further specialize in the mysterious art of the blood disciple (see *Lords of the Peaks* for more details on this prestige class). Wizards, bards and druids are not found among the Kukkomiri.

The Giants of Magadan

Capital: Magadan

Population: 11,326

Ruler: Jarl Ivar Haakonsson

Government: Monarchy

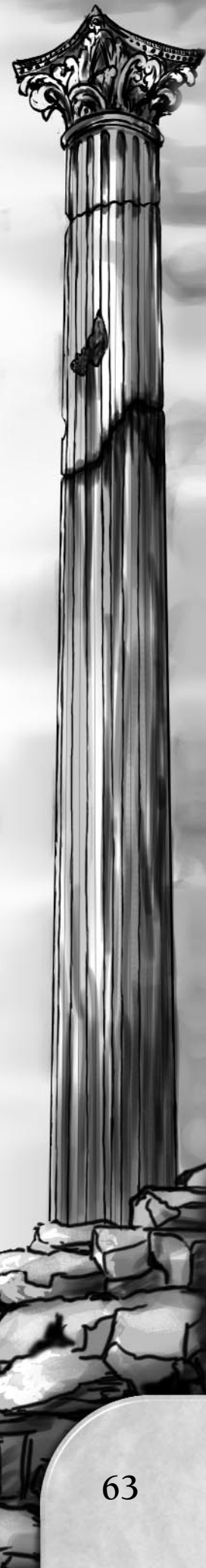
Like their kinfolk to the east in Kukkomir, the giants of Magadan have lived in their cold, distant corner of Onara for millennia, raiding and plundering all those within reach of their long arms and their longships. The Magadani, however, seem to be less wantonly violent and more fiendishly cunning than the Kukkomiri, which may ultimately serve to make them even more dangerous than their eastern relatives.


The raising of the Wall of the Gods had considerably less impact on the Magadani than one might expect; the area where they made their homes had always been mountainous and difficult to traverse, and making the mountains somewhat higher did little to change their lives. As with the Kukkomiri, the Magadani lost access to the ocean when the Godswall came. However, they still had ready access to the landlocked settlements of the Khitani (now the Haina), which they had raided intermittently for years.

Unfortunately for the giants, the strong defensive measures taken by General Chai Tsu and his successors made raids much more difficult and costly once they were put in place. The jarls of Magadan slowed down the frequency of their attacks, but aggressive members of several giant tribes continued raiding. These bold giants also began taunting, and even attacking the jarls' own followers, calling them cowards. This conflict eventually degenerated into a lengthy civil war, which the conservative jarls eventually won at great cost.

Since then, the Magadani have been making irregular, unpredictable raids against the Haina and the Riders, striking quickly and claiming what they can before returning home. These more careful raids have proven extremely difficult to defend against, and the Haina rulers of Kou and the surrounding settlements are growing deeply concerned.

A few months ago, a far-ranging group of giant scouts rediscovered Giantskeep, the ancient fortress of the Celestial Giants now claimed by the Legion of Unyielding Courage. When they reported this to Jarl Haakonsson, the jarl was outraged that humans – and whatever those tiny, twisted creatures that lived with them were – were occupying the ancestral home of his people (ignoring the fact that the frost giants had neither built nor lived in Giantskeep). A war party was





immediately sent to reclaim the fortress, but the keep's stout defenders and potent magical wards made that attempt a costly failure. Since then, the jarl has been constantly seeking a way to capture the keep, probing for a weakness in the defenses with brief, periodic raids. So far, he has had no success, but he has recently gotten the Magadani rune-wizards (see below) to emerge from their isolation and assist in the reconquest of the fortress. The results of this campaign remain to be seen.

Magical Traditions

The Magadani are not as religious as the Kukkomiri giants to the east; in the words of one of their skalds, "the Celestial Giants were the most pious of all our kind, and look where it got them." A few priests of Althares and Hurrian are encountered in some of the smaller tribes, but these are more like cults than organized churches.

Arcane casters, on the other hand, are relatively common among the Magadani. Sorcerers and blood disciples are prominent advisors to the leaders of every tribe, though their oaths forbid them from actually ruling. Bards, or skalds as they are known among the giants, are less common, but well-respected members of society. Finally, there are the rune-wizards, a group of reclusive frost giant wizards who live in an isolated cave complex far outside the normal Magadani settlements. These potent magicians never set their spells or lore to paper; instead, they have turned the icy walls of their caves into a single, massive grimoire, carving the runes of their spells into the living ice. They rarely interact with the rest of the Magadani, preferring to dedicate themselves to their studies. Occasionally, one or two rune-wizards will come to the jarl's court in Magadan to relate some obscure prophecy, then turn around and head home again without answering any questions about what the prediction might mean. However, one recent prophecy lead directly to the rediscovery of the Giantskeep, and the rune-wizards have begun to take an active interest in reclaiming the fortress, though they have not told any of the other giants why it is so important to them.

Those Who Lurk

Not all of the Infernals trapped behind the Wall of the Gods dwell in the organized kingdoms of the Sealed Lands. Many dwell, singly or in small bands, in the unclaimed places of the Sealed Lands: barren caves in the mountainous walls, boggy lowlands in the central plain, or dark and twisted woodlands. They will attack anything they think they can kill — human, giant, animal or Infernal — and are a significant threat to the lands near their lairs. A few of the better-known examples of such creatures are described below, but there are far more of these lurking killers than can be listed here.

Buhez the Foul

Buhez is an enormously large and powerful hezrou, a toadlike demon known for its bloodlust and aggressive nature. For many years, it dwelled in an ancient cluster of Auxunite ruins on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Tears, but when it was driven out of that place by Xabal, it fled northward to the Cold Fens, where it lairs to this day. It mainly subsists on the wild horses of the northern plains, and those Riders who stray too far northward in an attempt to tame the

horses. If it has gone too long without feeding, it will sometimes travel east or west in search of prey, and has been blamed for the disappearance of frost giants from both Kukkomir and Magadan.

Buhez enjoys the smell of fear from its prey, and will often confront them openly just so it can savor their terror. However, it is also quite cunning, and will not give its victims a chance to flee. Mounted Riders, in particular, have proven difficult for Buhez to catch, forcing it to rely on treachery and magical powers — both of which it has in abundance.

Nageshira

Nageshira is a marilith, a brilliant tactical commander and, some say, Uhxbractit's former lover (if such concepts have any meaning among Infernals). For reasons unknown, she and Uhxbractit had a falling out roughly a century ago, and she left the Lordship of Iron headed west. No news was heard of her for many years, but recent reports suggest that she has made her home in the southwestern corner of the Sealed Lands, near the Haina town of Sang-du.

A man named Chulin, a jeweler from Sang-du, was traveling to a small village some distance west of his home to visit his cousin. When he arrived at the village, however, he was horrified to discover that all of the inhabitants had been killed, and then brought to life once more as the walking dead. Naturally, he immediately turned to flee, but was stopped short by the sight of a beautiful woman with the body of a snake, her six arms wielding a variety of weapons and her hypnotic eyes boring into Chulin's.

"Welcome to my village," she said, her voice somewhere between a purr and a hiss. "Have you brought me a gift?"

Chulin couldn't make his mouth work, but he knew all too well that his own body and soul were the "gift" that the creature wanted. Even in his terror, he somehow remembered that his pouch contained a beautiful gold and ruby bracelet that he had made for his cousin's daughter to wear at her upcoming wedding. With trembling hands, he managed to fish the bracelet from his pouch and hold it up towards the demoness, still unable to speak.

Nageshira looked at the bracelet for a long moment, then laughed fiercely. "Very good!" she said, slithering forward to pluck it from Chulin's nerveless fingers. "And very pretty. For that, you may live...but take care that you do not come back again without more. This is enough for one arm...but you would not have me leave the rest bare, would you?"

Terrified, Chulin could only nod, and the snake-woman laughed again. As she did, her hold over him was somehow broken, and he ran with all the speed he could manage.

Since then, contact with several other villages in the area has been lost, and a delegation of priests and soldiers from Zhuang is on its way to investigate and try to deal with the problem. In the meantime, none of the residents of Sang-du go anywhere without one or more pieces of jewelry in their pockets. Some of the more cynical locals think that the whole thing was a story made up by Chulin to try to sell more jewelry, but no one can deny that his hair has been stark white since the day he ran back to Sang-du, and he has not left his home since.

Sivirimirivis

The scaled, lurking horror known as Sivirimirivis may be the oldest living thing on Onara; no one is entirely sure. It may have come to Arcanis through the dimensional rift that began the Time of Terror, or it may have been there all along, crawling and killing in the dark places of the world. It was not a formal part of Uhxbractit's army, though it killed more humans than a platoon of devils, and it is thought to have come north to the Blasted Plains in order to watch the great battle and kill anything that was still alive afterwards. The only thing that anyone is really sure about is that Sivirimirivis is ancient, and evil beyond words, and the most dangerous single entity in the Sealed Lands.

It does not seem to have a fixed home; some have speculated that it lairs in the ruins deep in the Sea of Tears, but there is no way to know for sure. Its attacks have been reported along the entire coastline of the Sea of Tears, and up and down the shores of all four of the rivers that feed that body of water. No one seems to be immune from Sivirimirivis' hunger; it has snatched Haina fishermen from the bridges of Tenji, slave workers from the fishing boats of Muul, succubi from the docks of Pleasance and nightmares from the banks of the Black River. It has been seen as far south as Stonefall and as far north as the Cold Fens, and only the frost giants have managed to stay out of its clutches – probably because they stay away from the rivers. Xabal of Bastion once sent a flotilla of warships onto the Sea of Tears to hunt Sivirimirivis, but one at a time, each was dragged below the surface and lost with all hands. No one has dared challenge the fiend's dominance of the waves again.

In centuries past, Sivirimirivis apparently traveled on land as well; members of the Legion of Unyielding Courage tell tales of a day when the thing's vast tentacles snatched four soldiers off the hundred-foot-high walls of Giantskeep while its body lay on the ground at the base of the walls. However, it has apparently kept to the water for the past hundred years or so, and no one has seen more of the creature than its enormous tentacles. Thankfully, Sivirimirivis' attacks are infrequent and generally kill no more than a half-dozen individuals, though the creature could clearly do far more damage if it was so inclined.

The Spiders of Taiteng

Monstrous spiders, some of tremendous size, have lived in the Taiteng forest for centuries. While wild animals suffered greatly from the spiders' depredations, the humans living in the area knew enough to avoid the areas where the spiders made their lairs, and so deaths were kept to a minimum. However, things took a bad turn when a particularly large and vicious bebilith made its own lair in the Taiteng Forest and began breeding with the largest and most dangerous of the spiders. The resulting creatures, colloquially known as 'pitspiders,' are far more intelligent and aggressive than 'normal' giant spiders, and have arcane powers as a result of their fiendish blood, while still retaining all their natural cunning and poison.

The Haina shamans of the Taiteng have managed to keep the spiders from attacking their villages so far, but the spiders have been appearing in much greater numbers recently, and the shamans have begun to fear that a large-scale attack is imminent. They have been reluctant to send to Zhuan for reinforcements, since they have

always treasured their independence, but there is a growing sentiment that military help will be needed, and must be called before it is too late.

The Forgotten Villages

North of the Guomin river, on the western edge of the Cold Fens, crouch many small, dank villages, not even significant enough to bear names. Their inhabitants, descendants of the ancient Auxunites, are poor and humble; they can barely provide enough food to sustain themselves. The villages have nothing to offer the Haina, and are far enough from the main Infernal kingdoms to remain largely unmolested. During the centuries since the Sealing, life in these villages has remained largely unchanged from generation to generation. New villagers are born; old ones die, and are buried at the edges of each village, among the bones of their ancestors for a hundred generations past.

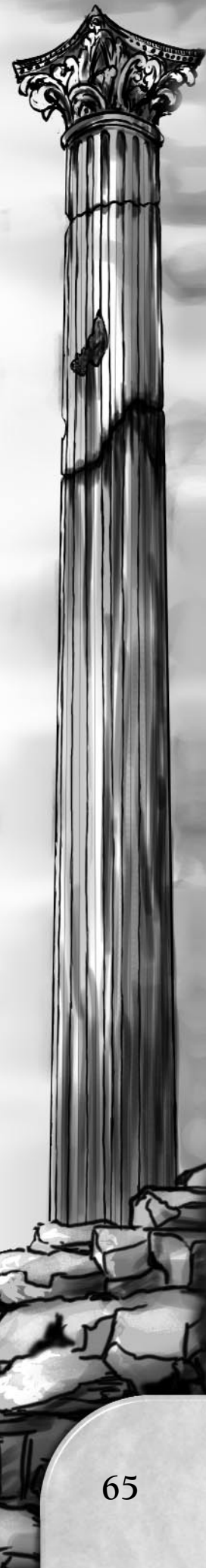
A few years ago, a raiding party of devils from the Lordship of Iron came to one such village. They had been scouting the lands around Bastion, in hopes of finding an unexpected route by which to attack Xabal's city; having found none, they decided to at least gather some slaves to bring home, so their trip would not have been in vain. When the devils arrived in the village, it was immediately apparent that the villagers could put up no resistance whatsoever. The Infernals began tormenting the villagers – not harming them enough to diminish their value as slaves, but enough to help the devils work off some of their frustration. The villagers wept and screamed, calling out for salvation, but none came.

One villager, however, neither wept nor screamed. An older man named Miax, he was a descendant of the last of the Auxunite Priest-Kings, though he did not know it. All he knew was a chant he had been taught, passed on by his father and grandfather and for dozens of generations before them. It was, he had been told, a cry for help: an invocation that could save his people if ever it were needed. It had never been used before, for it could only be used once, and the need had never been dire enough. But now, his entire village was at risk, and if this need was not dire enough, there would never be such a need. So Miax walked to the end of his fishing dock, raised his hands over the Cold Fens, and began to speak the chant he had been taught.

Miax did not know what the chant meant; it was in a language he did not know, and the translation had been forgotten generations ago. What it meant, in the old tongue of the Auxunites, was this:

*I call upon you to rise
I call you to emerge from your sleep and fight
My blood is your blood
Let it fill your dead veins with my life
Let you who were defeated find victory once more
By my blood which is your blood I call upon you to rise*

Miax's voice was old and hoarse, and the devils were amusing themselves with the other villagers, so it was some time before any of them noticed the old man's actions. When one finally did notice, it walked down the dock towards him, searing the marks of its talons into



the weathered planks of the dock as it passed. "What are you doing, worm?" it snarled. Miax did not reply, but continued his chant, his voice growing ever more hoarse. Annoyed with the insolence of this human, the devil picked Miax up in one mighty claw; Miax's voice grew higher with fear, but his chanting did not stop. With a growl, the devil casually raked its claws across Miax's abdomen, disemboweling him. Satisfied that the chant was ended and the defiant human punished, the demon dropped Miax to the dock and walked away.

Miax died there on the dock, continuing to gasp out the chant of his ancestors until his last breath escaped from his lungs. As the last line of the chant gave way to Miax's death rattle, the first drops of his blood fell from the dock into the Cold Fens. As the devils tormented and enslaved the people of Miax's village, carrying them back to the city of Muul, the slow, inexorable currents of the Cold Fens washed Miax's blood away from the village where he had lived and died. Drop by drop, the blood was eventually swept into the ancient waters of the Sea of Tears, where the ruins of ancient Auxunite cities lay cold and forgotten beneath the rippling water.

It may be a coincidence that the devils that raided Miax's village all died within a year of the raid (except the one who slew Miax, which vanished entirely). The visitors to Pleasance that claimed to see dozens of dark, manlike shapes emerging from the Sea of Tears and stalking northwest in the diffuse moonlight were all drunk, and likely drugged as well; their accounts may be dismissed as hallucinations. The report by a Haina patrol, claiming that the villages at the edge of the Cold Fens were banding together under some new leader, is somewhat harder to ignore, as is the fact that the patrol vanished after being sent to investigate the situation in more detail; but the Sealed Lands are full of dangers. Even the torn-up ground at the edges of the nameless villages, as though many things had forced themselves to the surface and then walked away, could probably be explained. And if you were to somehow enter the ancient ruins beneath the Sea of Tears and discover that the tombs of the Priest-Kings are open and empty, and that the gigantic crypt of the warlord Auxun himself has been cracked open as if from a single massive blow, his sarcophagus open and empty, you would doubtless try to attribute this to the ravages of time and the depredation of underwater scavengers.

If you were to ask Miax what it meant, he would tell you that Auxun and the Priest-Kings that worshipped him had returned to lead their people to conquest once more. Miax is dead, of course, as are the tens of thousands of villagers who lived at the edge of the Cold Fens before him – enough to make a mighty army, especially under the command of one as cunning as Auxun. Auxun is dead, too, naturally, and the Priest-Kings as well, despite their potent magical powers. They are all just as dead as Miax, and the dead do not speak.

But if you were to ask Miax, that is what he would say.



Chapter Three

NEW RULES

Psionics and Magic in the Sealed Lands



For the most part, psionics and magic work much the same in the Sealed Lands as they do elsewhere on Onara. However, due to the unusual nature of the area, and certain unknown aspects of the Sealing, spells and powers that rely on summoning or planar travel don't function at all, while other effects are changed in ways both obvious and subtle.

Within the different regions beyond the Godswall, there could be greater or lesser restrictions than those described here, such as areas of wild and unpredictable magic, or dead areas where magic does not function at all.

Detection Magic

Detect evil and similar spells are effectively useless in the Sealed Lands. The Infernals have been dwelling here for over a thousand years, and the very ground itself is steeped in their vile energies. This causes most areas of the Sealed Lands, except perhaps the Citadel of the Celestial Giants and a few select cities, such as Bastion, to radiate overwhelming evil. This aura is strong enough that a caster of *detect evil* is stunned for 1 round regardless of his caster level.

Summoning Magic

As part of its divine nature, the Godswall prevents any of the Infernals trapped within from returning to their home plane. The same effect also keeps any new beings from being summoned into the affected area, which prevents the Infernals from summoning reinforcements from their home planes. Because of the limitations on planar travel (see below), the fiends also cannot summon their fellows from other parts of the Sealed Lands to their aid, except by old-fashioned methods like sending a message or yelling for help. As a result, the *summon demon* and *summon devil* abilities possessed by many Infernals do not function within the Sealed Lands.

Planar Magic

The same effect that keeps creatures from being summoned into or out of the Sealed Lands also prevents any form of planar travel, including *etherealness*, *teleportation*, and any other spells which involve accessing or passing through other planes or extradimensional spaces. This also means that magic items that make use of such spaces, such as *bags of holding* or *handy haversacks*, will not function within the Sealed Lands. If such an object is somehow brought into the Sealed Lands, anything placed into it beforehand will be inaccessible until the container is taken out of the Sealed Lands again. The container will function as a normal sack, backpack, quiver, etc. while within the Sealed Lands. However, anything stored in it in this fashion will be lost forever once the extradimensional space inside the container is accessible once more.

Spells Affected

As a result of the changes described above, the following spells (and any spell-like abilities, psionics, or magic items which mimic their functions) simply do not work in the Sealed Lands. Once the Seal is broken, these spells/powers will begin to work normally again; however, magicians/psionicists in the Sealed Lands have long ago discarded the spells as useless, and they are almost completely unknown in the area by now. Only base spells and powers are listed, but all lesser, greater and mass versions of these spells and powers are also affected.

Astral Caravan	Maze
Astral Construct	Mount
Astral Projection	Not Where You Think
Astral Seed	Phase Door
Astral Traveller	Phase Door, Psionic
Baleful Teleport	Planar Ally
Banishment	Planar Binding
Banishment, Psionic	Plane Shift
Blasphemy	Presence of the Master-Smiths
Blink	Prismatic Sphere
Call Weaponry	Prismatic Spray
Commune	Prismatic Wall
Contact Other Plane	Project Image
Creeping Doom	Quintessence
Decerebrate	Refuge
Dictum	Retrieve
Dimension Door	Rope Trick
Dimension Door, Psionic	Secret Chest
Dimension Swap	Shades
Dismissal	Shadow Conjuration
Dismissal, Psionic	Shadow Evocation
Dismiss Ectoplasm	Shadow Stride
Dispel Chaos	Shadow Walk
Dispel Evil	Shambler
Dispel Good	Simulacrum
Dispel Law	Storm of Vengeance
Dissipating Touch	Summon Instrument
Divert Teleport	Summon Monster (I – IX)
Dream Travel	Summon Nature's Ally (I – IX)
Duodimensional Claw	Summon Spirit Warrior
Ectoplasmic Cocoon	Summon Swarm
Ectoplasmic Shambler	Summon Thy Own
Elemental Swarm	Summon Tome
Energy Wall	Teleport
Entangling Ectoplasm	Teleport, Greater
Ethereal Jaunt	Teleport, Psionic
Ethereal Jaunt, Psionic	Teleportation Circle
Etherealness	Teleportation Circle, Psionic
Etherealness, Psionic	Teleport Trigger
Faithful Hound	Temporal Acceleration
Gaze	Time Stop
Genesis	Time Regression
Hail of Crystals	Transport Via Plants
Hold the Spirit	Trap the Soul

Holy Word	Tree Stride
Insect Plague	Wall of Ectoplasm
Instant Summons	Water Stride
Knowledge of the Elders	Word of Chaos
Magnificent Mansion	Word of Recall

The list above is drawn from *Core Rulebook I*, the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, and the *Player's Guide to Arcanis*. Similar spells and powers from other sources should be added to this list as needed. The above list is intended to provide enough examples to enable you to determine whether or not a spell or power not included on the list should be affected in the Sealed Lands.

When a spell has multiple components to its effect, and only some of those components involve moving or forcing a creature to a different plane, then it is just the plane-shifting aspects that are blocked. The remained of the spell or power's effects function as normal. For example, *blasphemy* and *holy word* both have the capability to banish creatures to another plane; that capability does not work in the Sealed Lands, but the spells' other effects still work.

The spell *hold the spirit* isn't banned because its effect violates the seal, but rather because its effect is irrelevant due to the seal's own properties. See the next section for details.

Death in the Sealed Lands

The same magical 'seal' that prevents planar travel within the Sealed Lands actually proves beneficial for those mortals that die beyond the Godswall. As long as the mountains stand, the spirits of the deceased cannot pass on to Beltine's Cauldron. As a result, the normal limits on resurrection on Arcanis (i.e., that it must take place before the first sunrise after death) do not apply within the Sealed Lands. This has also led to a proliferation of ghosts and other roving undead spirits who cannot be laid to rest until the Sealed Lands are free.

Infernals in Arcanis

In the core rules, demons and devils have a type of Outsider (generally with the Evil and Extraplanar subtypes). This classification doesn't quite capture all of the nuances that are possible in the world of Arcanis, because there are differences between native Infernals and non-native Infernals, as well as differences between bound and unbound Infernals. In addition to the various kinds of Infernals, there are also many other kinds of evil Outsiders that may be encountered in Arcanis; in other words, although all Infernals are (or were once) Outsiders, it is not the case that all Outsiders are Infernals.

New Type: Infernal

An Infernal is any demon, devil, or other fiend. Infernals are always of evil alignment (though they may be lawful evil, neutral evil, or chaotic evil). Some Infernals, but not all of them, are partially composed of the essence of some plane other than the Material Plane. Under rare circumstances, a creature may start out as some other type and undergo a transformation (physical, spiritual, or both) that causes it to become an Infernal.

Features

An Infernal has the following features.

- 8-sided Hit Dice.
- Base attack bonus equal to total Hit Dice (as Fighter).
- Good Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saves.
- Skill points equal to (8 + Int modifier, minimum 1) per Hit Die, with quadruple skill points for the first Hit Die.

Traits

An Infernal possesses the following traits (unless otherwise noted in a creature's entry).

- **Darkvision** out to 60 feet. Every Infernal also has the supernatural ability to see normally in natural and magical darkness of any sort, even that created by a *deeper darkness* spell.
- Proficient with all simple and martial weapons and any weapons mentioned in its entry.
- Proficient with whatever type of armor (light, medium, or heavy) it is described as wearing, as well as all lighter types. Infernals not indicated as wearing armor are not proficient with armor. Infernals are proficient with shields if they are proficient with any form of armor.
- Infernals breathe, but do not need to eat or sleep (although they can do so if they wish). Infernals with the Incorporeal subtype do not need to breathe. Some types of Infernals with the Native subtype, particularly those with more human-like forms, do need to eat and sleep.
- **Tainted:** All Infernals are treated as having the Tainted subtype for purposes of spells and effects that target Tainted creatures.
- **Irredeemable:** Even though they can be forced to serve mortals, true Infernals are irredeemably evil by their very nature. All Infernals are treated as having the Evil subtype for purposes of spells and effects that target evil creatures. Infernals are also treated as having a palpable aura of evil, with an aura strength equal to the Infernal's Hit Dice, using the core rules for detecting evil outsiders with the *detect evil* spell.
- Unlike most other living creatures, an Infernal does not have a dual nature – its soul and body form one unit. When an Infernal is slain, no soul is set loose. Spells that restore souls to their bodies, such as *raise dead*, *resurrection*, and even *true resurrection*, don't work on an Infernal, because there is no soul to bring back from the Underworld. An Infernal with the Native subtype can be raised or resurrected just as other living creatures can be.
- **Vulnerability to Sarishan steel:** Infernals of extraplanar origin are particularly vulnerable to weapons made of Sarishan steel. Such weapons bypass any Damage Reduction that the Infernal has. If the Infernal has the Regeneration special quality, weapons of Sarishan steel

deal damage that is treated as if it were of a type that the Infernal cannot regenerate. The touch of these weapons is excruciatingly painful to the Infernal. Infernals of native origin (see below) are not vulnerable to Sarishan steel; it is no different than normal steel to them.

The following creatures from the System Reference Document are considered Infernals in Arcanis: all creatures listed under “demons” (babau, balor, bebilith, dretch, glabrezu, hezrou, marilith, nalfeshnee, quasit, retriever, succubus, and vroek) and all creatures listed under “devils” (barbed devil, bearded devil, bone devil, chain devil, erinyes, hellcat, horned devil, ice devil, imp, lemure, and pit fiend). Any creature that gains the Half-Fiend template from the core rules has its type changed to Infernal (instead of to Outsider).

Demons and devils are still treated as distinct creature types in the sense that they have different individual traits (for example, devils are immune to fire and poison, while demons are immune to electricity and poison) but they are all considered Infernals rather than Outsiders in Arcanis and share the Infernal traits listed above in addition to their existing demonic or devilish traits. In terms of Base Attack Bonus, saving throw bonuses, skill points, and other traits, Infernals are just like Outsiders, so there is no need to recalculate game statistics for the creatures from the core rules listed above.

There are, of course, a great many Infernal creatures in Arcanis above and beyond those listed in the System Reference Document. Many of them have not been seen in the Known Lands since the Time of Terror, so their names and characteristics have been forgotten except perhaps by a handful of the most dedicated scholars of Sarishan lore. Generally speaking, a character with ranks in the Knowledge (the planes) skill can attempt to identify Infernals using the same rules for identifying Outsiders in the core rules.

Note that the terms “Mortal Plane” (of Arcanis) and “Material Plane” may be used interchangeably. As far as the residents of Arcanis are concerned, the Prime Material Plane is the Mortal Plane, so named because that is where most mortals dwell. Most Infernals originate from various Outer Planes, the names and details of which are beyond the scope of this book. The Underworld, which is where Beltine’s Cauldron is found, is not part of the Mortal Plane, nor is it considered an Outer Plane. On Arcanis, the souls of dead mortals generally (but not always) pass into the Underworld if they are not returned to life within 24 hours.

Infernal Subtypes

Three subtypes from the core rules (Evil, Extraplanar, and Native) are most commonly applied to Infernals. A new subtype, Tainted, is used in Arcanis to designate creatures of other types that have the taint of Infernal lineage but are not themselves full-fledged Infernals.

Evil

All Infernals have the Evil subtype. Even if an Infernal’s alignment somehow changes to something other than evil, it still retains the subtype. Any effect that depends on alignment affects an Infernal as if it had an evil alignment, no matter what its alignment actually is. An Infernal overcomes other creatures’ Damage Reduction as if its natural weapons and any manufactured weapons it wields were evil-aligned.

Extraplanar

Most Infernals encountered in Arcanis have the Extraplanar subtype. Such creatures appear on the Mortal Plane only as reflections of their true selves. They always retain a connection to the plane of their origin. This is particularly true of Infernals that have been summoned to the Material Plane; the connection between planes lasts for only as long as the summoning effect. Infernals that are called rather than summoned still retain a connection to their home plane (which is what allows them the one-time ability to return to their plane of origin, as specified in the core rules for Conjuraction [Calling] effects).

This is why Sarishan steel is effective against Infernals; it directly attacks the connection between the Infernal’s true (extraplanar) self and the Material Plane. Infernals with the Extraplanar subtype are vulnerable to Sarishan steel. It bypasses their Damage Reduction, if any, and for Infernals that have the regeneration special quality, damage dealt by Sarishan steel treated as a type of damage that they cannot regenerate.

When an Infernal of extraplanar origin is slain on the Mortal Plane, the connection between its true form (its soul) on its home plane and its temporary reflection on the Mortal Plane is severed. Its consciousness immediately “snaps back” to the other plane, leaving nothing behind (not even a body) on the Mortal Plane. However, unless the Infernal is a being of great power and influence, it may not be able to retain its original form upon returning to its home plane. Infernals that have been banished from the Mortal Plane are often reborn as dretches or lemures, the lowest and most abused forms of Infernals. Being well aware of this, Infernals are strongly motivated to preserve their lives when summoned.

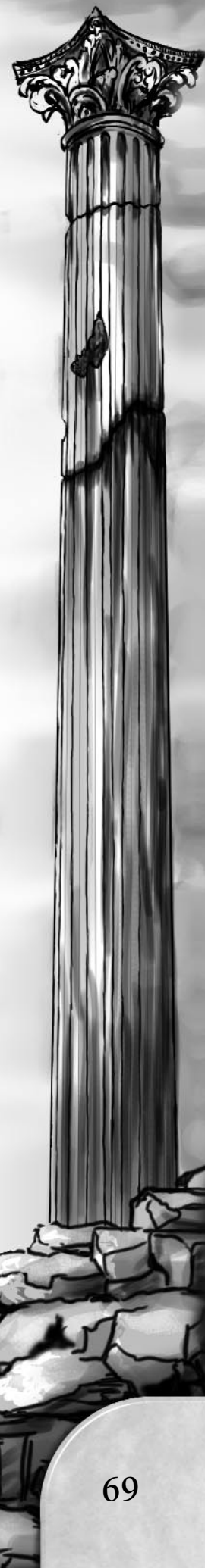
Native

When the Time of Terror was ended by the raising of the Godswall, the surviving members of the Infernal Host were trapped on the Material Plane. The region known as the Sealed Lands was locked away by the power of the Gods themselves, an edict so powerful that nothing could breach it. Those Infernals that had come to Onara during the Time of Terror were also affected by the Sealing. Their true selves were ripped from the various Outer Planes and bound to the Mortal Plane of Arcanis, their bodies and souls fused into a single unit. These Infernals do not have the extraplanar link that a summoned or called Infernal does. As a result, if they die on Arcanis, they are forever dead. This knowledge gives the Infernals from the Sealed Lands a good reason for caution.

The result of this, in game mechanics terms, is that the Infernals trapped behind the Godswall all lost the Extraplanar subtype and all gained the Native subtype. This is why native Infernals are not vulnerable to Sarishan steel; they have no extraplanar connection to attack.

Tainted

This subtype is particular to Arcanis and is used to identify creatures that have Infernal lineage or have been affected by Infernal corruption, but are not themselves full-fledged Infernals. For example, all dark-kin characters have the Tainted subtype. Any creature that gains the Fiendish template from the core rules is also considered to have the Tainted subtype, whether it is an Infernal or not.



Some spells and effects (particularly those in this book) target Tainted creatures specifically. All Infernal creatures are considered to have the Tainted subtype, regardless of whether they are Extraplanar or Native. Tainted is not an aligned subtype; creatures with the Tainted subtype do not automatically have the Evil subtype, for example. Unlike a true Infernal, a creature that is merely Tainted does not automatically detect as evil; however, certain spells and effects (such as the ability of a Holy Champion of Sarish to discern Infernal creatures) specifically detect creatures with the Tainted subtype regardless of their alignment. The strength of a Tainted creature's aura under such detection is based on its Hit Dice, using the core rules for detecting evil Outsiders with the *detect evil* spell.

Bound and Unbound Infernals

Among the many titles given to the God Sarish is that of the Binder. To His followers alone is given the capacity to rebuke and turn Infernals so that they cower before His might; to summon and command Infernals to unwillingly do His bidding; and to mark Infernals with His Sigil so that they may be more easily commanded by Him in the future.

Note that an Infernal's status as Bound or Unbound is entirely independent of its subtype (Extraplanar or Native). A Bound Infernal is one that has been marked with the *Sigil of Sarish* and therefore can be summoned and commanded by any of His followers who know the proper rituals. Any spellcaster (arcane or divine) in Arcanis who summons a generic Fiendish creature via one of the *summon monster* spells from the core rules is summoning a Bound Infernal. Any Sarishan who uses the *summon thy own* line of spells from the *Player's Guide to Arcanis* is summoning a unique individual Infernal that was previously marked with the *Sigil of Sarish* by a member of the Sarishan Binder prestige class. (See the *Player's Guide to Arcanis* for more details on the Sarishan Binders and the *Sigil of Sarish*.)

However, not all Infernals with the Extraplanar subtype are Bound – only those that are summoned or called in accordance with the rituals laid down by the followers of Sarish. There are other rituals, ancient and terrible, through which gates to the Lower Planes may be opened and the Infernals that lurk beyond admitted to the Material Plane. The efficacy of these rituals was curtailed or blocked entirely during the time that the Godswall stood, but now that the Gods have seen fit to unmake their barrier, it is once again possible for Unbound Infernals to walk the surface of Onara.

The vast majority of Infernals from the Sealed Lands are also Unbound. They were never directly defeated at the Battle of Hope's End; rather, they were cast beyond the Wall of the Gods without being individually marked by Sarish and His followers. However, any Unbound Infernal can become a Bound Infernal if it is marked by a Sarishan Binder following the rules in the *Player's Guide to Arcanis*.

The power of a Sarishan to turn and rebuke Infernals is based on the Infernal's status as being Bound or Unbound. A Bound Infernal can be turned or rebuked. An Unbound Infernal can-

not. This is true regardless of whether the Infernal is Native or Extraplanar in origin. On the other hand, the efficacy of Sarishan steel at penetrating an Infernal's defenses is based on its subtype; Extraplanar Infernals are vulnerable to Sarishan steel, while Native Infernals are not. This is true regardless of whether the Infernal is Bound or Unbound.

A creature that has the Tainted subtype, but is not Infernal, cannot be bound. Only full-blooded Infernals can be marked with the *Sigil of Sarish*. Likewise, creatures (such as dark-kin) with the Tainted subtype but not the Infernal type cannot be turned or rebuked by characters with the power to turn and rebuke Infernals, and they are not especially vulnerable to the touch of Sarishan steel.

Dark-Kin

These unfortunate souls, descended from a half-fiend ancestor many generations ago, are tainted with the touch of the Infernal. Scorned by most people, dark-kin simply try their best to make their way in the world. Some dark-kin fight against their Infernal heritage, hoping to be redeemed by their good deeds, while others embrace the darkness within and succumb to evil and despair.

All dark-kin have some overt physical manifestation of their taint, though it may be subtle or obvious. Some common physical traits include reddish-hued skin, small horns on the forehead, pronounced incisors, a forked tail, eyes that glow with a malignant light, and so forth. The number of possible manifestations is as varied as the number of individuals in the world. Depending on the specifics of his or her ancestry, the abilities of a particular dark-kin may also vary; there really is no "average" when one is talking about dark-kin. Tainted feats (see below) may also be used to further customize the abilities of a given individual.

Dark-kin Racial Traits:

- **+2 Dex, +2 Con, -2 Wis, -2 Cha:** Dark-kin are hardier and more agile than most characters, but they are easily distracted and quick to anger. Their reputation, and the aura of wrongness which often surrounds them, make things difficult for dark-kin in most social gatherings.
- **Medium Size:** As Medium-size creatures, dark-kin have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- **Dark-kin base speed is 30 ft.**
- **Darkvision:** Dark-kin can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only, but is otherwise like normal sight.
- **Unnatural Aura:** Animals become uneasy around dark-kin. Dogs will bark and horses become unruly. Dark-kin receive a -2 penalty to Ride checks and a -5 penalty to Wild Empathy checks.
- **Automatic Languages:** Same as their parent race or nation.
- **Bonus Languages:** Same as their parent race or nation, plus Infernal.
- **Favored Class:** Barbarian. A multiclassed dark-kin's Barbarian class does not count when determining if he suffers an XP penalty for multiclassing. Dark-kin must constantly battle their dark nature, struggling for control over the Infernal rage and bloodlust that drives them.

In addition, during character creation, a dark-kin character may choose two special abilities from the list below to reflect the specific effects of their Tainted blood. Unless otherwise specified, no specific ability may be taken more than once.

- **Acid resistance:** Acid runs off this dark-kin's flesh like water. Each time that the character would normally take acid damage, that damage is reduced by 2.
- **Barbed flesh:** The character's skin is studded with sharp barbs. The character is always considered to be wearing armor spikes, and may (at her discretion) do regular damage instead of subdual damage with unarmed attacks. However, any armor worn by the character must be specially made and costs twice the normal price.
- **Cold resistance:** This dark-kin's tainted blood keeps her warm from within. Each time that the character would normally take cold damage, that damage is reduced by 2.
- **Electricity resistance:** Lightning holds no fear for this dark-kin. Each time that the character would normally take electrical damage, that damage is reduced by 2.
- **Fiendish anatomy:** This character's internal organs are located in different places than those of normal humans. When this character suffers a critical hit, he may make a Fortitude save (DC 15+opponent's BAB). On a successful save, the critical hit is treated as a normal hit. This ability has no effect on sneak attacks. Unfortunately, the character's strange internal architecture also makes it more difficult to treat his wounds. Heal checks made on this character suffer a -5 penalty.
- **Fire resistance:** This dark-kin could endure the flames of Hell itself. Each time that the character would normally take fire damage, that damage is reduced by 2.
- **Immunity to charm spells:** This dark-kin is almost impossible to charm, as her blood is thick with the Infernal. Any spells or psionic powers with the (Charm) descriptor have no effect upon this dark-kin.
- **Natural armor:** This dark-kin has a scaly, metallic, rubbery, or otherwise tough hide, which gives him a racial natural armor bonus of +1.
- **Poison resistance:** Like her fiendish ancestor, this dark-kin has little to fear from poisons. The character receives a racial bonus of +4 on all saving throws versus poison.
- **Scent:** The character has an extremely sensitive (and probably oversized) nose. As a result, the character gains the *scent* extraordinary ability (as described in *Core Rulebook III*). However, as a side effect, all gas- or scent-based attacks (*stinking cloud*, green dragon breath, a ghost's stench, etc.) inflict double normal damage to this character and/or have the duration of their effects doubled on this character, as appropriate.
- **Vision of darkness:** The catlike eyes of this dark-kin can see through even magical darkness. *Darkness* spells (including *deeper darkness*) have no effect upon this dark-kin. Note that non-*darkness*

spells that impair vision, such as *obscuring mist*, affect this dark-kin normally.

Dark-Kin Bloodlines

As for the dark-kin within the Sealed Lands, they display a diverse assortment of powers, reflecting the varied nature of their Infernal ancestors. More interestingly, some of these dark-kin have managed to track down their fiendish forefathers in hopes of understanding – and perhaps increasing – their own powers. While many Infernals ignore these impertinent requests, or even slay their progeny for disturbing them with such nonsense, more than a few dark-kin have gotten the information they wanted, though they usually had to swear potent oaths as part of the bargain.

In game terms, dark-kin may seek out their progenitor (selected from the list below, or others made available by their GM) and attempt to convince them to provide more details about their Infernal heritage. This usually requires oaths and/or favors performed for the ancestor in question, but can lead to the development of some particularly unusual fiendish powers. After fulfilling whatever criteria their ancestor demands of them, the dark-kin may select one of the Level 1 bloodline powers listed for that Infernal below. From then on, when the dark-kin would normally receive a free characteristic increase (i.e., every fourth level), he may select an additional bloodline power instead of a characteristic increase. The character must select all of the available level 1 bloodline powers before selecting a level 2 bloodline power, and must select all of the level 2 bloodline powers before selecting a level 3 bloodline power. Obviously, no dark-kin may ever have powers belonging to more than one Infernal ancestor.

A dark-kin's "blood rank" is defined as the total number of bloodline powers that dark-kin possesses. Unless otherwise indicated in the power description, all bloodline powers that require an effective caster level use the dark-kin's total character level. Unless otherwise stated, the saving throw to resist a dark-kin's bloodline power is equal to 10 + the dark-kin's Charisma modifier + the dark-kin's blood rank.

Characters should note that there exists an organization of militant dark-kin known only as the Call of the Blood, who seek to eliminate those Infernals who have intentionally created Tainted humans, so that no more of their kind need ever be born. Any individuals who cooperate with such Infernals are considered enemies by the Call, and those who formally embrace their ancestors' paths will certainly be primary targets of this secretive group.

Dark-kin Bloodline Powers

Brood of Buhez

- 1 **Guts of Iron (Ex):** The character receives a +1 profane bonus on all Fortitude saves.
- Hard to Kill:** The character receives Toughness as a bonus feat.
- 2 **Foul Stench (Su):** Once per day per four character levels, the character may exude a burst of disgusting odors from her skin as a stan-

dard action. All other creatures within 10' of the dark-kin at the time the odor is released must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + one-half the dark-kin's HD + the dark-kin's Con modifier) or be nauseated (unable to do anything but a single move-equivalent action per round) for 1d6 rounds.

Leap of the Toad (Sp): Once per day per four character levels the character may *jump* (as the spell, except that no material component is needed).

3 Demonic Clutch (Ex): The dark-kin gains the Improved Grab special attack (see *Core Rulebook III*) when making unarmed attacks with either her claws or a bite attack.

Skin Like Stone (Ex): The dark-kin's racial natural armor bonus improves by +2 (even if it is +0 to begin with). This stacks with all other increases to racial natural armor.

Brood of Caneturec

1 Book of Knowledge: The dark-kin gains Appraise and any two Knowledge skills as class skills. Nimbleness (Ex): The character receives a +1 profane bonus on all Reflex saves.

Foresight (Sp): Once per day per four levels, the character may perform an *augury* as the spell of the same name, except that her own blood and hair serves as the material components and focus for the spell.

2 Precise Strike (Ex): Once per day, as a standard action, the dark-kin may make one attack, be it melee or ranged, which is treated as a touch attack allowing it to ignore armor, shield and natural armor bonuses to Armor Class.

Farsight (Sp): Once per week the dark-kin may cast *scrying*. However, she may substitute her own blood for the normal focus by dealing 2d6 damage to herself during the casting. This requires her to make a Concentration check or lose the spell. If she uses her own blood, and succeeds on the resulting Concentration check, then the save DC is also increased by 2.

3 Open Mind: The dark-kin gains the Wild Talent feat as a bonus feat; this allows the character to take levels in psionic classes and psionic prestige classes that have a prerequisite of a power point reserve.

Brood of Chuhar

1 Gaze of the Pit (Su): The character gains a +4 profane bonus on all Intimidate checks. Serpent's Blood (Ex): The character gains a +4 profane bonus on all saves versus poison.

Skin of Flame (Ex): The flesh of the dark-kin becomes inured to fire, taking on a dark-red sheen. This grants him fire resistance 5, which increases to 10 at character level 12 and to 15 at character level 18.

2 Terror of the Pit (Sp): The dark-kin gains the ability to cast *cause fear* once per day per four levels.

Fangs of the Pit (Ex): The bite of the dark-kin becomes poisonous. The character gains a bite attack, or if he already has a bite attack, it

becomes poisonous. If the character did not already have a bite attack, then he is considered non-proficient until he takes Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bite). The bite attack is considered to be a natural secondary attack and deals 1d4 damage plus one-half the character's Strength bonus. Anyone who takes damage from the dark-kin's bite must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + one-half the dark-kin's HD + the dark-kin's Con modifier) or be poisoned. The primary and secondary damage of the poison are the same: 1d4 points of Constitution damage.

3 Wings (Ex): The dark-kin grows wings, granting him a fly speed equal to his base speed with average maneuverability. These wings make it particularly difficult to disguise the dark-kin as any wingless creature without resorting to magic. Any mundane attempt to disguise the dark-kin suffers a -5 circumstance penalty. Additionally, these new appendages force all clothing and armor to be fitted specifically for the dark-kin, increasing the cost by 50%. The dark-kin must have existing armor and clothing modified, by spending 25% of the base cost for the armor or clothing, before it can be used again.

Brood of Ghashmet

1 Blood Scales: The character receives Blood Scales as a bonus feat.

Chill Touch (Sp): The dark-kin may now cast *chill touch* once per day per four levels.

2 Blood of Ice (Ex): The flesh of the dark-kin becomes inured to cold, taking on a light-blue sheen. She gains cold resistance 5, which increases to 10 at character level 12, and to 15 at character level 18.

Numbing Cold (Sp): Any time a target is affected by the dark-kin's *chill touch* it also suffers 1 point of Strength damage, regardless of whether its saving throw against the *chill touch* succeeded or failed. If the target also failed the save then it is also under the effects of *slow* for 1d6 rounds, with no further saving throw being allowed against the *slow* effect. The *chill touch* ability of the dark-kin now counts as a 3rd-level spell.

3 Cold Grip of Fear (Su): The dark-kin gains the ability to generate an aura of *fear* in a 10' radius around her once per day per four character levels. Treat this aura as the *fear* spell except that it is a 10' emanation centered on the dark-kin rather than a cone.

Deathly Cold (Sp): The *numbing cold* ability of the dark-kin is now augmented such that instead of only being *slowed* the target is first affected by a *hold monster* effect for 1d4 rounds and then *slow* for 1d6 rounds; both effects allow no additional save against them. The *chill touch* ability of the dark-kin now counts as a 7th-level spell.

Brood of Hamaimon

1 Forked Tongue: The dark-kin gains Bluff, Diplomacy and Sense Motive as class skills.

Low Charm (Su): Each day, for a number of rounds equal to his blood rank, the character may

add a +2 profane bonus to his Charisma. These rounds may be used consecutively, or divided up among numerous different uses. This boost to Charisma does not grant a caster additional bonus spells, but it does influence his saving throw DCs. Additionally, it has the normal effect that an increased Charisma has on skills and other abilities.

2 Glib Tongue (Sp): The dark-kin gains the ability to lie with little chance of being detected. The character gains the ability to cast the *glibness* spell once per day.

Speak of the Devil (Su): If the character's name is spoken aloud within one mile of his location, the character hears the sentence in which it was spoken, and can recognize the speaker if he is familiar with his or her voice.

3 Convincing Tongue (Sp): Once per day per four levels, the character may bring forth powerful emotions in those who hear him speak. These emotions either duplicate the *crushing despair* spell or the *good hope* spell, and the dark-kin may choose which creatures within a 30' radius of him are affected and which are not affected.

High Charm (Su): The character's *low charm* ability now grants a +4 profane bonus to Charisma rather than a +2 and may now be used for up to two minutes per blood rank.

Brood of Kutcharg

1 Iron Lungs: The character receives Endurance as a bonus feat. If the dark-kin already has Endurance, or later gains it as another bonus feat, she may receive the Die Hard feat instead.

War Cry (Su): Once per day per four levels, the character may utter a stirring battle cry to raise the spirits of his allies. This cry provides a +1 morale bonus to attack and damage rolls and on saving throws against charm and fear effects. These bonuses last for 5 rounds.

2 Sharp Eyes (Ex and Su): The dark-kin's vision improves significantly. This grants the dark-kin low-light vision, but it also allows her to ignore concealment of up to 20% (such as that granted by *blur*). The low-light vision is an extraordinary ability, while the ability to ignore concealment is supernatural.

Skin of Ash (Ex): The flesh of the dark-kin becomes inured to fire, taking on a dark-red sheen. She gains fire resistance 5, which increases to 10 at character level 12 and to 15 at character level 18.

3 Fleet of Foot (Ex): The dark-kin gains a +10 bonus to her base speed.

Fool's Dare (Su): Once per day the dark-kin may issue a challenge to any other individual, "daring" the target to perform some activity. Treat this as the *suggestion* spell, except that the suggestion given does not necessarily have to be reasonable – an obviously harmful or even fatal course of action may be suggested, other than a direct instruction for the target to commit bodily harm upon itself. For example, "I dare you to jump off of that cliff" would be a valid use of this ability, but "I dare you to stab yourself in the throat" would not. This is considered a language-dependent, mind-affecting

effect. The target may refuse the dare on a successful Will save. The target gains a further +4 bonus on its save if the course of action proposed is obviously dangerous or fatal.

Brood of Meliol

1 Trust Me (Ex): The character gains a +4 profane bonus on all Bluff checks.

Speak No Evil (Sp): Once per day per four levels, the dark-kin can produce a *silence* effect as the spell.

2 Would I Lie To You? (Su): The dark-kin gains the ability to lie with little chance of being detected. The character gains the ability to cast the *glibness* spell once per day.

See No Evil, Hear No Evil (Sp): The dark-kin acquires the ability to render his foes deaf or mute. Once per day per four levels the dark-kin may use the *blindness/deafness* spell.

3 Calming Words (Su): Once per day per four levels, the character may pacify even the most hostile of crowds. This effect duplicates that of *calm emotions* centered on the dark-kin. The character does not have to concentrate to maintain the effect, but it still only lasts one round per level.

I Am Not a Threat (Su): The dark-kin is now protected by an aura of sanctity. This aura is a continuously active *sanctuary* spell. Anyone who attempts to strike the dark-kin must make a Will save. Failure on the save prevents that creature from striking the dark-kin for the next 24 hours. If at anytime the dark-kin takes an aggressive action, as detailed in the *sanctuary* spell, then the effect ends immediately. If this aura is dispelled, it may be resumed on the dark-kin's turn as a free action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Brood of Tulemigantzi

1 Lightning Dodge (Ex): The character receives a +1 profane bonus on all Reflex saves.

Storm Touch (Sp): The very touch of the dark-kin becomes charged with elemental electric energy, allowing her to cast *shocking grasp* once per day per four levels.

2 All or Nothing (Ex): Once per day, the character may re-roll a failed attack roll. However, if this re-roll is a natural 1 then the dark-kin has struck herself, dealing normal damage to herself instead of her intended target.

Skin of Lightning (Ex): The flesh of the dark-kin becomes inured to electricity, taking on a dark-blue sheen. She gains electricity resistance 5, which increases to 10 at character level 12 and to 15 at character level 18.

3 Eater of Lightning (Su): The dark-kin's flesh can now absorb electrical energy, rather than just dissipating it. Half of the electrical damage that is prevented by the *skin of lightning* ability now also heals the character. For every two points of damage prevented, the dark-kin is healed one point; this healing can further reduce the electrical damage that isn't negated, or it can heal the dark-kin

directly. However, this ability cannot grant excess or temporary hit points. For example, a *lightning bolt* hits Dreklur, a member of the Brood of Tulemigantzi and a 12th level Fighter, for 16 points of electricity damage. The *skin of lightning* ability prevents 10 points of that damage, and the *eater of lightning* ability also heals Dreklur of 5 more points of damage, resulting in Dreklur only taking 1 point of damage.

Stormcaller (Sp): The dark-kin's inner reserves of electrical energy have reached a point where they can now be released in concentrated bursts. Once per day per four levels the dark-kin may unleash his inner energy in the form of a *lightning bolt* spell. The caster level is equal to one-half the dark-kin's total character level (rounded down).

Brood of Uhxbractit

1 Natural Leader (Ex): The dark-kin gains a +2 profane bonus to his Leadership score when recruiting non-good followers and cohorts; this bonus has no effect until such time as the dark-kin takes the Leadership feat. If using the alternate Leadership rules that are used in *LIVING ARCANIS*, this is instead a -1 level gap adjustment for non-good cohorts, and a -2 level gap adjustment for non-good dark-kin cohorts.

Tangletail (Ex): The character grows a small, prehensile tail, which may be used in combat. The dark-kin gains the benefits of the Improved Trip feat, but only when attempting the trip attack with his tail. The tail is treated as a natural secondary attack, but deals no damage. If the dark-kin fails the trip attempt, he may not be tripped in return.

2 Soul of Coal (Ex): The flesh of the dark-kin becomes inured to fire, taking on a dark-red sheen. He gains fire resistance 5, which increases to 10 at character level 12, and to 15 at character level 18.

Voice of Command (Su): Infernals now pay attention when the dark-kin issues a command. Once per day per four characters levels the character may rebuke/command Infernals as an evil cleric commands and rebukes undead. The dark-kin's character level should be treated as his cleric level for the purposes of rebuking and commanding Infernals. Also, he may add his blood rank to his turning check. Finally, if he has five or more ranks in Knowledge (the planes) he gets an additional +2 bonus on his turning check.

3 Poison Breath (Su): The dark-kin can now exhale clouds of poisonous gas as a standard action once per day per four levels. This cloud of gas fills a cone that is 5 feet long per blood rank. The cloud does 2d6 points of damage per blood rank (Fortitude save for half damage) and dissipates within 1 round. The dark-kin must wait at least 1d4 rounds before using this ability again, if he has more uses left that day.

Wings (Ex): The dark-kin grows wings, granting him a fly speed equal to his base speed with average maneuverability. These wings make it particularly difficult to disguise the dark-kin as any wingless creature without resorting to magic. Any mundane attempt to disguise the dark-kin suffers a -5

penalty. Additionally, these new appendages force all clothing and armor to be fitted specifically for the dark-kin, increasing the cost by 50%. The dark-kin must have existing armor and clothing modified, by spending 25% of the base cost for the armor or clothing, before it can be used again.

Brood of Zalanadère

1 Blood Scales: The character receives Blood Scales as a bonus feat.

Stunning Blow: The dark-kin gains vicious insight into the workings of fleshed creatures. He gains Stunning Fist as a bonus feat, whether he meets the requirements or not. Additionally, he may apply its effects to all his natural attacks, not just to his unarmed strikes.

2 Heart of Fire (Ex): The flesh of the dark-kin becomes inured to fire, taking on a dark-red sheen. He gains fire resistance 5, which increases to 10 at character level 12, and to 15 at character level 18.

Living Inferno (Sp): The inner fire of the dark-kin can now seep through the character's skin, wreathing him in a *mantle of unassailable flame* once per day per four character levels.

3 Call Forth the Flames (Sp): The flames within the dark-kin may now be expelled as a *fireball* once per day per four levels. The caster level is equal to one-half the dark-kin's total character level (rounded down)

Fury's Vengeance (Su): All of the dark-kin's natural weapons now behave as if they were *flaming* weapons, dealing +1d6 points of fire damage on each successful hit. This does not make them count as magical for bypassing damage reduction or for any other purposes. The dark-kin may activate or suppress this ability for any or all of his natural weapons as a single standard action.

The val'Vasik

A young and minor Val bloodline, the val'Vasik are exclusively found in the city-state of Bastion within the Sealed Lands, though that may change if the Wall of the Gods is ever pierced or brought down. Like all other Val, the val'Vasik are the direct descendants of a Valinor, in this case the fallen Patience of Sarish, now known as Xabal. They breed true; the child of a Val is always another Val, regardless of the other parent's race.

The favored class of the val'Vasik is Paladin.

For complete details about the Val in general and about the many other Val bloodlines known to dwell in Onara, consult the *Codex Arcanis* and the *Player's Guide to Arcanis* available from Paradigm Concepts, Inc.

As noted in the *Player's Guide to Arcanis*, the saving throw DC for Bloodline Powers is 10 + the Val's blood rank + the Val's Charisma modifier.

val'Vasik Bloodline Powers

1 Touch Not My Children (Su): The forces of evil are reluctant to harm or even touch a descendant of Xabal once their identity is revealed. A val'Vasik may act under the protection of Xabal (treat this as a *protection from evil* effect) for one round per day per character level. These rounds can be divided up in any way the character chooses. Starting and ending this ability is a free action, but it must

remain active for at least 1 full round per activation.

Echoes of the Master's Voice (Sp): As Xabal once spoke a word to free his followers from the bondage of evil, so can his children speak an echo of that word to produce a shadow of its effects. Once per day per four character levels, the val'Vasik may speak a lesser holy word causing pain and dismay to Infernals. This lesser holy word behaves as a *sound burst*, but it only deals damage to Infernals and Tainted individuals.

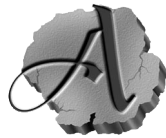
2 Harm Not My Children (Su): As much as they might wish otherwise, the forces of evil have less power over the val'Vasik than they do over other mortals. The val'Vasik receives a +3 bonus on all saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities cast by Infernals and a +1 bonus on all saving throws against spells and spell-like abilities cast by other Tainted individuals.

Our Master Bids You Obey (Su): Even though Xabal and his children are no longer in favor with Sarish, the Infernals still fear the wrath of the Binder. Four times per day, the val'Vasik may either turn or rebuke/command Infernals as a cleric turns or commands undead. When this bloodline power is chosen, the character must choose whether he wishes to turn or rebuke Infernals, and this choice cannot be changed. The val'Vasik's character level is used as his cleric level for the purposes of this turning, and he gains a +2 bonus on the turn check if he has five or more ranks in Knowledge (the planes).

If there are more potent bloodline powers among the val'Vasik, they are not known at this time.

Infernal Heritage

While it is possible to play an Infernal, such as the Bearded Devil, Succubus, Erinyes, and Chain Devil, the combination of Hit Dice with level adjustment places such characters out of reach for most starting characters, and cripples higher-level characters with lower hit points, fewer feats, skills, than other characters of a similar level. Instead of playing a fiend as a PC, a dark-kin character may instead work towards unlocking various aspects of his ancestry.



Locked and Unlocked Heritage

Every dark-kin has a measure of Infernal Heritage, but not all dark-kin can tap into that source. To tap into this source a dark-kin must take levels in one of the three Heritage classes, which are racial classes only available to dark-kin. A dark-kin who takes levels of Infernal Heritage has an *unlocked heritage*, while one who takes none of the racial levels has a *locked heritage*. Because all racial levels must be taken before any class levels can be taken, this choice cannot be undone once it has been made, and the character's heritage will always remain locked or unlocked.

Heritage Levels and Heritage Strength

Levels in the Heritage classes never count towards calculating an experience penalty for multiclassing, since they

are racial class levels. Many of the Tainted feats presented in this book require varying levels of Infernal Heritage as a prerequisite, namely Minor, Intermediate and Major. A Minor heritage requirement can be met by having one or more levels in any Infernal Heritage; Intermediate by four or more levels, and Major by seven or more levels. The levels are cumulative, meaning that if a feat requires only a Minor heritage as a prerequisite, then a character with an Intermediate or Major heritage can also take that feat.

Heritage Levels and Multiclassing

Infernal Heritage levels are basically racial character levels. Unlocking one's Infernal Heritage requires dedication and focus. Once you have taken levels in any class other than Infernal Heritage you may not take any more levels in Infernal Heritage, even if you have never taken any before. Thus, it must be the first class you take, and you must take as many levels of Infernal Heritage as you will ever want to have before taking levels in any other class.

You may mix and match freely between the three Infernal Heritage classes presented below. If you take levels in multiple Infernal Heritage classes, your various Infernal Heritage levels stack for determining the strength of your heritage, and for determining the strength of your energy resistances. You may never have more than 10 levels total between the three Infernal Heritage classes.

Heritage Levels and Character Levels

Levels of Infernal Heritage are treated as character levels for all purposes. However, you do not gain ability score increases at 4th and 8th level if you are taking those as Infernal Heritage levels. Instead, you gain the ability score increases that are specified in the racial level progression. Likewise, you do not gain feats at 3rd, 6th, and 9th level; instead you gain the special abilities and feats specified in the level progression. As soon as you stop taking levels of Infernal Heritage, you return to the normal feat and ability-score-increase progressions; for example, a character with 3 levels of Infernal Heritage who then takes a level of fighter would gain a +1 ability score increase because he is now 4th level. However, he would not have gained a general feat at 3rd level because that was a racial level.

Heritage Levels and Dark-Kin Racial Qualities

Instead of choosing any two of the special dark-kin racial abilities, a character that chooses to unlock his Infernal Heritage always gains the Vision of Darkness and Immunity to Charm qualities. All of the other dark-kin base racial qualities remain unchanged. Additional special abilities are granted by the various Infernal Heritage progressions.

Choosing Your Infernal Heritage

When you decide to unlock your Infernal Heritage, you must choose the type of Infernal line from which you are descended. You must choose either a demonic or a devilish heritage. This choice cannot be changed once it has been made, and it will affect some of the benefits you gain as you progress through your racial levels.

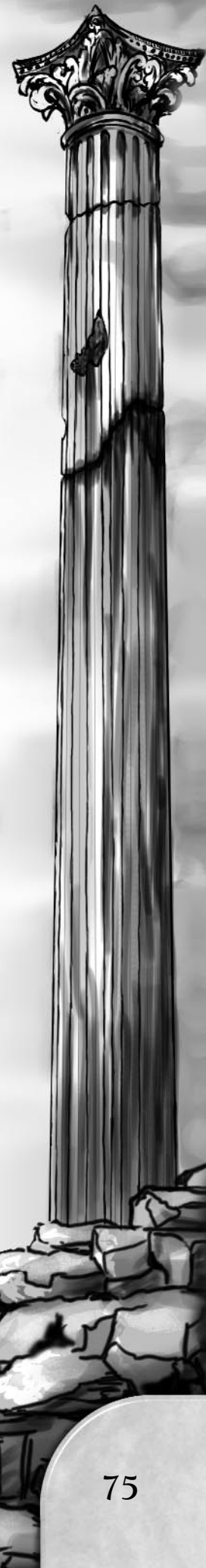


Table LD-01: Infernal Warrior

Class Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Minor heritage, favored weapon, rage 1/day
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Resistances (2), darkness 1/day
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Ability increase (Dexterity), Tainted feat
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Intermediate heritage, Weapon Focus
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Resistances (5), darkness 2/day, rage 2/day
6th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+2	Ability increase (Constitution), Tainted feat
7th	+7/+2	+5	+2	+2	Major heritage, Alertness
8th	+8/+3	+6	+2	+2	Resistances (10), darkness 3/day, Weapon Specialization
9th	+9/+4	+6	+3	+3	Ability increase (Strength), Tainted feat
10th	+10/+5	+7	+3	+3	Natural armor (+1), ability increase (+2), rage 3/day

Infernal Warrior

Alignment: Any.

Race: Dark-kin.

Hit Die: d10

Class Skills

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

The Infernal Warrior's Heritage class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (the planes) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Spot (Wis) and Swim (Str).

Class Features:

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A dark-kin who takes levels in Infernal Warrior's Heritage gains proficiency in simple weapons, light and medium armors and shields. You also gain one additional proficiency; see Favored Weapon below for details.

Minor Heritage: You now qualify to take feats that require a Minor Infernal Heritage.

Favored Weapon (Ex): At 1st level you become familiar with the weapon favored by your ancestors. If you chose to be the descendent of demons then you gain Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword) as a bonus feat. If you chose to be the descendent of devils then you gain Martial Weapon Proficiency (glaive) as a bonus feat.

Rage (Ex): At first level, you gain the ability to rage once per day exactly as a barbarian (see *Core Rulebook I*). You gain additional uses of your rage ability at 5th and 10th level. The uses that you gain from your Infernal Heritage stack with uses that you gain from taking levels in the barbarian class.

Resistances (Ex): As you continue to unlock your Infernal Heritage, your body begins to become resistant to the types of energy that your fiendish ancestors are protected against. You gain energy resistance 2 at 2nd level, energy resistance 5 at 5th level, and energy resistance 10 at 8th level. Your energy resistance is effective against acid, cold, and fire damage.

Darkness (Sp): The power of your ancestors to cloak themselves in shadows manifests itself in you starting at 2nd level. Once per day, you may cast *darkness* as a sorcerer four levels higher than your Infernal Heritage level. For every three additional Infernal Heritage levels you take you gain an additional use of this ability, to a maximum of three per day at 8th level.

Ability Increase (Ex): At 3rd, 6th and 9th levels the physical powers of your Infernal Heritage manifest themselves. At 3rd level you gain a +1 racial bonus to Dexterity, at 6th level you gain a +1 racial bonus to Constitution, and at 9th level you gain a +1 racial bonus to Strength.

The full power of your Infernal Heritage becomes manifest at 10th level when these bonuses all increase to +2 racial bonuses.

Intermediate Heritage: You now qualify to take feats that require an Intermediate Infernal Heritage.

Tainted Feat: At 3rd, 6th, and 9th level, you gain a bonus feat, which must be a Tainted feat for which you meet the prerequisites.

Weapon Focus: At 4th level, you gain Weapon Focus with your ancestors' favored weapon (longsword or glaive) as a bonus feat.

Major Heritage: You now qualify for any feat that requires a Major Infernal Heritage.

Alertness (Ex): You gain Alertness as a bonus feat.

Weapon Specialization: At 8th level, you gain Weapon Specialization with your ancestors' favored weapon (longsword or glaive) as a bonus feat.

Natural Armor (Ex): At 10th level, your skin forms thick hard plates over the vulnerable areas of your body. You gain a +1 natural armor bonus; this is a racial bonus and increases your base natural armor bonus (in other words, it is not an enhancement bonus). This stacks with any feats you may have that increase your racial natural armor bonus, such as Callused Skin (from the *Player's Guide to Arcanis*).

Infernal Arcanist

Alignment: Any.

Race: Dark-kin.

Hit Die: d4

Class Skills

Skill points at each level: 4 + Int modifier.

Table LD-02: Infernal Arcanist

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Caster Level
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Minor heritage, favored weapon, spellcasting	1
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Resistances (2), summon familiar, bonus feat	1
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Ability increase (Wisdom), Tainted feat	2
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Intermediate heritage, darkness 1/day	3
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Resistances (5), bonus feat	3
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Ability increase (Primary), Spell Focus	4
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Major heritage, darkness 2/day	5
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Resistances (10), bonus feat	6
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Ability increase (Secondary), Greater Spell Focus	6
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Ability increase (+2), darkness 3/day	7

The Infernal Arcanist's Heritage class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (the planes) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Spellcraft (Int) and Spot (Wis).

Class Features:

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A dark-kin who takes levels in Infernal Arcanist's Heritage gains proficiency in simple weapons. Infernal Arcanist's Heritage levels do not give you any armor or shield proficiencies. You also gain one additional weapon proficiency; see Favored Weapon below for details.

Minor Heritage: You now qualify to take feats that require a Minor Infernal Heritage.

Favored Weapon (Ex): At 1st level you become familiar with the weapon favored by your ancestors. If you chose to be the descendent of demons then you gain Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword) as a bonus feat. If you chose to be the descendent of devils then you gain Martial Weapon Proficiency (glaive) as a bonus feat.

Spellcasting (Sp): An Infernal Arcanist's Heritage grants you the ability to cast spells either as a sorcerer, or as a wizard does. If you have a devil as an ancestor, then you cast spells as a wizard, whereas having a demon as an ancestor allows you to cast as a sorcerer.

Regardless of which progression you are using, you may cast spells as a sorcerer or wizard of equal level to two-thirds your Infernal Arcanist's Heritage level (round down, minimum one). You gain no other benefits of the class (including bonus feats).

If you later take levels in the class whose casting you were emulating, those levels and these stack to determine your spells per day, caster level, and spells known (if applicable).

Resistances (Ex): As you continue to unlock your Infernal Heritage, your body begins to become resistant to the types of energy that your fiendish ancestors are protected against. You gain energy resistance 2 at 2nd level, energy resistance 5 at 5th level, and energy resistance 10 at 8th level. Your energy resistance is effective against acid, cold, and fire damage.

Summon Familiar (Su): You gain the ability of a sorcerer to summon a familiar. Use your Infernal Arcanist's Heritage level minus one to determine the abilities of this familiar. If you acquire the ability to summon a familiar

from a second class, then these levels and those stack to determine the abilities of the familiar.

Bonus Feat: At 2nd, 5th, and 8th levels, you gain a bonus feat. You may choose any magic item creation or metamagic feat for which you meet the prerequisites. Your spellcasting levels from Infernal Heritage count for the purpose of meeting the prerequisites of these types of feats.

Tainted Feat: At 3rd level you gain a bonus feat, which may be any feat of the Tainted subtype for which you meet the prerequisites.

Ability Increase (Ex): At 3rd, 6th and 9th levels the mental powers of your Infernal Heritage manifest themselves. At 3rd level you gain a +1 racial bonus to Wisdom. At 6th level you gain a +1 racial bonus to either Intelligence, if your ancestor was a devil, or Charisma, if your ancestor was a demon. At 9th level, you gain a +1 racial bonus to the other ability (Charisma if your ancestor was a devil, or Intelligence if your ancestor was a demon).

The full power of your Infernal Heritage becomes manifest at 10th level when these bonuses all increase to +2 racial bonuses.

These ability score increases are applied before skill points are calculated, so an increase in the Intelligence modifier of the dark-kin granted by this ability, provides an additional skill point at that level.

Intermediate Heritage: You now qualify to take feats that require a Minor or an Intermediate Infernal Heritage.

Darkness (Sp): The power of your ancestors to cloak themselves in shadows manifests itself in you starting at 4th level. Once per day, you may cast *darkness* as a sorcerer two levels higher than your Infernal Heritage level. For every three additional Infernal Heritage levels you take you gain an additional use of this ability, to a maximum of three per day at 10th level.

Spell Focus: At 6th level you gain Spell Focus as a bonus feat. You may choose any school of magic that is not prohibited to you.

Major Heritage: You now qualify for any feat that requires a Minor, Intermediate or Major Infernal Heritage.

Greater Spell Focus: At 9th level you gain Greater Spell Focus as a bonus feat. The feat applies to whichever school of magic you chose at 6th level.

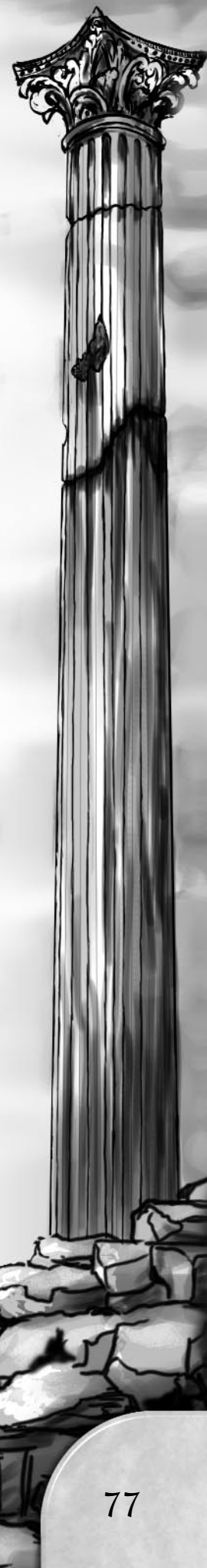


Table LD-03: Infernal Stalker

Class Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+1	+0	+2	+0	Minor heritage, favored weapon, sneak attack +1d6
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+0	Resistances (2), darkness 1/day
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+1	Ability increase (Dexterity), trapfinding, Tainted feat
4th	+4	+1	+4	+1	Intermediate heritage, evasion, sneak attack +2d6
5th	+5	+1	+4	+1	Resistances (5), darkness 2/day, trap sense +1
6th	+6/+1	+2	+5	+2	Ability increase (Constitution), uncanny dodge, Tainted feat
7th	+7/+2	+2	+5	+2	Major heritage, sneak attack +3d6
8th	+8/+3	+2	+6	+2	Resistances (10), darkness 3/day, stealthy
9th	+9/+4	+3	+6	+3	Ability increase (Strength), sneak attack +4d6, Tainted feat
10th	+10/+5	+3	+7	+3	Ability increase (+2), trap sense +2, improved uncanny dodge

Infernal Stalker

Alignment: Any.

Race: Dark-kin.

Hit Die: d6

Class Skills

Skill points at each level: 8 + Int modifier.

The Infernal Stalker's Heritage class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (the planes) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), Use Magic Device (Cha), and Use Rope (Dex).

Class Features:

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A dark-kin who takes levels in Infernal Stalker's Heritage gains proficiency in simple weapons and the following: hand crossbow, rapier, sap, short bow and short sword. They also gain proficiency in light armor but not shields. You also gain one additional weapon proficiency; see Favored Weapon below for details.

Minor Heritage: You now qualify to take feats that require a Minor Infernal Heritage.

Favored Weapon (Ex): At 1st level you become familiar with the weapon favored by your ancestors. You must choose if your line was sired by a demon or a devil, a choice that cannot later be changed and may impact your feat selection. If you chose demons then you gain Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword) as a bonus feat, otherwise if you chose devils you gain Martial Weapon Proficiency (glaive) as a bonus feat.

Sneak Attack (Ex): An Infernal Stalker's Heritage grants you the ability to deal devastating strikes to foes that are unaware of you, or distracted during combat against you. This ability is identical to that of a rogue, and deals +1d6 extra damage. At 4th, 7th and 9th

levels the extra damage dealt increases by +1d6, reaching a maximum of +4d6 extra damage at 9th level.

This extra damage stacks with all other sources of sneak attack damage, such as levels in Rogue or Assassin.

Resistances (Ex): As you continue to unlock your Infernal Heritage, your body begins to become resistant to the types of energy that your fiendish ancestors are protected against. You gain energy resistance 2 at 2nd level, energy resistance 5 at 5th level, and energy resistance 10 at 8th level. Your energy resistance is effective against acid, cold, and fire damage.

Darkness (Sp): The power of your ancestors to cloak themselves in shadows manifests itself in you starting at 2nd level. Once per day, you may cast *darkness* as a sorcerer four levels higher than your Infernal Heritage level. For every three additional Infernal Heritage levels you take you gain an additional use of this ability, to a maximum of three per day at 8th level.

Ability Increase (Ex): At 3rd, 6th and 9th levels the mental powers of your Infernal Heritage manifest themselves. At 3rd level you gain a +1 racial bonus to Charisma, at 6th level you gain a +1 racial bonus to Wisdom, and at 9th level you gain a +1 racial bonus to Intelligence.

The full power of your Infernal Heritage becomes manifest at 10th level when these bonuses all increase to +2 racial bonuses.

These ability score increases are applied before skill points are calculated, so an increase in the Intelligence modifier of the dark-kin granted by this ability, provides an additional skill point at that level.

Tainted Feat: At 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels, you gain a bonus feat, which may be any feat of the Tainted subtype for which you meet the prerequisites. Instead of a Tainted feat, you may also choose the Skill Focus feat.

Trapfinding (Ex): The keen senses of your ancestors now allow you to discern traps simply by searching for them. You gain the ability to locate traps using the Search skill, regardless of their Difficulty Class. This ability is identical to that of the same name that a Rogue possesses.

Intermediate Heritage: You now qualify to take feats that require a Minor or an Intermediate Infernal Heritage.

Evasion (Su): At 4th level, you gain the preternatural quickness of your Infernal heritage. You may now, when wearing light or no armor, evade damage from certain attacks. If you make a successful Reflex saving throw against any attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save (such as the *Fire*, *Cold*, and *Electricity* Eye

Rays of a Retriever) you instead take no damage. You lose the benefits of this ability if you are helpless (such as unconscious or paralyzed). This ability does not stack with that of a rogue.

Trap Sense (Ex): The combination of your keen vision, and your preternatural quickness grants you a +1 bonus, starting at 5th level, on your Reflex saves made to avoid traps, and a +1 dodge bonus to Armor Class against attacks made by traps. At 10th level, these bonuses increase to +2.

Trap sense bonuses gained from multiple classes stack.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): The speed and agility of the quickest of your dark ancestors now grants you the ability to react to danger before your senses would normally allow you to do so. Beginning at 6th level, you retain your Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. You do, however, still lose your Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.

Major Heritage: You now qualify for any feat that requires a Minor, Intermediate or Major Infernal Heritage.

Stealthy (Ex): At 8th level, you gain Stealthy (see *Core Rulebook I*) as a bonus feat.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): A Infernal Stalker of 8th level or higher can no longer be flanked. This defense denies another creature the ability to sneak attack the character by flanking him, unless the attacker has at least four more rogue levels than the target does.

New Feats

Feats categorized as [Tainted] can only be taken by characters with the Tainted subtype (half-fiends, tieflings, dark-kin, evil outsiders, or other characters that have been tainted by evil). A character possessing any Tainted feat has a strong and noticeably unnatural aura about him; a character with at least one such feat suffers a -2 penalty on all Charisma-based skill checks with animals and humanoids, except for the Intimidate skill. This penalty is cumulative if a character takes multiple Tainted feats, and is also cumulative with the Unnatural Aura racial trait of dark-kin. Certain Tainted feats may specify a penalty other than -2, in which case the penalty given by the feat applies instead of the default -2 penalty.

New Bonus Types

Divine: Divine bonuses do not stack with Corrupted or Profane bonuses, even though they have different names.

Corrupted: Only Infernals and other Tainted beings gain any benefit from this type of bonus, which does not stack with Divine or Sacred bonuses.

New Feat Types

Background: This feat type represents the training and studies undertaken by a character before starting his or her adventuring career. These feats may only be taken during character creation.

Certain feat chains that are marked with an asterisk (*) must be started by taking the first feat as a Background feat at 1st level, but the subsequent feats in the chain then lose the Background designation. In other words, if the feat chain is not begun at 1st level, it can never be followed at all, but if it is started at 1st level, then additional feats in the chain may be taken after 1st level, exactly as if they were General feats.

Blood: This type of feat indicates that your blood has special properties. You may only ever have one feat with the Blood subtype, although some Blood feats can be taken multiple times to increase their benefits. If you ever become a creature that lacks blood, such as an undead, you lose the benefits of these feats until you once again have blood.

Tainted: This feat type deals with the Infernal nature of a character with tainted blood. Only creatures with the Tainted subtype may take these feats. All dark-kin characters automatically have the Tainted subtype, and certain other races and prestige classes may grant this subtype as well.

Infernal Heritage Requirements

A common requirement for many of the feats below is a level of unlocked Infernal heritage. Occasionally, the requirement is for a locked heritage. Infernal heritage is different than Bloodlines and Bloodranks, although they may seem similar. Unless explicitly stated, a requirement for an unlocked Infernal heritage can be met with only a minor heritage.

Natural Attacks and Feats

Many of the feats presented below grant a character one or more natural weapons. Unless otherwise stated these are considered to be primary weapons, meaning that they can be used with no penalty on the attack roll. However, if they are used in conjunction with manufactured weapons then any attacks with them are made at a -5 penalty, unless the attacker also has the Multiattack feat, which reduces the penalty to -2. An attack can only be made with a natural weapon if that portion of the body isn't concealed or otherwise occupied. For example, you cannot make a claw attack if you are holding a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. All natural weapons threaten a critical on a natural 20 only, and deal double damage on a confirmed critical, unless otherwise stated in the feat description.

Dark-kin characters qualify to take the Multiattack feat (see *Core Rulebook III*) once they have two or more natural weapons.

Acid Blood [Background*, Blood, Tainted]

Your blood is a caustic acid.

Prerequisites: Con 15+

Benefits: Each round, the first time that you are struck by a physical attack, your body releases a spray of caustic blood. This deals 1d4 points of acid damage to all creatures in a 5-foot radius (10 feet if you are Large size). A Reflex save (DC 11 + your Constitution modifier) halves the damage. Melee weapons that strike you for damage must also save (they are treated as attended objects). They take no damage on a successful save.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times, so long as it was initially taken as a Background feat. Each additional time this feat is taken your blood spray deals an additional 1d4 points of damage, and the save DC increases by 1.

Alien Mind [Tainted]

Your mind is tinted with the rage and evil of the Outer Planes from which many Infernals hail.

Prerequisite: Infernal Mind

Benefit: Anyone attempting to read or otherwise make contact with your mind, such as through *detect thoughts*, must make a Will save (DC 10 + your Intelligence modifier) to resist being dazed for 1d3 rounds. Detecting your auras or *scrying* on your location does not count as reading your mind.

Alienation [Tainted]

Your dark presence causes others to leave you alone, unless they are looking for trouble.

Prerequisite: At least four other Tainted feats or blood rank 3+.

Benefit: Your Infernal taint is so pronounced that normal people want nothing more than to leave you alone. Their minds actively attempt not to perceive your presence. You will need to extend more effort than others just to be noticed. Guards will not trouble you under normal conditions, but under questionable circumstances may focus upon you as being evasive or shifty. People give way to you on the street, make room for you at the bar, and in general try to avoid you. This does not increase your Hide or Move Silently checks, nor does it act as any other form of protection from having your location discerned; it simply prevents you from attracting casual notice.

Awakened Heritage [Tainted]

The evidence of your Infernal heritage is stronger than that of other dark-kin.

Prerequisite: Unlocked Infernal heritage or blood rank 1+

Benefit: You gain an additional dark-kin racial option of your choice.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times; you must choose a different racial option each time.

Blood Scales [Blood, Tainted]

You can form your own blood into a temporary protective coating on your skin.

Benefit: Once per day, as a move-equivalent action, you can cause blood to ooze out of your pores, where it hardens into rust-colored scales. This supernatural ability deals you 5 points of damage that cannot be negated by any means, but provides you with a +2 natural armor bonus for 1 minute per character level.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times. Each time this feat is taken it deals an extra 5 points of damage when used, grants an additional +2 natural armor bonus, and can be used an additional time each day.

Blood of My Brother [Tainted]

You can sense the blood of the damned... you swear you can almost smell them.

Prerequisites: Unlocked Intermediate Infernal Heritage.

Benefit: The character gains sensitivity to the presence of Infernals. A DC 15 Wisdom check alerts the character to the presence of any Infernal in a 60-foot radius.

Brood of the Demon Lords [Tainted]

Your ancestor must have been a Demon Lord, for as you have grown in power the greatness of your Infernal heritage has become clear.

Prerequisites: Demonic Heritage, Major Infernal Heritage or blood rank of 3 or higher, Infernal Taint, must be of chaotic alignment.

Benefit: You gain the ability to *summon monster* once per day. You may only summon a Chaotic creature of non-Good alignment using this ability. If you have a blood rank the level of the *summon monster* effect is your blood rank +1. So if you have a blood rank of 5, then you may use *summon monster VI* once per day. If you have levels in Infernal Heritage then the level of the *summon monster* effect is your heritage level +1 (maximum of 9).

Brood of the Devil Kings [Tainted]

Your ancestor must have been a Devil King, for as you have grown in power the greatness of your Infernal heritage has become clear.

Prerequisites: Devil's Child, Major Infernal Heritage or blood rank of 3 or higher, Infernal Taint, must be of lawful alignment.

Benefit: You gain the ability to *summon monster* once per day. You may only summon a Lawful creature of non-Good alignment using this ability. If you have a blood rank the level of the *summon monster* effect is your blood rank +1. So if you have a blood rank of 5, then you may use *summon monster VI* once per day. If you have levels in Infernal Heritage then the level of the *summon monster* effect is your heritage level +1 (maximum of 9).

Brothers of Darkness [Tainted]

You can share the blessings of your Infernal heritage with those bound to you in blood and deed.

Prerequisites: *Vision of darkness* dark-kin racial trait; ability to summon a familiar, bonded mount, or other similar creature.

Benefit: You can share your Darkvision and Vision of Darkness with a bonded companion creature (familiar or paladin's warhorse). The sharing is automatic (i.e. does not require an action) any time the companion creature is within five feet of you.

Daemonic Appearance [Tainted]

The blood of demons and devils flows in your veins. This Infernal heritage is impossible to disguise, mutating you little by little into a copy of your ancestors. To the layperson, you may very well be a demon walking the world.

Prerequisites: Dark-kin; each individual trait has one additional prerequisite feat.

Benefits: Choose one of the following traits and apply the listed modifier; the exact physical appearance of each trait is left up to you but it must be obvious. Each time you take this feat you incur an additional -1 penalty to your Unnatural Aura and a -2 penalty to Disguise checks to appear as anything but an Infernal; all of these penalties are cumulative. The entries below not only indicate the type of ability it is, be that spell-like supernatural or extraordinary, but also the type of Infernal Taint that is needed.

- **Daemon Eyes (Sp; Devil Eyes)** – You can cause fear in opponents simply by looking at them. As a standard action you can target an opponent within 5 feet of you with a *fear* effect. You may use this ability a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier plus one, minimum two. The caster level for this effect is your character level, and the save DC is 10 + 1/2 character level + Cha mod (minimum 1).
- **Horns of the Beast (Ex; Massive Horns)** – The base damage of your gore attack increased to 1d8. Additionally, when you make a charge attack with your horns and successfully hit you deal double normal damage (this does not stack with feats such as Spirited Charge that also affect charging damage). Finally, you gain a +2 bonus to all Intimidate checks.
- **Razor Teeth (Ex; Wicked Teeth)** – The base damage of your bite attack increases to 1d6. Additionally, whenever you successfully hit with a bite attack you may elect to start a grapple as a free action that does not provoke an attack of opportunity as if you had Improved Grab. Finally, you gain a +2 bonus to all Intimidate checks.
- **Wicked Sting (Ex; Prehensile Tail or the Tangletail ability of the Brood of Uhxbractit)** – Your tail thickens and grows a stinger made of sharpened bone. You may now use your tail to make attacks, treating it as a natural secondary attack (you can make at most one attack a round with the tail, and that attack is made at a –5 penalty off your full attack). The tail is not a reach weapon, and deals 1d6 piercing damage. The tail may be used to make trip attacks if you have the Tail Attack feat, or the Tangletail Bloodline ability of the Brood of Uhxbractit. Once per day, following a successful attack, you may deliver a dose of poison into the wound. The poison can be resisted with a Fortitude save, and deals 1d4 Strength as primary damage and 2d4 Strength as secondary damage. The save DC is 10 + 1/2 character level + Constitution modifier. You are immune to your own poison; this does not grant immunity to any other poisons, including that of other dark-kin. You may not harvest or collect the poison from your stinger. If you are wearing heavy armor, the armor check penalty applies to attack rolls made with the tail and prevents the delivery of the poison.
- **Wicked Claws (Ex; Sharp Claws)** – The base damage of your claw attacks increases to 1d4, and they become razor sharp making their base critical threat range 19-20 with a x2 multiplier.
- **Hooves of the Beast (Ex; Cloven Hooves)** – Thanks to the power of your legs, your charge attacks are particularly devastating. This grants you an additional +2 to bonus on attack rolls while charging. Additionally, if you possess the Massive Horns or Horns of the Beast feats, you gain 2d8 bonus damage on charge attacks made with your gore attack. As bonus damage, this extra damage is not doubled if you have the Horns of the Beast feat. Finally, you gain a +2 stability bonus on all opposed checks made to resist a bull rush or trip attack, as the powerful muscles in your legs make you difficult to move.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times. Choose a different trait each time you take it.

Demonic Heritage [Tainted]

Your connection to your Demonic heritage is stronger than that of most dark-kin.

Prerequisites: Dark-kin racial traits of *acid resistance* and *cold resistance*

Benefit: You gain fire resistance of 2, and your existing acid and cold resistances increase to 5.

Special: You may no longer take the Devil's Child feat.

Devil's Child [Tainted]

Your connection to your Devilish heritage is stronger than that of most dark-kin.

Prerequisites: Dark-kin racial traits of *acid resistance* and *fire resistance*

Benefit: You gain cold resistance of 2, and your existing acid and fire resistances increase to 5.

Special: You may no longer take the Demonic Heritage feat.

Dislocation [General]

Your impressive dexterity allows you to bend and warp your body to escape even the most confining of imprisonments.

Prerequisites: Dex 15+

Benefit: You may dislocate a limb (arm or leg) from its socket to move that limb in ways it normally cannot. Dislocating the limb, which deals 1d6 non-lethal damage, is a free action that doesn't provoke attacks of opportunity. While the limb is dislocated it cannot be used, either reducing you to one useful hand (if you dislocate an arm), or reducing your speed by 50% (if you dislocate a leg).

While you have a dislocated limb, you gain +4 bonus on Escape Artist checks. You can reset the dislocated limb without dealing further damage, but doing so is a full-round action and provokes attacks of opportunity. You may dislocate a maximum of two limbs at the same time, in which case the bonuses stack, but each limb requires a separate action to pop out of its socket and a separate action to return to its socket.

Enhanced Senses [Tainted]

The gifts of your Infernal heritage have heightened your senses.

Prerequisites: Unlocked Infernal Heritage or blood rank of 1+, dark-kin racial options *vision of darkness* and *scent*, Infernal Taint.

Benefit: You gain blindsight with a 10-foot radius; if you are deafened or otherwise prevented from hearing you lose this ability. Your enhanced senses also make you sensitive to certain environments and types of attacks. You now suffer double damage from all sonic-based attacks, such as a *sound burst* spell, and gain Light Sensitivity.

Special: Both Blindsight and Light Sensitivity are detailed in *Core Rulebook III*.

Fiendish Bearing [Tainted]

You revel in the fear your Taint arouses in those around you. You often use it to bully or frighten people to get your way.

Benefit: You receive a +4 racial bonus on all Intimidate skill checks made against non-Tainted creatures. Your bearing doesn't lend itself well to sensitive matters or to gathering information (except by intimidation), thus you suffer a -2 penalty on Bluff, Diplomacy and Gather Information checks made when dealing with non-Tainted creatures.

Fiendish Feeding [Tainted]

Dark tastes and vile habits are your nature and to give into them allows you to heal yourself of physical harm.

Prerequisites: Any non-Good alignment, base Fortitude save +4 or better.

Benefit: Drinking the blood of an alive or freshly-killed sentient creature allows you to gain the same healing as a night of rest (1 hit point of damage per character level). A freshly deceased creature is one that has been killed within the past minute. To use this feat on a living creature, the subject must either be a willing victim, or be helpless. If used on a living creature this feat deals an equal amount of damage to the target as is healed to you. Finally, after each draught of blood is consumed, which takes a standard action, you must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + damage healed) or be nauseated for 1 minute.

Fire Blood [Background*, Blood, Tainted]

You can use your own blood to make a weapon burst into flames.

Prerequisite: Con 15+

Benefit: This supernatural ability allows you to coat your melee weapon with your own Infernal blood once per day, causing the weapon to burn with noxious green flame. Activating this ability is a standard action and deals you damage as if you had struck yourself with your own weapon. The weapon gains the *flaming* property for 1 round per 2 character levels.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times, so long as it was taken as a background feat. Each additional time this feat is taken you may use it an additional time per day. The second time you take this feat you gain the option to elect to deal a critical hit to yourself; if you do then your weapon gains *flaming burst* instead of *flaming*. Finally, if you take this feat a third time, the duration of each activation increases to one round per character level.



Hellish Fury [Tainted]

When you enter a rage, the evil manifest in your blood is visible in your very eyes.

Prerequisite: Ability to rage.

Benefit: Each time you begin to rage you may make an Intimidate check against a foe within 30 feet as a free action. Treat this as a demoralize opponent attempt (see the Intimidate skill description in *Core Rulebook 1*) and resolve it as normal, except that the opponent is shaken for one round per character level, rather than one round.

Normal: Demoralizing an opponent requires a standard action, can only be performed against a foe within melee reach, and the effect only lasts for one round.

Infernal Energy Immunity [Tainted]

You gain the energy immunity of your Infernal ancestors.

Prerequisite: Unlocked Major Infernal Heritage, at least 8 total levels of Infernal Heritage

Benefit: If you chose to be the descendent of demons at the time you unlocked your Infernal Heritage, you gain immunity to electricity. If you chose to be the descendent of devils, you gain immunity to fire.

Infernal Essence [Tainted]

Through time and patience, introspection, or simply fierce determination, you have you have come to master the darkness within your soul.

Prerequisites: The Darkness Within, Infernal Mind

Benefits: You have gained a semblance of control over your Infernal soul, granting you a +2 bonus on Will saves to resist the alignment shift due to The Darkness Within. You also develop the ability to communicate telepathically with Infernals within 30 feet.

Infernal Mind [Tainted]

Thanks to your Infernal heritage, your mind is very hard to control.

Prerequisites: Wis 13+.

Benefit: Your mind is protected against mental assault. You gain a +4 bonus on Will saves against charm and compulsion effects.

Special: Casters with the Alien Understanding feat are able to bypass some of this protection. Against charm and compulsion effects created by such casters you only receive a +2 bonus.

Infernal Poison Immunity [Tainted]

You gain the poison immunity of your Infernal ancestors.

Prerequisite: Infernal Energy Immunity

Benefit: You gain immunity to all poisons, both natural and magical.

Infernal Rage [Tainted]

You have learned to focus the Infernal evil, hatred, and anger running through your veins. Now, your blood no longer haunts you; it fuels you.

Prerequisites: Hellish Fury, character level 6+, unlocked Infernal heritage.

Benefit: Once per day, while raging, you may attempt to focus your anger and hatred to such a degree that you can act normally even while raging. When you have a normally forbidden ability, such as casting spells, which you wish to perform while raging, you may attempt a Will save as a free action. The DC for this save is 20 minus your total level of Infernal Heritage. If the check is successful you may perform that action. Otherwise you have failed to focus your anger, and may not perform that action, though you may continue as normal under rage. Each use of this ability lasts for the duration of your rage, but its use must be specified at the time you enter rage.

Special: You may take this feat more than once. Each additional selection of this feat adds one to the number of times per day it may be used, and subtracts 2 from the DC of the Will save to perform regular actions.

Infernal Taint [Background*, Tainted]

The taint of the Infernal in your blood is stronger than in most dark-kin, causing daemonic features to develop in you as time goes by. Even though these features make you seem more demonic than most other dark-kin, you can still pass as “normal” for your race if you take steps to hide the evidence of your true heritage.

Prerequisite: Dark-kin.

Benefits: Choose one of the following traits and apply the listed modifier; the exact physical appearance of each trait is left up to you. Each time you take this feat you incur an additional -1 penalty to your Unnatural Aura. You may only select each trait once, and all traits are extraordinary in nature.

- **Devil Eyes** – Your eyes have an aspect of the Infernal that cannot be mistaken or forgotten. You gain a +3 bonus on all Intimidate checks.
- **Massive Horns** – You sprout thick horns from your skull. They may be hidden by thick hair or by a hat or other covering. Your horns can serve as natural weapons, granting you a gore attack that deals 1d6 points of damage plus your Strength modifier.
- **Wicked Teeth** – Your teeth are sharp and deadly. Your teeth can serve as a natural weapon, granting you a bite attack that deals 1d4 points of damage plus your Strength modifier.
- **Prehensile Tail** – You gain a small, imp-like prehensile tail with a 5' reach. You can use your tail to pick up and carry unattended items of Fine and Diminutive sizes that weigh no more than 1 pound. Your tail is not strong enough to hold a weapon or to be used in combat in any other way. If you also take the Tail Attack feat you may make trip checks with your tail, albeit at a -2 penalty because your tail is weaker than you are. If you fail the trip check, you may be tripped in return.
- **Sharp Claws** – Your fingernails lengthen and become as sharp as daggers. Your claws can serve as natural weapons, granting you two claw attacks that deal 1d3 points of damage plus one-half your Strength modifier. As a double natural weapon you get one attack with each on a full attack (and no derivative attacks), and only one attack with a standard attack action.
- **Cloven Hooves** – Your feet crack and split and the soles become as hard as a horse's hooves. You gain a +3 bonus on all Balance checks.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times, so long as it was initially taken as a Background feat. Each additional time this feat is taken you may select another trait.

Lord Over My Lesser [Tainted]

The power of your Infernal taint cannot be denied as lesser Infernals bow to your will.

Prerequisites: Brood of the Devil King or Brood of the Demon Lords; Major Unlocked Infernal Heritage or blood rank 5+

Benefit: Once per day you may target an Infernal within 30 feet with a *dominate monster* effect. Additionally, once per day per point of Charisma modifier you may target Infernals with a *command* spell. These spells

are cast at your character level, even if that is normally lower than the minimum caster level for the *dominate monster* effect. Both effects may be resisted with a Will save (DC 10 + one-half your character level + your Charisma modifier). These are both spell-like abilities.

Natural Rejection [Tainted]

The strength of your taint is so strong that natural elements seem to reject you.

Prerequisite: At least three other Tainted feats.

Benefits: You receive a +2 bonus on Swim checks and a +1 bonus on saving throws against elemental effects (any effect with the Air, Earth, Fire or Water subtype).

No Place is Home [Background, General]

For dark-kin and gnomes, there is no land in which they are welcomed and readily accepted. Shunned by all, your forced wanderings have given you a diverse skill set.

Prerequisites: Dark-kin or gnome

Benefit: Upon taking this feat, you may select an additional base class as a favored class. The class must be one that you are qualified to take at 1st level.

Special: Members of the Brood of Caneturec may select a psionic class as an additional favored class despite not being able to take levels in psionic classes until they have gained the *Open Mind* bloodline ability.

Poison Blood [Background*, Blood, Tainted]

You can use your own blood as a virulent poison.

Requirement: Con 15+

Benefit: This supernatural ability allows you to coat your melee weapon with your own Infernal blood once per day, causing the weapon to poison your foes. Activating this ability is a standard action and deals you damage as if you had struck yourself with your own weapon. The weapon is then coated with your poison for 1 round per 2 character levels. Each successful hit with the weapon also removes one round from the duration. The poison can be resisted with a Fortitude save (DC 10 + one-half your character level + your Constitution modifier) and has a primary and secondary damage of 1 point of Constitution.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times, so long as it was initially taken as a Background feat. Each additional time this feat is taken you may use it an additional time each day. The second time you take this feat you gain the ability to elect to deal a critical hit to yourself; if you do then the primary and secondary damage of the poison are increased to 1d4 Constitution. Finally, the third time you take this feat, its duration increases to one round per character level.

Reduced Unnatural Aura [Tainted]

You have learned to temper the unnatural reaction that your fiendish blood naturally provokes in others.

Prerequisite: Blood rank 0, Locked Infernal Heritage, cannot have the ability to rage, cannot have The Darkness

Within feat (unless you also have To Quell the Whispers)

Benefit: The penalties from your Unnatural Aura are reduced by one-half (round down). If you take this feat as a Background feat, then you lose your Unnatural Aura completely.

Special: If you ever take The Darkness Within then you lose all benefits of this feat.

Sultry [Tainted]

You are descended from a line of Succubi, so the Tainted blood in your veins has a very powerful effect on those of the opposite sex.

Prerequisite: Cha 13+.

Benefit: Your wiles make you better at interacting with members of the opposite sex. You gain a +2 bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy and Gather Information checks with members of the opposite sex. However, you gain an equal penalty with all members of your sex due to the jealousy your skills cause.

Special: These benefits and penalties only apply to genetically compatible races. For example, a dark-kin would not gain these benefits or penalties with an Elorii.

Snarl [Tainted]

You know how to use your Infernal heritage to strike fear in others.

Prerequisite: Unlocked Infernal Heritage or blood rank 1+

Benefit: As a free action once per day you may snarl. This is a terrible, frightful noise that disconcerts foes within 20 feet. Those affected become *shaken* for 1d4 rounds unless they succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + one-half your character level + your Charisma modifier). This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

This ability can be used outside of combat to gain a +4 bonus on Intimidate checks for 1 minute per character level.

The Darkness Within [Background, Tainted]

When Beltine stirred her Cauldron and ladled out the pieces of your soul, several pieces possessed the taint and formed a malign presence. Despite this presence's lack of control over you it still whispers darkly in your mind, attempting to guide you to a path that will bring you great power but ultimately lead you to ruin.

Prerequisite: Dark-kin, may not possess a Patchwork Soul.

Benefit: The strength of your *unnatural aura* is higher than most, doubling the penalties from their base values. Additionally, this palpable aura gives you a -2 penalty on Diplomacy checks, but grants you a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks. Finally, the taint upon your soul is plainly visible to any who cast *detect evil* upon you; you are treated as having the Evil subtype but only for the purposes of *detect evil*.

Once per day you may surrender your will to the dark presence in your soul, allowing it to grant you unholy strength. You gain a +4 corrupt bonus to Strength and Constitution, which last for a number of rounds equal to 2 + your Charisma modifier. Once the power of the dark presence is spent, you must make a Will save (DC 10 + one-half your character level) or fall prey to the temptations of evil. If you fail the save your alignment shifts one step closer to Neutral Evil. Any change happens first along the Lawful-Chaos axis, before shifting along the Good-Evil axis. An *atonement* spell cast by a cleric of

priest of your original alignment can restore you, but you must meet the requirements of the spell and succeed on another Will save, as above, to shift your alignment back.

The Inferno Within [Metamagic, Tainted]

The fire within is embraced by your magic.

Prerequisite: Spontaneous caster, The Darkness Within

Benefit: Any spell you cast that has the Fire descriptor deals an extra point of damage for each die of damage. For example, a *scorching ray* deals 4d6+4 damage with each ray instead of 4d6. This use of the feat does not affect casting time.

Alternatively, you may increase the casting time to a full-round casting time and cast the spell from a slot at least two levels higher to deal an extra 1d6 fire damage per level of the spell. The extra point of damage per die also applies. For example, a 12th-level dark-kin sorcerer may cast *fireball* from a 5th-level or higher-level spell slot with a casting time of 1 full round to deal 10d6+3d6+13 fire damage.

To Quell the Whispers [Tainted]

Through time and patience, introspection, or simply fierce determination you have come to master the darkness within your soul.

Prerequisites: The Darkness Within, Infernal Mind, Iron Will, and Infernal Essence

Benefit: You are no longer required to make a saving throw after you call upon the unholy strength of The Darkness Within. You can also compel the dark presence to stay longer than before: the duration of your unholy strength is doubled.

Voice of Doom [Tainted]

You can wail, scream, or shout at volumes unattainable by mere mortals.

Prerequisite: Strength 15+.

Benefit: This supernatural ability, usable once per day, allows you to scream as a standard action, filling a 10-foot cone with an incredible sonic blast. Anyone caught within the blast must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + one-half your character level + your Strength modifier) or be stunned for 1 round. Creatures that are especially vulnerable to sonic attacks are stunned for 1d4 rounds instead. This attack also duplicates the area attack effects of the *shatter* spell. The caster level of the spell-like effect is equal to one-half your character level (minimum 1).

Special: You may gain this feat more than once. Each time you choose this feat, you may use the ability one additional time per day. If you take this feat a total of three times, then the duration of the stunning effect is doubled.

Withering Touch [Tainted]

Your touch withers and kills vegetation.

Prerequisites: Natural Rejection, non-good alignment, may not have levels in druid (or must be an ex-druid), may not have the Plant domain.

Benefit: Once per day as a standard action you may touch an area of vegetation no greater than one cubic foot per character level, which immediately withers and dies. If this is used against vegetation that is under a magical effect, such as *entangle*, it suppresses the magical effect for 1

minute (10 rounds). If this is used against a creature of the Plant type, it requires a successful melee touch attack and deals 1d4 points of damage per character level, with a Fortitude save for half damage (DC 10 + one-half your character level + your Wisdom modifier).

Wings of the Fiend [Tainted]

You have a pair of small bat-like wings protruding from your back.

Prerequisite: Daemonic Appearance (any one type).

Benefit: You grow wings that are 3 feet tall and have a 6-foot wingspan. While not capable of true flight, your wings are useful for jumping and hovering. You gain a +2 bonus on all Jump and Balance skill checks.

You also gain the spell-like ability to hover, as the *levitate* spell once per day, as a standard action; this is cast at your character level. This is a personal effect and only functions if you are lightly encumbered. You also incur an additional -1 penalty to your Unnatural Aura.

Armor and clothing fashioned for you costs an extra 50% to create. Previous armor and clothing may be refitted, at 25% of the base cost. Until such clothing and armor are refitted, they cannot be worn.

Wings of the Devil [Tainted]

You have large bat-like wings.

Prerequisite: Wings of the Fiend.

Benefit: Your wings have grown to a larger size, 5 feet tall with a 10-foot wingspan. You gain a fly speed of 40 feet with good maneuverability. This is an extraordinary ability and replaces the *levitate* portion of the Wings of the Fiend feat. By taking this feat, you incur an additional -2 penalty to your Unnatural Aura. Your wings are quite substantial and cannot easily be hidden, which will no doubt affect your interactions with the superstitious folk of Onara. You have a -10 penalty to Disguise checks to appear as anything except an Infernal.

New Core Class

The Order of the Ivory Bow

"I'm not a leader of beasts or demons, but of men. Go now and be men, and hunt down our Infernal foe."

Thus was the charter given to the Order of the Ivory Bow, sister organization to the Order of the Inner Demon, by the First Emperor. The Order of the Inner Demon, that branch of warriors that specialize in destroying Infernal enemies and their followers, does not accept dark-kin, as the rigors involved in holding a demon within themselves can too easily overwhelm a creature already tainted. Thus, the dark-kin who sought to assist the First Emperor in destroying the demon armies of the Time of Terror formed, with his blessing, their own Order of the Ivory Bow. Working with the Order of the Inner Demon, the Ivory Bow is the tracking arm of the Infernal

hunters. Trained by the Sarishan Church to empower their blood, they can use the Infernal taint within them, already sympathetic to the blood of their foe, as a deadly weapon.

During the First Emperor's campaign to drive the Infernal off Onara the Order of the Ivory Bow was vital, for only they could tell instinctively where the Infernal was hiding. Thus, rather than being able to stage a guerilla war against the forces of light, the Infernals were routed almost completely as the armies of light surged northward.

Although they are two distinct organizations, both the Order of the Inner Demon and the Order of the Ivory Bow are sponsored by the Temples of Sarish, and they have always been designed to work together, the Ivory Bow's tracking skills complementing the Inner Demon's Infernal power.

Adventurers: Even though the Time of Terrors is long gone, its legacy remains to plague Arcanis. Members of the Order of the Ivory Bow may be found anywhere in the Known Lands, rooting out Infernal cults and seeking out and destroying unbound Infernals roaming the land. Members of the Order are in constant communication both with their order, and the Order of the Inner Demon, coordinating their efforts.

Members of the Order of the Ivory Bow know that they are most effective when they are paired with a member of the Order of the Inner Demon, and it is quite common for members of these two orders to adventure together.

Characteristics: Members of this Order are a stark contrast to what is considered the stereotypical dark-kin. Their Infernal blood is not a weakness for these disciplined souls, but instead a weapon. Therefore they tend to be calm, reserved, and level-headed. Oftentimes this eerie calm puts off fellow adventurers, who wonder if the capacity for human emotion exists within these renowned hunters.

In reality, however, the Order of the Ivory Bow has simply been trained never to use their weapons until the time is right. When faced with an Infernal, members of this Order go through a complete transformation, their hot Infernal blood filling them with a cold, unbending rage. It is then that companions wonder which is truly the demon, for it seems that the Order of the Ivory Bow loves nothing more than to tear Infernals apart.

And yet, as soon as the foes have been vanquished, the Ivory Bow is again calm, collected, and ready to do their duty.

Background: It was a Cambion Tracker who first thought of using his blood as a weapon instead of a hindrance. All alone and surrounded by Infernals of the time of terror, he learned to use his blood to find weaknesses in his Infernal progenitors. When the First Emperor called his crusade of light, this tracker, whose name has been lost to history, went to him and offered not only his services, but to teach others. Thus the Order of the Ivory Bow was born, and the First Emperor taught others to look beyond the Taint of Flesh and into the heart of the man. Indeed, in the earliest days after Onara had been freed from the Infernal it is said that this story of the Cambion Tracker was used to prevent men from hunting and killing the dark-kin.

Unlike the Order of the Inner Demon, dark-kin of the Order of the Ivory Bow are not trained from birth. Instead, those who have reason to truly hunt the Infernal find their way to the ancient Sarishan Temple

of the Venator Invictus, the Invincible Hunter, nestled in the Corlathian Mountains near the Dwarven Enclave of Encali. Here they are put through a rigorous series of tests, often without realizing it, to see if they are capable of controlling and directing the Infernal powers in their blood. Those who pass the tests are given a full two years of rigorous training.

For the first few months the dark-kin is placed in increasingly more dangerous situations. Some initiates are lost during this process, more are unable to control the Infernal fires that rage within them and thus are dropped from the training. Those who succeed move on to the next step. Using bound Infernals, they are taught to recognize and accept their heritage, and the resonance between the Infernal and their blood. Using this resonance they learn to sense Infernal taint and hone their blood against it. They are also indoctrinated in the faith of Sarish, who provides the pillar of unshakable truth that allows them to resist the lies of the Infernal. By the time the two years of training are up, the new initiate has a cold determination to slay the Infernal, and is on the path towards awakening his blood to accomplish this desire.

As the member of the Order of the Ivory Bow advances, he continues his training with the Sarishans, eventually unlocking more powers with his blood.

Races: The Order of the Ivory Bow only accepts dark-kin as they are forbidden from joining the Order of the Inner Demon.

Alignment: Lawful good.

Special: Must worship Sarish, and possess the Tainted sub-type.

Hit Die: d8



Table LD-04: Order of the Ivory Bow

Class Level	Base				Special	Spells per Day			
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Aura of faith, discern Infernal, track	-	-	-	-
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Favored enemy (Infernal), reckless abandonment, bone bow	-	-	-	-
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3		-	-	-	-
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Channeling, turn Infernals	0	-	-	-
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Archery style	0	-	-	-
6th	+6/+1	+5	+2	+5	Infuse bone bow, blood magic	1	-	-	-
7th	+7/+2	+5	+2	+5		1	-	-	-
8th	+8/+3	+6	+2	+6	Blood arrows, blood ward	1	0	-	-
9th	+9/+4	+6	+3	+6	Evasion, taste of blood	1	0	-	-
10th	+10/+5	+7	+3	+7	Arrow of binding	1	1	-	-
11th	+11/+6/+1	+7	+3	+7	Swift tracker, archery style	1	1	0	-
12th	+12/+7/+2	+8	+4	+8	Aura of courage	1	1	1	-
13th	+13/+8/+3	+8	+4	+8		1	1	1	-
14th	+14/+9/+4	+9	+4	+9		2	1	1	0
15th	+15/+10/+5	+9	+5	+9	Greater blood ward	2	1	1	1
16th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+5	+10		2	2	1	1
17th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+5	+10	Archery style	2	2	2	1
18th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+6	+11		3	2	2	1
19th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+6	+11		3	3	3	2
20th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+6	+12	Strike at the heart of darkness	3	3	3	3

Class Skills

Skill points at each level: 6 + Int modifier.

The order of the ivory bow's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Infernal) (Int), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), and Use Rope (Dex).

Class Features:

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A member of the Order of the Ivory Bow is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, and with light armor and medium armor.

Aura of Faith (Ex): The power of a member of the Order's divine aura is equal to his member of the Order level plus any other class levels that stack with member of the Order for this purpose (e.g. cleric).

Discern Infernal (Sp): Beginning at 1st level, a member of the Order may discern the presence of any Infernal creature. This spell-like ability is similar to *detect evil*, emanating from the Member of the Order to a range of 60 feet.

Track: Members of the Order of the Ivory Bow gain Track as a bonus feat.

Favored Enemy (Ex): At 2nd level, due to extensive study of Infernal creatures and training in the proper techniques for combating them, the member of the Order gains a +2 bonus on Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks when using these skills against Infernals. Likewise, he gets a +2 bonus on weapon damage rolls against Infernals. At 5th level and every five levels thereafter the bonus increases by 2.

Reckless Abandonment (Ex): Once per day, when fighting against Infernals, the dark-kin may submit to his cold, unforgiving rage. This gives him a +2 to hit and dam-

age, but a -4 penalty to Armor class that last for one round per Order of the Ivory Bow level. Also, while raging a member of the Order of the Ivory Bow may not disengage from combat unless he succeeds on a DC 10 + number of Infernal foes Will save. Failing this save forces the dark-kin to take aggressive action that round against his foes, while success allows him to end his rage. Unbound Infernals count double when calculating the save DC.

Bone Bow (Ex & Su): At 2nd level, members of the Order of the Ivory Bow are taught how to fashion a special composite longbow from the thighbone of an Infernal they have slain. Part of the rituals involved in the crafting of this weapon links it to the dark-kin, a bond that is not easily broken. The bone bow can be adjusted, which takes one minute and has no cost, to take maximum advantage of the dark-kin's Strength. If they ever lose this bow, or it is destroyed, they must spend 30 days in meditation while crafting a replacement.

A member of the Order of the Ivory Bow who can channel (see below) can, as a swift action, channel into their bow. This particular use of channeling, which is a supernatural ability, does not require the dark-kin to roll a channeling check, or damage, it simply spends one channeling attempt for the day. Each time they do this it lasts for one round per character level and grants the bow (and any ammunition it fires) the ability to bypass the damage reduction of Infernals. This also causes the bow to deal real damage to any Infernal that has regeneration. While this normally has no effect on unbound Infernals, if the dark-kin spends three channel uses for the day, the effect is empowered to the point where it also applies to unbound Infernals.

Finally, the mystic connection between the dark-kin and the bow is such that if anyone else attempts to use the weapon, they will find themselves afflicted with a *demon curse*. This curse, effectively cast at the dark-kin's level, causes them to suffer a -6 to Dexterity so long as they retain possession of the bow. The dark-kin may, at his discretion, end the curse when the bow is returned to him, but he is not obligated to do so.

Channeling (Su): Beginning at 4th level, the member of the Order can channel divine energy as a cleric would channel positive energy. This may be used in conjunction with other feats or class abilities as described elsewhere. A Member of the Order may *channel* a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Charisma modifier.

Turn Infernals (Su): Starting at 4th level, a member of the Order may use their *channeling* ability to turn Infernals as a cleric turns or rebukes undead. A member of the Order with 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (Planes) gets a +2 bonus on turning & rebuking checks against Infernals. This ability only affects bound Infernals, and usually causes outright laughter and scorn if its use is attempted on unbound Infernals.

Archery Style: At 5th level, a member of the Order of the Ivory Bow gains a bonus feat chosen from the list below. He gains an additional bonus feat again at 11th and finally at 17th level, chosen from the list below. He must meet all prerequisites for the feat when it is selected; treats levels of Order of the Ivory Bow as Fighter levels for feats that require levels in Fighter as requirements.

Far Shot, Greater Weapon Focus (bone bow), Greater Weapon Specialization (bone bow), Improved Precise Shot, Manyshot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run, Weapon Focus (bone bow), Weapon Specialization (bone bow).

Blood Magic: At 8th level, members of the Order of the Ivory Bow gain the Empower Blood as a bonus feat (*Player's Guide to Arcanis* page 145) but it may only be used with spells cast from the *Order of the Ivory Bow* and *Holy Champion* spell lists.

Spells (Sp): Beginning at 4th level, members of the Order of the Ivory Bow gain the ability to cast a small number of divine spells, which are drawn from the Holy Champion and Order of the Ivory Bow spell lists. A member of the Order must choose and prepare his spells in advance. To prepare or cast a spell, a member of the Order must have a Wisdom score equal to at least 10 + the spell level. The Difficulty Class for a saving throw against a member of the Order's spell is 10 + the spell level + the member of the Order's Wisdom modifier. Like other spellcasters, a member of the Order can cast only a certain number of spells of each spell level per day. His base daily spell allotment is given on Table DC-13: The member of the Order. In addition, he receives bonus spells per day if he has a high Wisdom score. When Table DC-13: The member of the Order indicates that the member of the Order gets 0 spells per day of a given spell level, he gains only the bonus spells he would be entitled to based on his Wisdom score for that spell level. The member of the Order does not have access to any domain spells or granted powers, as a cleric does. A member of the Order prepares and casts spells the way a cleric does, though he cannot lose a prepared spell to spontaneously cast a *cure* spell in its place. A member of the Order may prepare and cast any spell on the member of the

Order spell list, provided that he can cast spells of that level, but he must choose which spells to prepare during his daily meditation. Through 3rd level, a member of the Order has no caster level. At 4th level and higher, his caster level is one-half his member of the Order level.

Infuse Bone Bow (Su): At 6th level, the dark-kin learns to infuse his bow with greater power. As a *swift* action, the dark-kin may channel power into his bow. This use requires the dark-kin to make a channeling check and damage sufficient to affect a creature of his level. If successful, his Bone Bow gains the *bane* enhancement against one of the following three groups for one round per character level: *Demons, Devils* or *Tainted non-Infernals*.

Blood Arrows (Su): At 8th level a member of the Order of the Ivory Bow never fears running out of arrows in the heat of battle. By running his fingers along his bowstring, and cutting deep into his flesh, the dark-kin can, as a free action, forge a bond between his bow and his blood. For the next minute, the dark-kin may form arrows from his blood, each arrow so created costs the dark-kin one hit point. Blood arrows deal damage as normal arrows but are destroyed whether they connect with a target or not.

If you have a *blood* feat you may apply the following additional effects. If you have Acid Blood, then your arrows do an extra 1d4 acid damage. If you have Fire Blood then your arrows deal an extra 1d4 fire damage. If you have Poison Blood then your arrows deal 1 Constitution damage on a critical hit. Having any of these feats multiple times does not affect the above damage.

Blood Ward (Su): Starting at 8th level, members of the Order of the Ivory Bow are taught how to forge wards from their own blood. This ward, normally used to protect individual homes or small villages, keeps Infernals at bay. Creating the ward is a complex task, requiring one day of work, 50 gp in incense, and three channeling attempts.

To create the ward, the dark-kin cuts his hand and uses his blood to draw a sigil, combining the holy symbol of Sarish with his personal glyph. One the glyph is complete, he imbues it with the holy energy of Sarish by making three channeling attempts. The most powerful of those attempts determines the power of the ward. The dark-kin also has the option of burning Constitution to raise the effectiveness of the ward. Each point of Constitution burnt raises the effective turning level of the ward by 2 levels. The dark-kin may burn at most 1 + original Constitution modifier in this manner. Ability burn cannot be restored by magical means; only natural healing (typically one per day) can restore the ability burn.

Once completed the ward remains in place for one month per level of the Order of the Ivory Bow. If Constitution was burnt above to increase the power of the ward, the same amount is added to the duration. The ward covers a 20-foot radius, increasing by 10 feet for each Constitution point that was burnt. If any Infernal enters this radius the ward automatically wakes everyone within its area, and the Infernal is treated as if turned by a channeling attempt at the power of the ward (see above). Once the ward has been tripped it remains in full effect for another 24 hours, before slowly fading away. While fading away the radius shrinks at 5 feet per hour, until the ward is finally gone.

Evasion (Ex): At 9th level, members of the Order of the Ivory Bow can avoid even magical and unusual attacks with great agility. If he makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save (such as a *fireball*), he instead takes no damage. Evasion can be used only if the dark-kin is wearing light armor or no armor. A

helpless member of the Order of the Ivory Bow does not gain the benefit of evasion.

Taste of Blood (Su): Starting at 9th level, a member of the Order of the Ivory Bow receives a bonus equal to half his class level (round up) to Survival checks he makes to track an Infernal creature he has injured with one of his Blood Arrows.

Once per day, if the dark-kin has lost the trail (either by failing a track check, or because the Infernal left no tracks) he may call upon Sarish to guide him. This guidance allows the dark-kin to sense when he is facing in the direction of the Infernal, but gives no indication of distance or other hazards between the dark-kin and the Infernal. This ability only functions for 1 hour per class level. If the Infernal is on another plane of existence, or has been destroyed in the interim, then the ability fails, but the dark-kin instinctually knows why the ability failed.

Arrow of Binding (Su): At 10th level, a member of the Order of the Ivory Bow can imbue an arrow with the ability to bind the next target struck with a *dimension anchor* effect. Once per round, as a swift action, the character may channel energy into one arrow. This use requires the dark-kin to make a channeling check and damage sufficient to affect a creature of his level. If successful, the arrow becomes charged with a *dimensional anchor* effect for one round. A target struck by the arrow is under the effect of a *dimensional anchor* effect for one minute per class level.

Swift Tracker (Ex): Beginning at 11th level, a member of the Order of the Ivory Bow can move at their normal speed while following tracks without taking the normal -5 penalty. He takes only a -10 penalty (instead of the normal -20) when moving at up to twice normal speed while tracking.

Aura of Courage (Su): Beginning at 12th level, a member of the Order is immune to fear (magical or otherwise). Each ally within 10 feet of his gains a +4 morale bonus on saving throws against fear effects. This ability functions if you are conscious, but not if you are unconscious or dead.

Greater Blood Ward (Su): At 15th level, a member of the Order of the Ivory Bow learns to channel greater quantities of Sarish's power into their Blood Ward. When creating a Blood Ward, the dark-kin can elect to instead create a Greater Blood Ward. This requires an additional two days of effort, another 950 gp in incenses and six more channeling attempts than a standard Blood Ward during each day. Thus, the total costs for a Greater Blood Ward is three days of effort, 1000 gp of incense, and nine channeling attempts on each of the three days.

Like creating a Blood Ward, a Greater Blood Ward makes use of a blood glyph. However, instead you must make nine channeling attempts, taking the highest. Again, you may burn Constitution to raise your channeling level. However, rather than gaining only 2 levels for each 1 Constitution, you gain 3 levels for each 1 Constitution burnt (but only when creating a Greater Blood Ward). The limit on how much Constitution may be burnt is increased to 5 + your original Constitution modifier, but if more than 1 + your original Constitution modifier is burnt you must make a DC 15 + Constitution burnt Fortitude save or have the excess Constitution burn become permanent. Like with ability burn, this permanent burn may not be healed magically.

Once in place, a Greater Blood Ward remains active for one year per level of the Order of the Ivory Bow. The radius of effect is increased to 100 feet, plus 25 feet per point of Constitution burnt during creation. The ward remains active for 48 hours after being tripped, and may be tripped three times before fading away.

Strike at the Heart of Darkness (Su): At 20th level, a member of the Order of the Ivory Bow gains the ability to strike down Infernals with a single shot from their bow. As a full round action the dark-kin may infuse and fire one arrow. This requires the dark-kin to channel against the Hit Dice of the target Infernal as they fire the arrow. They gain a bonus on the attack roll equal to the modifier to his channeling level. If the arrow hits, and the channeling damage is greater than or equal to the Hit Dice of the Infernal, then the Infernal is destroyed. If the arrow hit, but the channeling damage was less than the Hit Dice of the Infernal, then it must make a DC 30 Fortitude save or be destroyed. Even if it makes the save, it still takes damage from the arrow. This is a supernatural death effect.

Holy Champion Spell List (Source: *Player's Guide to Arcanis*): 1st level spells – *Bless, Bless Water, Bless Weapon, Create Water, Cure Light Wounds, Detect Poison, Divine Favor, Endure Elements, Magic Weapon, Read Magic, Resistance, Restoration, Lesser, Virtue*; 2nd level spells – *Bull's Strength, Delay Poison, Eagle's Splendor, Owl's Wisdom, Remove Paralysis, Resist Energy, Shield Other*; 3rd Level – *Cure Moderate Wounds, Daylight, Discern Lies, Dispel Magic, Heal Mount, Magic Weapon, Greater, Prayer, Remove Blindness/Deafness, Remove Curse*; 4th Level – *Break Enchantment, Cure Serious Wounds, Death Ward, Holy Sword, Mark of Justice, Neutralize Poison, Restoration*.

Order of the Ivory Bow spells: 1st Level – *True Strike*; 2nd Level– *Animal Messenger, Produce Flame, Protection from Evil*; 3rd Level – *Sending*; 4th Level – *True Seeing*.

New Prestige Classes

Black Silk Wearer

The legendary – some would say mythical – black silk wearer of the Haina lands is not a single individual, but a small, elite group of spies, infiltrators and (if necessary) assassins. They focus most of their attention on gentle 'guidance' of the Haina leaders, but if their 'advice' is not heeded, they are always willing to implement a more direct form of corrective action.

While they are most often associated with the black silk clothing that they wear to better blend into the night, they are more often encountered in the guise of simple peasants, fishermen, merchants or travelers. Of course, those that see them

in such disguises never know that they have encountered a black silk wearer, and may indeed work beside them every day for years without suspecting their true identity.

Hit Die: d6

Requirements

To qualify to become a black silk wearer, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Skills: Disguise 5 ranks, Hide 10 ranks, Move Silently 10 ranks.

Feats: Skill Focus (Hide), Skill Focus (Move Silently).

Special: Must make contact an existing black silk wearer and agree to serve the organization, without question or reward, for one full year. If the acolyte completes the year's service in competent fashion, and does not reveal the existence of the organization or his connection to it, he may begin to take levels in the prestige class.

Class Skills

The black silk wearer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Local) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Pick Pocket (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex) and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 8 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Black silk wearers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons. They do not gain any additional armor proficiencies.

Oath of Service: Upon joining the black silk wearers, the character must swear an oath to service the common people of Haina. To always be on guard for their welfare, and to act to better their lives. If this oath is ever broken the character is ejected from the black silk wearers, loses all supernatural and spell-like abilities of the class, and may take no further levels in Black Silk Wearer until they have gained redemption amongst the black silk wearers.

Hide in Plain Sight (Su): Black silk wearers can use the Hide skill even while being observed. As long as they are within 10 feet of some sort of shadow, black silk wearers can hide themselves from view in the open without anything to actually hide behind. They cannot, however, hide in their own shadows. Hide in plain sight is a supernatural ability.

Sneak Attack: This is exactly like the rogue ability of the same name. The extra damage dealt increases by +1d6 every two levels. If the black silk wearer gets a sneak attack from another source (such as rogue or assassin levels), the bonuses stack. **Blind-fight:** At second level, the black silk wearer receives Blind-Fight as a bonus feat. If she already has Blind-Fight, she may select any other feat that she meets the requirements for.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): A 2nd level and higher black silk wearer is adept at avoiding danger, even before his senses would normally make him aware of it. He retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. He does lose his Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.

If a character gains Uncanny Dodge from a second class (such as barbarian, or rogue), the character automatically gets improved uncanny dodge (see below).

Passwall (Sp): Starting at 3rd level the black silk wearer may use *passwall* once per day as a sorcerer of



her character level. This passage only lasts long enough for you to pass through it, At 6th level, she may use this ability twice per day and at 9th level it may be used three times per day.

Skill Mastery: At 4th level the black silk wearer is so certain in his ability to Hide and Move Silently that he may always take 10 on these skills, even while under stress or being distracted. At 8th level, the black silk wearer may select an additional 1 + Int modifier skills that he may also take 10 on while under stress or being distracted.

Swift and Silent (Ex): At 4th level and above, the black silk wearer can move at his full movement rate while hiding and moving silently.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Starting at 5th level, a black silk wearer can react to opponents on opposides of him as easily as a single attacker, preventing him from being flanked. This denies opponents with sneak attack him by using flanking attacks. The exception to this is a rogue at least four levels higher than the black silk wearer.

If a character gains uncanny dodge from a second class (such as a barbarian or a rogue), the character automatically gains improved uncanny dodge, and the levels from those classes stack to determine the minimum level required to flank the character.

Suggestion (Sp): At 6th level, the black silk wearer can, as a standard action twice per day, influence someone's actions merely by speaking. Treat this as a *suggestion* spell, except that the suggested action does not need to be reasonable, but it must be in the best interests of the common people whom the black silk wearer serves. If the effect is unreasonable the target receives a +5 bonus to the

Table LD-05: Black Silk Wearer

Class Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Oath of service, hide in plain sight, sneak attack +1d6
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Blind-fight, uncanny dodge
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Passwall 1/day, sneak attack +2d6
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Skill mastery, swift and silent
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Sneak attack +3d6, improved uncanny dodge
6th	+4	+2	+5	+2	Passwall 2/day, suggestion 2/day
7th	+5	+2	+5	+2	Sneak attack +4d6
8th	+6	+2	+6	+2	Blindsight, skill mastery
9th	+6	+3	+6	+3	Passwall 3/day, sneak attack +5d6
10th	+7	+3	+7	+3	Untouchable, suggestion 3/day

save, +10 if the GM feels the suggested action to be unfair or obviously lethal. The save DC is 10 + black silk wearer level + Charisma modifier. At 10th level this ability may be used three times per day.

Blindsight (Ex): At 8th level, the black silk wearer's hearing is acute enough that she gains blindsight with a range of 60 feet. Blindsight is described in *Core Rulebook III*. If the black silk wearer is denied her hearing, she loses the benefits of blindsight. Finally, if she breaks her oath, the benefits of blindsight are lost until she again qualifies to take levels in black silk wearer, despite it being an extraordinary ability. The blindsight of a black silk wearer is continuous and need not be activated.

Untouchable (Su): At 10th level the black silk wearer can become truly untouchable with the ability to come incorporeal. As a free action, the black silk wearer may elect to become incorporeal for up to five rounds per day. These rounds need not be consecutive, and may be divided between multiple uses. This ability affects only the black silk wearer and his equipment. Incorporeal is detailed in *Core Rulebook III*.

Descendant

Some of the Tainted, rather than rejecting their Infernal blood, embrace it. Via careful study, strict mental and physical regimens, and arcane rituals, they seek to bring out the full power – and the full horror – of their Taint.

The val'Mehan of Canceri saw this quest for self-knowledge as a positive pursuit, and quickly offered their aid and knowledge to those who sought to unlock the power of their blood. Those who managed to complete the grueling instruction of the val'Mehan, swearing fealty to their teachers with their own Tainted blood, reaped extraordinary rewards. They learned to accept their own nature, feeling at home within themselves as they never had before. The val'Mehan, for their part, gained valuable servants with some unique abilities.

In recent years, some of the dark-kin masters of this path have themselves taken on students, binding their apprentices to themselves as they themselves were bound to the val'Mehan. These individuals have formed a secretive organization known as the Inheritors, about which little is known apart from the name. The val'Mehan themselves are not happy about this, and are choosing their new students with a great deal of care.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a descendant, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any non-good.

Race: Dark-kin, cambion, or tiefling

Skills: Knowledge (Arcana) 5 ranks, Knowledge (Local: dark-kin) 8 ranks

Feats: Great Fortitude, Toughness

Special: Must find and swear fealty to a willing mentor, which must be either a val'Mehan of Canceri descent (with 12 ranks in Knowledge (Arcana) and Knowledge (Local: dark-kin), and 5 ranks in Knowledge (Local: val'Mehan)), an Infernal with 9 or more HD, or a 10th-level descendant.

Class Skills

The descendant's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Arcana) (Int), Knowledge (Local) (Int), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Descendants do not gain any additional weapon or armor proficiencies.

Bound to Serve (Ex & Su): Upon starting the path of the descendant, the character must, of his own free will, make an oath to serve his mentor and never seek to cause him harm. This is the only way in which the power of the Binder can flow between mentor and student. This is a blood oath sanctioned and empowered by the will of Sarish, and breaking this oath is a dreadful thing. If the descendant breaks the oath to his master, he begins to lose strength and life. Each day after breaking his oath, the descendant suffers one Strength drain and one Constitution drain. The descendant can end the accumulation of drain by making an atonement to his mentor. This does not restore the previous drain, nor is there any magical means to do so.

A common example of the oath:

I, [character name], swear by my blood to Sarish the Binder to never intentionally cause harm to [mentor's name] by word or deed, by action or inaction. Nor will I ever intention-

Table LD-06: Descendant

Class Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Bound to serve, descendant ability, unnatural presence
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Natural armor +2
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	Descendant ability, toughness
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Attribute increase
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Descendant ability, natural armor +4
6th	+4	+2	+2	+5	Menacing aura, toughness
7th	+5	+2	+2	+5	Descendant ability
8th	+6	+2	+2	+6	Attribute increase
9th	+6	+3	+3	+6	Descendant ability, toughness
10th	+7	+3	+3	+7	Natural armor +6, transcendence

Descendant Abilities

Unless otherwise specified, the caster level for all spell-like abilities is equal to the character's descendant class level.

- **Barbs (Ex)** (Prerequisite: Must be at least a 2nd-level descendant): The descendant's skin grows barbs, thorns or spikes. Treat these as armor spikes (1d6 damage, x2 critical, when grappling an opponent, may be used as an off-hand weapon). The descendant is considered to be proficient with his own barbs automatically. If the descendant wishes to grapple an opponent without doing barb damage, he suffers a -4 circumstance penalty to his attack rolls and grapple checks. All clothing and armor worn by the Descendant must be fitted to compensate for the barbs, increasing the cost by 50%. Existing armor can be refitted at a cost of 75% of the base armor cost. Such armor cannot be worn until it has been refitted. Should a descendant have both wings and barbs, their armor costs double the normal price, and can be refitted for the cost of the base armor.
- **Brimstone (Su)**: Twice per day, as a standard action the descendant may shroud himself in a fog of brimstone. All living creatures within 5 feet plus 5 feet per two descendant levels must make a DC 10 + 1/2 descendant class level + Constitution modifier Fortitude save or be nauseated. A creature that is nauseated and leaves the cloud remains nauseated for 1d4 rounds after leaving the cloud. If a living creature remains in the cloud it must again make the save on your turn. The cloud lasts one round for each descendant level you have. You are immune to your own brimstone, but not that of other descendants.
- **Charm Person (Sp)**: The descendant may attempt to charm a single humanoid target, as the *charm person* spell, three times per day. The save DC is 11 + Charisma modifier.
- **Claws (Ex)**: The descendant's fingernails lengthen into claws. Your claws can serve as natural weapons, granting you two claw attacks that deal 1d6 points of damage plus one-half your Strength modifier. As a double natural weapon you get one attack with each on a full attack (and no derivative attacks), and only one attack with a standard attack action. This ability may be taken a second time, increasing the claw damage to 1d8 points of damage plus one-half your Strength modifier.
- **Command (Sp)**: The descendant may attempt to command a single target, as the *command* spell, three times per day. The save DC is 11 + Charisma modifier.
- **Fast Healing (Su)**: The descendant heals one hit point of damage per hour, regardless of activity. This ability may be taken up to two additional times, adding an additional point to the damage healed per hour each time it is taken.
- **Fire Resistance (Ex)**: The character gains fire resistance 10. This may be taken a second time, giving the descendant fire resistance 15.
- **Hellfire (Su)** (Prerequisites: *Infernal Fire* and *Brimstone*): The descendant is able to fling balls of Infernal fire at his opponents as standard action. Each day, the descendant can throw fire for a total of 2d6 per descendant class level. This can be divided as the descendant sees fit, though each hellfire ball requires a separate action to throw. For example, a 7th-level descendant could throw seven 2d6 attacks, two 7d6 attacks, or one 14d6 attack, or any other combination adding up to no more than 14d6 per day. Unused damage dice do not "roll over" for future days. The descendant must make a successful ranged touch attack to strike their target, which may make a Reflex save (DC equal to 13 + one-half the character's descendant class level) for half damage. Anyone struck by a hellfire ball must also make a Fortitude save (same DC as above) or suffer nausea (-2 on all d20 rolls) for 1d4+1 rounds due to the brimstone stench of the hellfire. Only the single target struck by the hellfire will take damage or become nauseated; there is no area effect of this ability.

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Descendant Abilities (Continued)

- **Hellish Shriek** (Su): The descendant can let out an unearthly cry. Once per day, plus once per four descendant levels, the character may scream as a standard action. All other creatures, excluding Infernals, constructs and undead, within 30 feet of the descendant take 2d6 sonic damage and must make a DC 13 + 1/2 descendant class level Fortitude save be deafened for 2d6 rounds. This ability may be taken a second time to increase the sonic damage to 6d6, and make those who fail the save deafened permanently.
 - **Hellish Talons** (Su) (Prerequisite: *Claws* that do 1d8 damage): The first time this is taken, the descendant's claws are considered to be magic for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction. The second time this ability is selected they also count as evil, and the third time this ability is taken they also count as cold iron.
 - **Infernal Bargainer** (Ex) (Prerequisite: *Charm Person*): The descendant has learned the fine art of the honeyed tongue. When haggling, or making a deal, the descendant no longer suffers any penalties from low Charisma, nor does he suffer the penalty due to his Unnatural Presence. The descendant also gains a +5 competence bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks, but only when haggling or making a deal. The DC against the descendant's *charm person* effect increases to 13 + Charisma modifier.
 - **Infernal Fire** (Sp): The descendant may produce flame, as the spell, three times per day.
 - **Poison** (Ex) (Prerequisite: *Barbs* and/or *Claws*): The descendant's barbs or claws (chose one for which you have the prerequisite descendant ability) exude a poison. Any opponent damaged by the barbs/claws is injected with poison. The poison has a save DC of 10 + 1/2 descendant class level + Constitution modifier). The primary damage is 1d4 Dexterity, and the secondary damage is 1d6 Dexterity.
 - **Poison Immunity** (Ex) (Prerequisite: *Fire Resistance* and *Fast Healing*): The character gains immunity to all poisons.
 - **Projectile Barbs** (Su) (Prerequisite: *Barbs*): The descendant may now shoot his barbs at opponents. Treat the barbs as a ranged martial weapon that deal 1d6 damage, have a range increment of 20 feet and a critical threat range of 20 with a x2 critical multiplier. As fired weapons there is Strength modifier added to damage. As a martial ranged weapon, the descendant may apply any applicable missile feats he may have (such as Far Shot, Rapid Shot, Precise Shot, Point Blank Shot, etc). Each barb that is fired regrows at the end of the turn, and deals 1d3 non-lethal damage to the descendant when fired.
- If the descendant has the *Poison* ability, then the fired barbs are also poisoned, as described above.
- **Regeneration** (Ex) (Prerequisite: *Fast Healing* 3): The Descendant gains regeneration 3. The Descendant takes normal damage from acid and from sources that are silver, blessed or holy. This ability may be taken a second time to increase this to regeneration 5.
 - **Resilient Body** (Ex) (Prerequisite: Must be at least a 2nd-level descendant): The descendant gains damage reduction 1/-. This ability may be selected two additional times, each time increasing the amount of damage resisted by 1, for a maximum damage reduction of 3/-.
 - **Unnerving Gaze** (Su): The descendant can disturb and unsettle his opponents with a mere look. Once per day per descendant level, the descendant can allow his eyes to fill those around him with fear. All creatures, except Infernals, within 30 feet must make a DC 12 + 1/2 descendant class level + Charisma modifier Will save or be shaken for one round per two descendant levels. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.
 - **Wings** (Ex): The descendant grows wings, and can fly at a rate equal to their base ground movement with Poor maneuverability. This special ability can be taken multiple times. Each time it is taken, the descendant may either increase their flying speed by +10 feet or improve their maneuverability by one level (maximum good). All clothing and armor worn by the Descendant must be fitted to compensate for the wings, increasing the cost by 50%. Existing armor must be modified, costing 75% of its original value, before the winged descendant can wear it. Armor made for a character with both *barbs* and *wings* costs twice the normal price.
 - **Wounding** (Ex) (Prerequisite: *Claws* that do 1d8 damage): A hit from the descendant's claws can cause a bleeding wound. Anytime the descendant successfully confirms a critical hit with his claws on a creature, that creature suffers 1 Constitution damage.

ally cause harm to the val'Mehan, who are the true children of Sarish, by word or deed, by action or inaction. I further swear to obey [mentor's name] in all things, giving my life to him/her to mold so that I may embrace the truth of my heritage and life. I give thanks, and am beholden unto, the Binder and his children for the opportunity to discover who I am.

Descendant Ability: Upon gaining an odd-numbered level in the descendant prestige class, a character may choose one special ability from the list below. Unless otherwise stated in the description of the specific ability, no descendant ability may be chosen more than once by a given character. Some abilities

have additional requirements, which are also listed. These must be met.

Unnatural Presence (Ex): Those who have embraced their Taint by following the path of the descendant have an even stronger aura of wrongness than most of the Tainted. A descendant receives a -2 racial penalty to all Charisma-based skill checks with all humanoids and animals. Intimidation checks made against humanoids and animals do not receive this penalty, instead receiving a +2 racial bonus. This penalty stacks with any racial penalties the character may already have for being Tainted.

Natural Armor (Ex): At 2nd level, the descendant's skin becomes harder to pierce as it grows to resemble that of the character's Infernal ancestor. Whether the skin develops scales, feathers, a leathery texture or a metallic sheen, the character receives a +2 natural armor bonus. At 5th level, this bonus increases to +4, and at 10th level to +6.

Toughness (Ex): At 3rd level, and again at 6th and 9th levels, the descendant gains the Improved Toughness feat as a bonus feat.

Attribute Increase (Ex): At 4th level and again at 8th level, the strength of the descendant's Infernal ancestor manifests itself. The descendant add one to either his Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution scores. Treat this as a racial bonus.

Menacing Aura (Su): At 6th level and above, the descendant's fiendish nature projects an aura of fear around him. Opponents within 10 feet of the descendant to make a DC 10 + descendant level + Charisma Will save or be shaken for 1d6 rounds. Characters who successfully save are immune to that descendant's menacing aura for 24 hours. This is a mind-affecting fear effect to which Infernals are immune. Tainted and val'Mehan receive a +4 bonus on the save to resist this effect.

Transcendence (Ex): Having reached 10th level, the descendant's taint has infused his mortal form to the point where he is no longer truly mortal. The descendant's type changes to Infernal; however, do not recalculate saving throws, skills, base attack or hit points. Spells and effects that function only on humanoids, such as *hold person* no longer affect the descendant, but he is not subject to any effect that can target an Infernal including being turned or rebuked by clerics of Sarish.

If the descendant is non-Evil in alignment, then upon attaining 10th level, he must make a DC 25 Will save. If he fails the save he immediately becomes evil. Also, a descendant at this level is affected by holy water as if he were an evil outsider, regardless of actual alignment.

Finally, the descendant is not considered to be a Native Infernal, that is when he dies his soul will be sent to the nether planes to be reborn as a lemure, dretch or other weak Infernal. This means that the descendant may not be the subject of *raise dead*, or *resurrection* spells. Indeed, it requires a *true resurrection*, *wish* or *miracle* spell to return the descendant to life at this time.

Hellrider

As a rule, the Tainted have little success with horses, or indeed with mounts of any kind. Animals seem to sense the foul and alien blood of the Tainted, and have no desire to bear them anywhere. Sufficiently persistent or skilled Tainted can coerce a horse into carrying them, and may eventually develop a rapport with the animal, but will never develop the remarkable bond that an untainted rider can share with his mount.

However, there are beasts, which will bear the Tainted without complaint – because they too bear the blood of the damned within their veins. Nightmares, hell-horses, fiendish horses and other partly Infernal mounts have no qualms about bearing an Infernal rider, but are far more difficult to tame than any mere horse. Those Tainted who manage to break such a creature to their will can enter the rarefied ranks of the Hellriders.

A few rare mortals, mostly among the Riders in the Sealed Lands, have managed to become Hellriders as well, but the path is far more difficult for them, since their fiendish mounts have no reason to fear or respect their would-be riders until they are forcibly made to.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

To qualify to become a hellrider, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.



Table LD-07: Hellrider

Class Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Chosen mount, empathic link, versatile rider
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Advance mount, saddle sense
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Aid mount, mount feat
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Advance mount, mount immunity
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Mount feat
6th	+6	+5	+5	+2	Advance mount
7th	+7	+5	+5	+2	Mount feat, share power
8th	+8	+6	+6	+2	Advance mount
9th	+9	+6	+6	+3	Mount feat
10th	+10	+7	+7	+3	Advance mount

Alignment: Must be within one step of the chosen mount's alignment along both the good/evil and law/chaos axes (i.e., a good-aligned hellrider cannot ride an evil-aligned mount).

Skills: Handle Animal 8 ranks, Ride 10 ranks.

Feat: Mounted Combat, Skill Focus (Handle Animal)

Special: Must possess a fiendish mount with HD equal to or less than the would-be hellrider's character level. The mount must be physically capable of carrying the character, must be at least one size category larger than the character, and must either be an evil outsider or be descended from one (e.g., a hell-horse, nightmare, fiendish horse, half-fiend/half-horse, howler, or other appropriate creature at the GM's discretion).

Class Skills

The hellrider's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Animal Empathy (Cha, exclusive skill), Balance (Dex), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Profession (Wis), and Ride (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Hellriders gain proficiency with light and heavy lances if they are not already proficient with them. They do not gain any additional armor proficiencies.

Chosen Mount (Ex): The hellrider may designate any one fiendish mount he has previously ridden as his chosen mount. The mount must be tamed, hand-raised, magically controlled, or otherwise made willing to bear the character. A hellrider can only have one chosen mount at a time. If the chosen mount is ever killed or otherwise lost, the character may not use any of the special abilities gained from this class until he obtains a new mount that meets the above criteria. In addition, any feats or improvements assigned to the lost mount are not transferred to a replacement mount.

It is important to note that fiendish mounts are, as a rule, considerably more intelligent and strong-willed than normal horses or other mounts. Unless they are magically controlled in some fashion, which can lead to problems of its own, mounts that are mistreated, ignored, abused or humiliated will have no compunction about leaving the character and taking their newfound feats and abilities with them. While the specifics of any such conflict are left to the GM, it should always be remembered that the hellrider's mount, even more so than a familiar or paladin's

warhorse, is not a prop or a combat accessory, but an independent character.

Empathic Link (Su): The hellrider has an empathic link with his mount out to a distance of up to one mile. The hellrider cannot see through the mount's eyes, but they can communicate telepathically. Even intelligent mounts see the world differently from humans, so misunderstandings are always possible.

Versatile Rider (Ex): At first level, hellriders gain the ability to use their Animal Empathy and Handle Animal skills on their mount and any creatures of the same type without penalty, even if they are not normally applied to that type of creature.

Advance Mount (Ex): At every even-numbered level, the hellrider may advance his chosen mount by one hit die, up to the maximum listed in the mount's monster listing. The mount receives all the standard benefits for this advancement as listed in Core Rulebook III. In addition, each time it is advanced with this ability the chosen mount gains +2 natural armor and +1 to any one attribute of the hellrider's choice. If the chosen mount that was advanced is ever killed or otherwise lost, these improvements are likewise lost and may not be transferred to a new mount, though future improvements may be assigned to a new mount as applicable.

Saddle Sense (Ex): At 2nd level, the hellrider gets a +2 competence bonus on any Ride checks made with respect to his chosen mount.

Aid Mount (Ex): At 3rd level and above, the hellrider may aid his chosen mount up to once per round as a standard action. By using the aid another action, he may provide a +4 bonus (twice the usual amount) to his mount's armor class or to a single attack roll attempted by the mount. Alternatively, he may add +4 to any single skill check attempted by the mount, or a +10 competence bonus to the mount's speed for one round. Either of these latter uses requires a DC 20 10 Ride check by the hellrider.

Mount Feat (Ex): At 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th levels, the hellrider may grant his chosen mount one feat from the list of "mount feats" below. This does not count against the limit of feats that the mount can possess, but the mount must meet any appropriate prerequisites. Training the mount to use the feat takes 28 days. If the chosen mount to which these feats were

granted is ever killed or otherwise lost, these feats are likewise lost and may not be transferred to a new mount, though future feats may be assigned to a new mount as applicable.

Mount Immunity (Su): At 4th level and above, the hellrider is considered immune to any area-effect spells or powers used by his chosen mount, as long as the mount itself is immune to the power. For example, a 4th-level hellrider riding a howler would not be affected by the creature's howl, and one riding a nightmare would be able to see through the smoke breathed out by his mount. However, a hellrider whose half-fiend/half-horse mount used its *unholy blight* ability would be subject to the effects of the spell based on his alignment, since the mount has no special immunity to its own ability.

Share Power (Su): At 7th level, the hellrider learns to use his mount's inherent abilities to his own advantage. Each round during which he is riding his chosen mount, the hellrider may, as a free action, choose any one ability from the list below that his chosen mount possesses. The hellrider is considered to also have that ability for as long as he remains mounted, or until he changes his selection. Abilities that may be shared include: blindsight, damage reduction, energy resistance (only one type per round), immunities (only one per round), scent or spell resistance.

Hellrider Mount Feats List

Alertness, Blind-Fight, Blood Scales, Combat Reflexes, Die-Hard, Dodge, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Toughness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Multiattack, Power Attack, Run, Toughness (may be taken more than once), Trample, Weapon Focus (may be taken more than once, but for a different natural weapon each time).

Infernal Harmonist

The path of the bard is not a welcoming one for the children of the damned. Their presence is so uncomfortable that the audience rarely relaxes enough to enjoy the performance. There are a few, however, who manage to hear the mournful, wicked songs coursing through their blood, and find a way to sing them for others. They are not, however, happy songs.

These rare but masterful songsters hear the cacophony of the damned, learning to translate it into a sublime symphony capable of arousing emotions that can haunt an audience for days. They call themselves the Infernal harmonists, for they have learned to hear and reproduce the subtle music found within the chaos of their otherworldly ancestors.

Over the past century, a



few val'Mehan bards, drawing upon their ties to the Binder, have also learned to hear the haunting refrains that the harmonists manifest. While rare, there are a few Val'Mehan students that seek out the masters of this musical form.

Hit Die: d6

Requirements

To qualify to become an Infernal harmonist, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Dark-kin, cambion, tiefling, or val'Mehan.

Skills: Knowledge (Arcana) 5 ranks, Knowledge (Local: dark-kin) 5 ranks, Perform (any one) 10 ranks.

Feat: Skill Focus (Perform)

Spells: Able to cast 2nd level arcane spells.

Languages: Must speak Infernal.

Special: Must have the Bardic Music class ability.

Class Skills

The Infernal harmonist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (Int), Spellcraft (Int), and Use Magic Device (Cha).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Table LD-08: Infernal Harmonist

Class Level	Base				Special	Spells per Day
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save		
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Greater bardic knowledge, greater bardic music, Infernal harmony	
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Hell song	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Songs of the damned	
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Unnerve	+1 level of existing class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Songs Infernal	
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Despairing wail	+1 level of existing class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Fire and brimstone	
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Symphony of the damned	+1 level of existing class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Ancestor's call	
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Despair	+1 level of existing class

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Infernal harmonists do not gain any additional weapon or armor proficiencies.

Spells per Day: An Infernal harmonist continues advancing in spellcasting ability as well as gaining the abilities of his new class. When an Infernal harmonist gains a new even-numbered level, the character gains new arcane spells per day as if he had also gained a level in whatever arcane spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. This essentially means that he adds half his Infernal harmonist level (rounded down) to the level of some other spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly. If a character had more than one spellcasting class before he became an Infernal harmonist, he must decide to which class he adds each level of Infernal harmonist for purposes of determining spells per day when he adds the new level.

Greater Bardic Knowledge: The levels gained as an Infernal harmonist stack with the character's bard levels for purposes of bardic knowledge checks.

Greater Bardic Music: The levels gained as an Infernal harmonist stack with the character's bard levels to determine the number of times per day that bardic music can be used.

Infernal Harmony (Su): The harmonist can use the bardic music abilities of *fascinate* and *suggestion* on outsiders, even if they are normally immune to such effects.

Hell Song (Su): By singing to a flame, an Infernal harmonist can cause it to diminish in size to as small as a candle, or flare up brightly. This does not change the heat or intensity of the flame, but does change the amount of light that is produced. This ability does not spend any uses of bardic music, but it can only be used so long as you have at least one use remaining for the day.

Songs of the Damned (Sp): The harmonist's music has the power to *fascinate* the Infernal hordes. The harmonist can *fascinate* up to 3 times his harmonist level in Hit Dice of Infernals, who must be within 270 feet. This ability may be used even once combat has started, or while nearby distractions exist, but otherwise behaves as the *fascinate* ability of a Bard with the exception of the targets, the range and the fact that this use requires three bardic music uses.

Unnerve (Ex): The harmonist's haunting tunes can unnerve their enemies. All opponents within 60 feet of the harmonist who can hear the music, which takes a standard action to play, must succeed on a Will save or suffer a -1 morale penalty to attacks, saves, skill checks and damage rolls; opponents who are not immune to fear also suffer an additional -1 penalty on saves versus fear effects. The save DC for this effect, which uses two uses of bardic music to activate, is the result of the harmonist's Perform check.

Songs Infernal (Sp): The harmonist can temporarily invoke the fires of damnation with his songs. By spending one bardic music use he may produce a *flame strike* effect, save that instead of half of the damage being holy, it is instead unholy damage. This effect is cast at his bardic music caster level, and has a save DC of 13 + harmonist's ranks in Perform.

Despairing Wail (Ex): The harmonist's songs are able to fill opponents with utter hopelessness. One target per three harmonist levels can be affected by this ability, which spends three bardic music uses. The victims must make a Will save with a DC equal to the result of the harmonist's Perform check. If they fail, they suffer a -3 morale penalty to attacks, saves, skill checks and damage rolls; any target who is not immune to fear also suffers an additional -3 penalty on saves versus fear effects.

Fire and Brimstone (Sp): The harmonist may fill a space with the fires of damnation for a period of time. Once per day, by spending three bardic music uses the harmonist may produce a *firestorm* effect as a druid whose caster level is that of his bardic music. The save DC is 13 + harmonist's ranks in Perform.

Symphony of the Damned (Su): The harmonist can weave a *suggestion* into the Songs of the Damned, affecting those who have already been fascinated by the latter ability. The harmonist must be able to simultaneously sing or chant while playing his instrument (or be playing an instrument that allows multiple effects of bardic music to be used at once). All creatures under the effect of Songs of the Damned must make a second Will save (at the same DC as Songs of the Damned). Any that fail will act upon the *suggestion* (as the spell) given by the harmonist; the harmonist must issue the same *suggestion* to all affected creatures. As with Songs of the Damned,

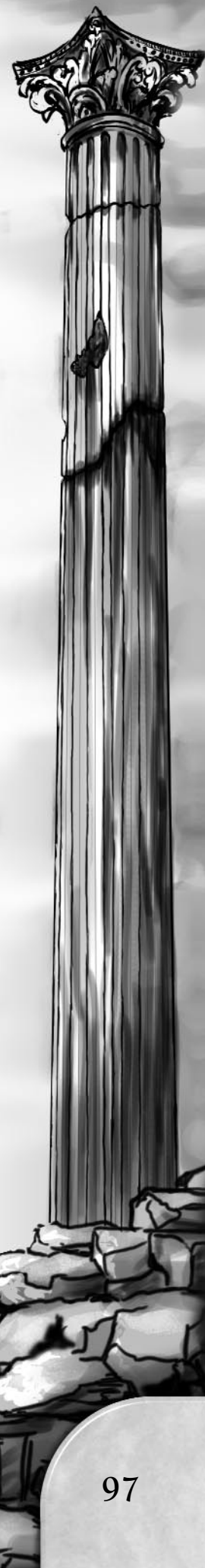


Table LD-09: Infernal Berserker

Class Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Intense rage 1/day
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Sudden fury, bonus feat
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Bonus feat
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Intense rage 3/day
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Bonus feat
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Fanatical rage 1/day
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Bonus feat
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	Fanatical rage 3/day
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Bonus feat
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Demonic rage

this ability can be used once hostilities have begun. It costs three bardic music slots to use this ability in addition to those already used to start Songs of the Damned.

Ancestor's Call (Sp): The harmonist may call upon his Infernal ancestors for aid. The Harmonist gains the ability to summon Infernals once per day as per the spell *summon monster VII* by spending two bardic music uses. Only Infernal creatures can be summoned with this ability and the caster level is the character's bardic music caster level.

Despair (Ex): The harmonist's song evokes the utter hopelessness of the damned, and can render one opponent useless as they sink deeply into despair and depression. The harmonist can start the song as a standard action, using four bardic music uses, and targeting any sentient creature within 30 feet. The target can make a Will save to resist the effect, with a DC equal to the result of the harmonist's Perform check. If the target fails, he suffers a -2 morale penalty on attacks, saves, skill checks and damage rolls, additionally if the target is not immune to fear he suffers an additional -2 penalty on saves versus fear.

The harmonist may maintain this effect but the target gets another Will save each round, albeit with his new penalty, against the original DC. For the first two additional rounds in which they fail, the penalties above increase by 2 (-2 on the first round, -4 on the second round, -6 on the third round). On the fourth round the target becomes *slowed* and only receives a standard action, and on the fifth round and onwards the target collapses in despair, unable to attack, cast spells, or manifest powers and should be considered to stunned.

If at any time the target makes one of the Will saves the effect is ended. The harmonist may maintain the effect as long as they wish, but it ends on their action of the round they cease to concentrate on the effect.



Infernal Berserker

Most dark-kin, and many other Tainted, spend most of their lives struggling to control the fierce, insensate rage that burns within them. Paroxysms of fury are set off by the slightest insult or setback, and the Tainted often find themselves hurting or even killing those few individuals who they care for, and who care for them. As a result, most try to lock their anger away, though few succeed for long.

The Tainted who follow the path of the berserker have chosen a different route. They have learned to channel their Infernal rages into incredible deeds of prowess on the battlefield, which actually seems to help them maintain

Table LD-10: Scourge

Class Level	Base				Special
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Bonus feat, deadly lash, penetrating sting
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Bonus feat, defensive strike
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Bonus feat, stunning blow
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Bonus feat
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Bonus feat, whiplash

their self-control when not in combat. This seems like an ideal path for the Tainted, but the cost to their health – and possibly their soul – is considerable.

Hit Die: d12

Requirements

To qualify to become a berserker, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Dark-kin, cambion, or tiefling.

Feats: Iron Will.

Base Fortitude Save: +6 or better

Special: Must be able to rage as a class ability.

Class Skills

The berserker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Survival (Wis) and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Berserkers do not gain any additional weapon or armor proficiencies.

Intense Rage (Ex): Starting at 1st level, a berserker can enter an intense rage once per day. This rage does not count toward the berserker's normal uses of rage, but functions as a normal rage with the following changes. The berserker may select, when he enters the intense rage, to either increase his Strength by an additional +2, to increase his Constitution by an additional +2 or to increase the bonus to his Will save by an additional +2; he may not select all three, nor may he change his decision once made.

Additionally, the berserker gains a limited, but potentially dangerous, version of Die-Hard. The berserker continues to function as normal, even after reaching 0 hit points. The berserker continues to lose 1 hit point each round, in addition to any damage he may take from combatants. Once the berserker reaches –5 hit points or lower, he falls unconscious, and continues to bleed until stable or dead.

At 4th level and higher the berserker may enter an intense rage three times per day.

The bonuses granted by Intense Rage do not stack with those of Rage, Fanatical Rage or Demonic Rage.

Sudden Fury (Ex): At 2nd level and above, the berserker may enter a rage, including an intense, fanatical or demonic rage, as a free action.

Bonus Feat: At 2nd level, 3rd level, and every other level thereafter, the berserker gains a free bonus feat. This feat must be chosen from the following list: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Hellish Fury, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Improved Toughness, Power Attack,

Toughness, or Voice of Doom.

Fanatical Rage (Ex): Beginning at 6th level, a berserker may enter a fanatical rage once per day in addition to his daily quota of normal and intense rages. A fanatical rage is just like a normal rage, except that the ability bonuses are +6 each instead of +4, and the Will save bonus is +4, rather than +2. Also, a berserker in a fanatical rage remains conscious and active until he dies, even when reduced to fewer than 0 hit points. The berserker takes 1 damage in each round in which he acts when he has fewer than 0 hit points. At 8th level and above, a berserker may enter a fanatical rage three times per day.

The bonuses granted by Fanatical Rage do not stack with those of Rage, Intense Rage or Demonic Rage.

Demonic Rage (Su): Once per week, a 10th level berserker may channel the fury of his Infernal ancestors and enter a demonic rage. While in this rage the berserker's type changes to Infernal, although he is unaffected by effects that specifically target Infernals (such as *banishment*, *turn Infernals*, etc). This rage grants +8 to Strength, +8 to Constitution, –4 to Intelligence, –4 to Wisdom, +10 to Intimidate, and +10 to Will saves. The berserker gains damage reduction 3/- (this doesn't stack with existing damage reduction, and simply replaces it). Finally, he continues to remain conscious and act normally even when below 0 hit points; each round in which he takes an action when below 0 hit points he loses an additional hit point.

Demonic rage lasts until the berserker is dead or otherwise incapable of acting. If there are no foes present, the berserker must attack the nearest living creature, including allies, as the darkness of his Infernal heritage consumes him. If the berserker wishes to end the Demonic Rage, he must succeed on a DC 30 Will save, which may be attempted once per round as a free action. Finally, once the rage ends, the berserker immediately falls into a deep sleep for one hour per round spent in the rage. If woken before that time is up, the berserker is fatigued until he can continue his rest.

The bonuses granted by Demonic Rage do not stack with those of Rage, Intense Rage or Fanatical Rage.

Scourge

Scourges are the slave-keepers of the Infernal lords, responsible for training and controlling their charges. They are also charged with tracking down and returning any escaped slaves. Most Scourges are themselves Infernals or tieflings, though some dark-kin have begun to take up the role in recent generations.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a scourge, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any non-good.

Skills: Intimidate 10 ranks, Listen 3 ranks, Spot 3 ranks.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Expertise, Skill Focus (Intimidate).

Special: Must be proficient with the whip, and must own at least one whip.

Class Skills

The scourge's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Tumble (Dex), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor

Proficiency: Scourges do not gain any additional weapon or armor proficiencies.

Bonus Feat: Each time he gains a level, the scourge may choose a bonus feat from the following list: Improved Critical (whip), Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Skill Focus (any one class skill), Track, Weapon Finesse (whip), Weapon Focus (whip), Weapon Specialization (whip). Note that the scourge may take the Weapon Specialization (whip) feat even if he does not have four or more levels as a fighter; however, all other prerequisites for all feats still apply.

Deadly Lash (Ex): The scourge may do normal damage rather than subdual damage with his whip. In addition, the scourge adds his class level to all damage done with a whip, whether normal or subdual.

Penetrating Sting (Ex): Normally, a whip does no damage to targets with an armor bonus of +1 or better or a natural armor bonus of +3 or better. The scourge, trained in the precise use of his whip to strike vulnerable areas, adds double his scourge class level to each of these thresholds before determining what targets he can harm. For example, a 1st level scourge can damage any target with less than a +3 armor bonus and less than a +5 natural armor bonus. At 5th level, he can damage anyone with less than a +11 armor bonus and less than a +13 natural armor bonus.

Defensive Strike (Ex): At 2nd level and above, the scourge does not provoke an attack of opportunity by attacking with a whip, even if doing so while standing in a threatened square.



Stunning Blow (Ex): At 3rd level, the speed of the scourge's whip is sufficient to stun foes with the deafening cracks it makes. Up to once per round, but no more than once per scourge level per day, the scourge may attempt to stun an opponent with a whip attack. The scourge must declare that he is using this ability before making the attack roll (thus, a missed attack roll ruins the attempt). A foe struck by the scourge is forced to make a Fortitude save (DC 15 + the character's scourge level). In addition to receiving normal damage, if the save fails, the opponent is stunned for 1 round. Enemies that are immune to sonic attacks are likewise immune to this ability.

Whiplash (Ex): By carefully placing his blows, the scourge can hamper his foes as well as injure them. Whenever a scourge hits an opponent with his whip, he may forego normal damage and instead inflict one point of either Strength or Dexterity damage. This attack cannot reduce an ability score below 1.

Sentinel

Almost completely unique to the dwarves of Tir Betoq, the members of this class are devoted to guarding the high passes of the Godswall – or wherever else they might happen to be – against the forces of the Infernal. While some call them bullheaded, fanatical or worse, none can doubt their devotion to the cause of keeping Onara safe from fiends of all descriptions.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

To qualify to become a sentinel, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Any good.

Base Attack Bonus: +7 or better.

Skills: Knowledge (Religion) 4 ranks.

Feats: Iron Will.

Special: The character must agree to spend at least six months when first entering the prestige class, and at least three months out of every future year, guarding the Godswall (or other Infernal-plagued area at the GM's discretion) against marauding fiends. The character must also swear never to retreat from battle against an evil outsider while anyone else is still in danger from it.

Class Skills

The sentinel's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (Religion) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Sentinels are proficient with all martial weapons, light, medium and heavy armor, and all shields.

Detect Evil (Sp): At will, the sentinel can detect evil as a spell-like ability. This ability duplicates the effects of the spell *detect evil*, using the sentinel's character level as the caster level.

Fiendslayer (Ex): The sentinel gains a +1 modifier as a morale bonus to all attack rolls, damage rolls, and Spot, Listen and Search checks against Infernals. The bonus also applies to Will saves made against spells or spell-like abilities cast by Infernals, and to opposed ability checks made against evil outsiders. The bonus increases by +1 each time the sentinel gains an odd-numbered class level.

Spells: Beginning at 1st level, a sentinel gains the ability to cast a small number of divine spells. To cast a spell, the sentinel must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level, so a sentinel with a Wisdom of 10 or lower cannot cast these spells. Sentinel bonus spells are based on Wisdom, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the sentinel's Wisdom modifier. When the sentinel gets 0 spells of a given level, such as 0 1st-level spells at 1st level, he gets only bonus spells. (A sentinel without a bonus spell for that level cannot yet cast a spell of that level.) The sentinel's spell list appears below. A sentinel has access to any spell on the list and



can freely choose which to prepare, just like a cleric. A sentinel prepares and casts spells just as a cleric does (though the sentinel cannot spontaneously cast cure or inflict spells).

Sentinels choose their spells from the following list:

1st level—*Bless*, *bless water*, *bless weapon*, *divine favor*, *doom*, *endure elements*, *protection from evil*, *remove fear*, *resistance*, *shield of faith*.

2nd level—*Aid*, *bull's strength*, *delay poison*, *magic vestment*, *pierce*, *resist elements*, *spiritual weapon*.

3rd level—*Dispel magic*, *greater magic weapon*, *invisibility purge*, *magic circle against evil*, *prayer*.

4th level—*Dismissal*, *dispel evil*, *divine power*, *hallow*, *holy sword*, *true seeing*.

Fear No Evil (Su): A sentinel of second level or higher is immune to all fear effects generated by Infernals. Allies within 10 feet of the sentinel gain a +4 morale bonus to saving throws against any such effects as well.

Holy Ward (Su): Beginning at fourth level, the sentinel gains spell resistance equal to 11 + his class level against all spells and spell-like effects cast by Infernals.

Heart of the Heavens (Su): At tenth level, the sentinel is able to inspire his allies to incredible feats of prowess when fighting Infernals. All allies within 30 feet of the sentinel are considered to have one level of this prestige class, regardless of prerequisites, while fighting evil outsiders. They do not get the sentinel's spellcasting ability or additional skill points and feats, but receive all other bonuses

Table LD-11: Sentinel

Class Level	Base				Special	Spells per Day			
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Detect evil, fiendslayer +1, spells	0	--	--	--
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Fear no evil	1	--	--	--
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Fiendslayer +2	1	0	--	--
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Holy ward	1	1	--	--
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Fiendslayer +3	1	1	0	--
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2		1	1	1	--
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Fiendslayer +4	2	1	1	0
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2		2	1	1	1
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Fiendslayer +5	2	2	1	1
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Heart of the heavens	2	2	2	1

of this virtual level (base attack bonus, hit points, saving throw modifiers, the fiendslayer ability at +1 and *detect evil*). Eligible allies within 30' who have levels in the sentinel prestige class add one to their effective sentinel class level (maximum of 10) while fighting evil outsiders. Again, this does not affect their spellcasting ability, but does grant all the other benefits that would be gained by virtue of this "extra" level. If the sentinel is killed or otherwise incapacitated, all benefits gained by this ability immediately end unless there is another tenth-level sentinel in range (a ninth-level sentinel who is effectively tenth level due to this ability does not qualify).

Summoner

Certain wizards and priests, devotees of Sarish the Binder, specialize in the potent and often addictive practice of summoning and binding outsiders. The path of the summoner bears great risks, but can lead to great power.

Hit Die: d4

Requirements

To qualify to become a summoner, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Skills: Knowledge (Arcana) 10 ranks, Spellcraft 10 ranks.

Feats: Alien Understanding, Skill Focus (Knowledge (Arcana)), Spell Focus (Conjuration).

Languages: Must speak Infernal

Spell Casting: Must be able to cast 4th level spells, and 10 Conjuration spells including *Summon Monster I-IV*.

Special: Divine casters must worship Sarish and have access to the Daemonology domain. Non-divine casters must accept Sarish as their patron deity.

Class Skills

The summoner's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (Int), and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Summoners do not gain any additional weapon or armor proficiencies.

Spells per Day: A summoner continues advancing in spellcasting ability as well as gaining the abilities of his new class. When a summoner gains a new level, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in whatever spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. This essentially means that he adds the level of summoner to the level of some other spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly. If a character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a summoner, he must



Table LD-12: Summoner

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Circle mastery, summoning specialization	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Negotiate +2	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Enhanced summons	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Advanced summons, Infernal favor +1	+1 level of existing class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Proficient summons, negotiate +4	+1 level of existing class
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Proficient calling	+1 level of existing class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Banish (1/day)	+1 level of existing class
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Negotiate +6, spontaneous summons	+1 level of existing class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Infernal favor +2	+1 level of existing class
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Summons mastery, negotiate +8	+1 level of existing class

DC	Desired Favor	Price
15	Kill a creature of less than 5 HD that is unprotected; reveal difficult to find Knowledge; recover unprotected item; act as a bodyguard.	No cost to the summoner; free due to past services.
20	Kill a creature of less than 8 HD that is unprotected, or a less powerful creature that is mildly protected; reveal obscure knowledge; recover a lightly protected item.	A magical item of no less than 1,500gp value, or the sacrifice of a Medium-sized or larger non-sentient creature.
25	Kill a creature of less than 10HD that is unprotected, or lesser creatures that are moderately protected; recover moderately protected item.	A magical item of no less than 2,500 gp value, or the sacrifice of a Large or bigger non-sentient creature.

decide to which class he adds each level of summoner for purposes of determining spells per day when he adds the new level.

Circle Mastery (Ex): Beginning at 1st level, the summoner learns to master the art of creating the calling diagrams used with the *dimensional anchor* spell and some planar binding spells. The summoner receives a proficiency bonus equal to twice his summoner class level to any Spellcraft checks made to create a calling diagram.

Summoning Specialization (Su): The summoner casts spells with the calling or summoning subtypes at +1 caster level.

Negotiate (Ex): Beginning at 2nd level, the summoner learns a variety of bargaining techniques that are useful when dealing with otherworldly creatures. The summoner gains a +2 bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks when negotiating with creatures who have the outsider type, or the extraplanar subtype. At 5th level the bonuses increase by +2, the bonuses increase again by the same amount at 8th and 10th level, reaching a maximum of +8.

Enhanced Summons (Ex): When casting a *summon monster* spell to summon multiple creatures of a lower level, the summoner adds +1 to the number of creatures summoned (e.g., when using *summon monster IV* to summon creatures from the third-level list, the summoner receives 1d3+1 creatures rather than the normal 1d3).

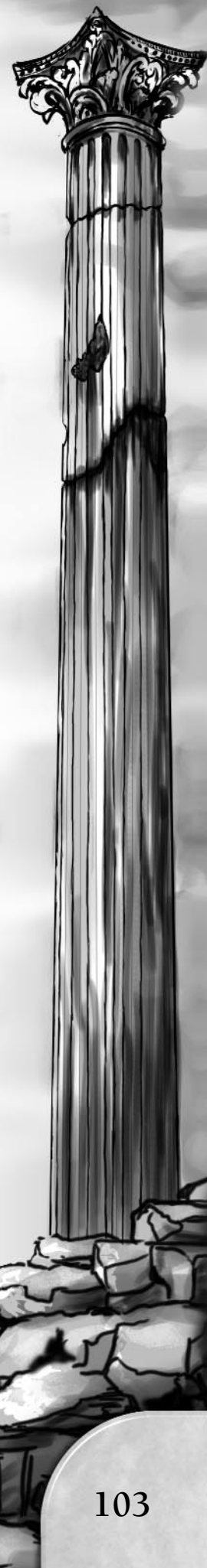
Advanced Summons (Ex): At 4th level and higher a summoner can choose to call only exceptional examples of the creatures he summons. Any creature summoned by the summoner has a +4 bonus to Strength, Dexterity and Constitution.

Infernal Favor (Su): Over the course of his career, a summoner meets and interacts with many outsiders, and gradually develops a reputation among them. Experienced summoners have learned how to use this reputation to their advantage in most cases.

When casting a spell with the calling subtype, a summoner of 4th level or higher may roll a Favor check (d20 + the summoner's Charisma modifier + the listed Favor bonus -1 per other outsider currently performing a service). Compare the roll to the DC of the desired service on the table above. If the roll succeeds, the normal negotiation portion of the spell is not required; the Called creature will immediately agree to perform the task for only minimal compensation (listed in the table).

Should the summoner ever roll a natural 1 on the favor check, the called creature is angry due to a past transgression against either itself, its kindred or its masters. The favor check automatically fails, and negotiation must proceed as normal, except that the called creature will demand double the normal payment for tasks. Additionally, offended creatures will make extra efforts to subvert the summoner's orders.

Proficient Summons (Ex): A 5th level or higher summoner may cast *summon monster* spells as standard action casting times, rather than 1 round casting times. These spells may not have meta-magic feats applied to them that further influence the casting time, such as *quicken* spell.



Proficient Calling (Ex): Any spells with the calling subtype cast by a summoner of 6th level or higher may be cast in one-half the normal time.

Banish (Sp): A 7th level or higher summoner may cast the *banishment* spell once per day as a standard action. The caster level for this ability is equal to double the summoner's class level.

Spontaneous Summons (Su): Starting at 8th level, a summoner can summon creatures to his service even if he was not previously prepared to do so. The summoner can "lose" a prepared spell in order to cast any *summon monster* spell of the same level or lower, in the same way that a good-aligned cleric can convert memorized spells to *cure* spells.

Summons Mastery (Su): At 10th level, a summoner has truly mastered the ability to summon creatures to his aid. Whenever he casts a *summon monster* spell he may call double the normal number of creatures. For example, a 10th level summoner who casts *summon monster IX* may call forth two elder elementals, rather than just one. Similarly, he could instead have called 2d3+2 creatures from the *summon monster VIII* list, or 2d4+4 creatures from any lower lists.

Taint Hunter

First encountered among the dwarves of Tir Betoq, these rare and dedicated individuals hunt out the Tainted and their Infernal allies wherever they hide. Not all Tainted are evil, but the taint hunter will never believe that. They believe that those who bear the blood of demons or devils must be destroyed before they spread their filth anywhere else.

The majority of taint hunters are loners, focusing on the destruction of the Tainted because of some personal tragedy suffered in their own lives. However, persistent rumors speak of an organization known as the Cleansing Rain, which seeks to formally organize and train taint hunters.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a taint hunter, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Any non-Tainted.

Alignment: Any non-chaotic.

Skills: Knowledge (Local: dark-kin) 4 ranks or Knowledge (The Planes) 4 ranks

Feats: Iron Will, Track.

Base Will Save: +5 or better.

Class Skills

The taint hunter's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Gather Information



(Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Local) (Int), Knowledge (Religion) (Int), Knowledge (The Planes) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), and Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Taint hunters do not gain any additional weapon or armor proficiencies.

Spells: Beginning at 1st level, a taint hunter gains the ability to cast a small number of divine spells. To cast a spell, the taint hunter must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level, so a taint hunter with a Wisdom of 10 or lower cannot cast these spells. Taint hunter bonus spells are based on Wisdom, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the taint hunter's Wisdom modifier. When the taint hunter gets 0 spells of a given level, such as 0 1st-level spells at 1st level, he gets only bonus spells. (A taint hunter without a bonus spell for that level cannot yet cast a spell of that level.) The taint hunter's spell list appears below. A taint hunter has access to any spell on the list and can freely choose which to prepare, just like a cleric. A taint hunter prepares and casts spells just as a cleric does (though the taint hunter cannot spontaneously cast cure or inflict spells).

Table LD-13: Taint Hunter

Class Level	Base				Special	Spells per Day			
	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save		1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Detect taint, sacred foe +1, implacable	0	--	--	--
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Resolve +1	1	--	--	--
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	Dogged pursuit	1	0	--	--
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Sacred foe +2, resolve +2	1	1	--	--
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Steadfast 2/- & 20	1	1	0	--
6th	+4	+2	+2	+5	Resolve +3, detect Infernal	1	1	1	--
7th	+5	+2	+2	+5	Sacred foe +3	2	1	1	0
8th	+6	+2	+2	+6	Resolve +4	2	1	1	1
9th	+6	+3	+3	+6	Steadfast 4/- & 25	2	2	1	1
10th	+7	+3	+3	+7	Sacred foe +4, resolve +5	2	2	2	1

Taint hunters choose their spells from the following list:

1st level—*Bless, bless water, bless weapon, detect evil, divine favor, endure elements, protection from evil, resistance, shield of faith.*

2nd level—*Aid, delay poison, endurance, magic vestment, pierce, resist elements, zone of truth.*

3rd level—*Daylight, discern lies, dispel magic, greater magic weapon, magic circle against evil, prayer.*

4th level—*Dimensional anchor, dismissal, dispel evil, divine power, hallow, holy sword, true seeing.*

Detect Taint (Su): The taint hunter quickly develops a remarkable ability to detect traces of Infernal blood in other beings. When a Tainted creature comes within 60 feet of the taint hunter, she becomes aware that something Tainted is nearby, though she cannot necessarily pinpoint which creature is Tainted. This ability is continuously active, and operates in a sphere around the taint hunter.

Sacred Foe (Ex): A taint hunter considers it her sacred duty to destroy the Tainted. As such, starting at 1st level, she gains a +1 bonus on Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot and Survival checks when using these skills against Tainted creatures. Similarly, she gets a +1 bonus to damage rolls made against Tainted creatures. Each three levels beyond 1st level, these bonuses increase by +1, reaching their maximum of +4 at 10th level. These bonuses stack with those from Favored Enemy, should the taint hunter also have that ability.

Implacable: A taint hunter may never knowingly associate with a dark-kin or other Tainted individual on a non-hostile basis. It is permissible for a taint hunter to (briefly) act friendly towards Tainted individuals in order to allay their suspicions for a later attack, but a taint hunter who knowingly allows one of the Tainted to live when he could have acted to destroy them has betrayed everything that the class stands for. Such a character immediately loses all benefits of the taint hunter class until he either receives an *atonement* spell or slays the Tainted individual that he wrongfully allowed to escape his righteous wrath.

Resolve (Ex): Starting at 2nd level, a taint hunter gains a measure of resistance to the Infernal powers of the Tainted. She receives a +1 morale bonus on saves against spells and spell-like abilities of Tainted creatures. This bonus increases by +1 for every two levels thereafter, reaching its maximum of +5 at 10th level.

Dogged Pursuit (Ex): When pursuing Infernals or the Tainted, the taint hunter will not rest until she finds her quarry. The taint hunter receives Endurance as a bonus feat; if she already has this feat she receives Die Hard instead.

Also, while pursuing Tainted creatures, including those whom she only believes to be Tainted, she may ignore the effects of fatigue and exhaustion for one day per level. However, these effects take immediate effect if she deviates from her pursuit, or when her pursuit is complete.

Steadfast (Ex): A 5th level and higher taint hunter gains damage reduction 2/- against physical attacks from Tainted foes. She also gains spell resistance 20 against spell and spell-like abilities from Tainted foes. At 9th level, these increase to damage reduction 4/- and spell resistance 25.

Warlock

Wizards and sorcerers with Tainted blood are often drawn to become arcane spellcasters, either in an effort to understand their natures better or because they want to tap into their own internal power. Those who wish to use their Infernal heritage to maximize their magical powers may eventually seek to follow the path of the warlock, a fiendish magician who empowers his spells with his own life energy... or perhaps that of others.

Hit Die: d4

Requirements

To qualify to become a warlock, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Dark-kin, cambion, or tiefling.

Skills: Knowledge (Arcana) 10 ranks, Knowledge (Local: dark-kin) 5 ranks, Spellcraft 5 ranks.

Feats: Any two metamagic feats

Spell Casting: Must be able to cast 3rd level arcane spells.

Special: Must own or purchase a single gem worth at least 5,000 gp.

Class Skills

The warlock's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con),

Table LD-14: Warlock

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day	Gem Capacity
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Store essence 1d4		5
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3		+1 level of existing class	6
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	Store essence 1d6		9
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Metamagic feat	+1 level of existing class	10
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	Store essence 1d8, capture essence 1d4		13
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5		+1 level of existing class	14
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Store essence 2d6		19
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	Metamagic feat	+1 level of existing class	20
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	Store essence 2d8		25
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	Capture essence 1d6	+1 level of existing class	26

Craft (Int), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

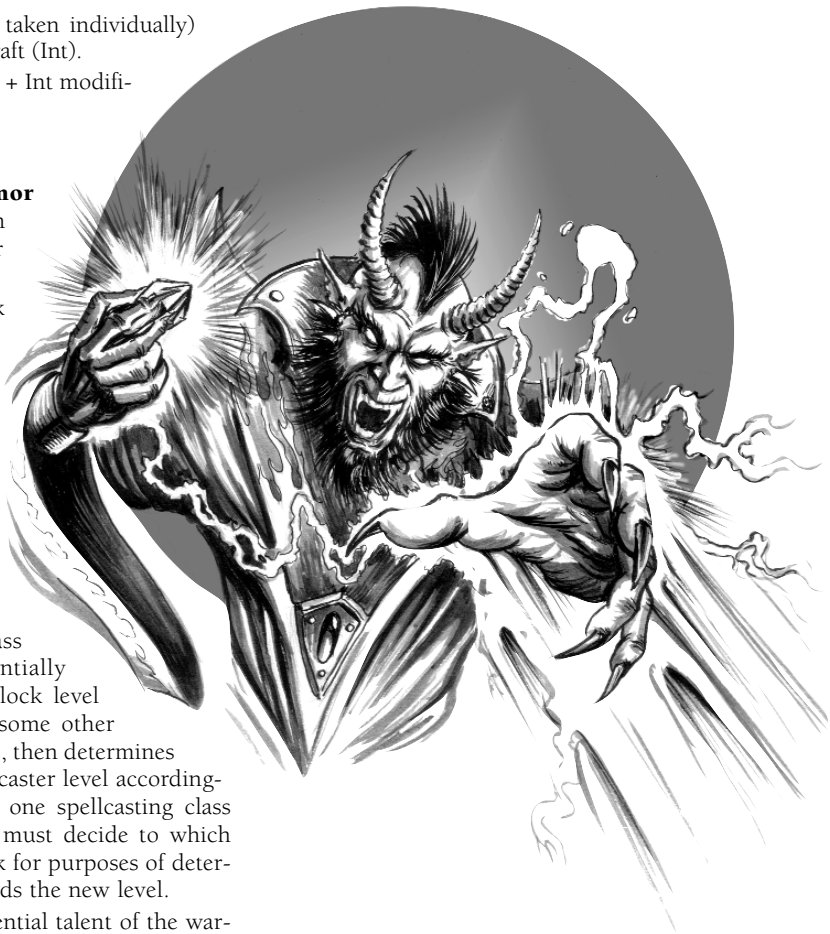
Class Features

Weapon and Armor

Proficiency: Warlocks do not gain any additional weapon or armor proficiencies.

Spells per Day: A warlock continues advancing in spellcasting ability as well as gaining the abilities of his new class. When a warlock gains a new even-numbered level, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in whatever spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. This essentially means that he adds half his warlock level (rounded down) to the level of some other spellcasting class the character has, then determines spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly. If a character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a warlock, he must decide to which class he adds each level of warlock for purposes of determining spells per day when he adds the new level.

Store Essence (Su): The essential talent of the warlock is the ability to store some of his own life energy in a gem and use it to empower his spells. Once per 24 hours, either while preparing spells for the coming day (if the character must memorize spells in advance) or immediately after waking up (if the character casts his spells spontaneously), the warlock may enter a trance for 10 minutes. During this trance, the character rolls 1d4 and adds his warlock level to the total. Every second level the die type increases, as indicated in the table. The character immediately loses that many hit points, which cannot be



healed or restored for the next 24 hours by any means short of a *wish* or *miracle*. These lost hit points are stored as energy charges in the warlock's gem. For the next 24 hours, these charges may be spent to empower the warlock's spells as follows, but their use must be specified before the spell is cast:

Increase the damage done by a damage-dealing spell. Each stored charge spent adds 1 extra damage to the spell; at most 1 charge per warlock level may be spent in this fashion.

Add a competence bonus to the warlock's caster level check to overcome spell resistance. Every two stored charges that are spent grant a +1 competence bonus to the caster level check; at most 2 charges per warlock level may be spent in this fashion.

Add to the DC of a saving throw against the warlock's spell. Every three stored charges that are spent grant a +1 bonus to the Difficulty Class of the spell; at most 3 charges per warlock level may be spent in this fashion.

The caster may combine several of these effects on a single spell as long as he has enough charge stored to pay the cost. Any stored charge left in the gem after 24 hours is lost. The character may not store or spend charges without having the gem in his hand. As long as a charge stored in the gem, it radiates faint transmutation magic.

The warlock's gem has hardness 10 + 1 per warlock level, and hit points equal to half of the warlock's normal maximum. If the gem is destroyed while it still holds any charges, the warlock takes 1d4 points of damage per charge remaining in the gem with a DC 12 + warlock level Will save for half damage.

If the gem is lost, or destroyed, then the warlock loses access to the supernatural benefits of this class until he has acquired a new one and spent 24 hours attuning himself to it. After that time it may be used as his focus again, and has properties as detailed above.

Metamagic Feat: At 4th level, and again at 8th level, the warlock gains a bonus metamagic feat that he meets the requirements for.

Capture Essence (Su): At 5th level and above, the warlock can use his gem to draw Infernal energies from other Tainted characters. Drawing forth essence from a Tainted creature requires a standard action. If the tainted creature is willing then no attack roll is necessary, but if the creature is unwilling then a melee touch attack is necessary.

If the touch succeeded, which is automatic with willing creatures, the target takes 1d4 + the warlock's class level points of damage. At 10th level this increases to 1d6 + 10 points of damage. As with the damage the warlock takes by using Stone Essence, this damage may not be healed for 24 hours by anything short of a *wish* or *miracle* spell.

The warlock must now succeed on a DC 10 + damage dealt Concentration check to capture the released essence. If the check fails, then the warlock has failed to capture the essence. If he rolled a natural 1, then he must make another Concentration check. If this second check is also a failure, either due to a natural 1 or simply by failing to meet the DC, then the warlock's gem shatters (subjecting him to the rules above under Store Essence).

If he succeeded on the Concentration check, then the damage dealt is added as stored charges to his gem. If this would place him over his normal limit on charges, as detailed in the table, then he must make a DC 20 + excess charges Concentration check or the gem shatters. If he succeeds then any excess charges have been dissipated and the gem is full to capacity.

This ability may only be used on a target once per day. Also, capturing the essence from unwilling creatures is an evil act, and if the warlock makes a habit of doing so his alignment will shift to evil, if it has not already done so.

Life Quests

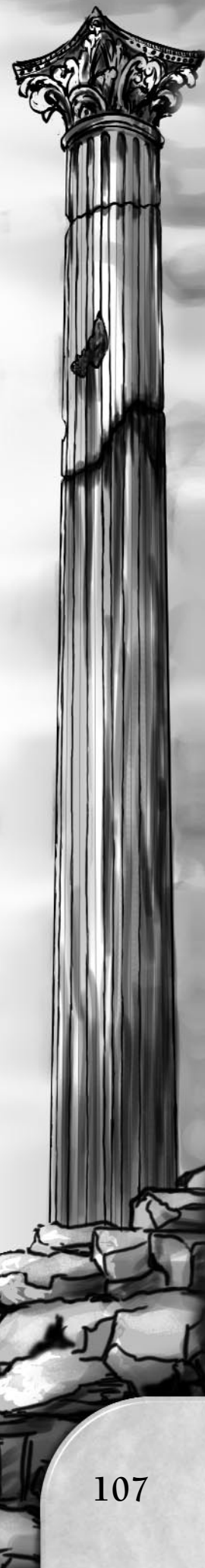
A Life Quest is a special kind of journey. It represents some overarching goal, some inspirational (or terrible) goal that the character spends his life trying to reach. It is a transformation, mentally, physically, and spiritually, from whatever the character is into whatever the character truly wishes to become. It represents redemption for the unredeemable, perfection for the imperfect, or the attainment of ultimate corruption for the corrupted. The completion of a Life Quest should be one of the most defining moments in a character's entire life story, the instant at which he achieves a goal so deeply-held that it reveals the truest essence of his nature and alters him in ways that no one else can ever really understand or appreciate.

A Life Quest is not really a template, because it represents a lengthy process of searching and changing, and it is not really a prestige class, because its effects are not the sort of things that are measured in terms of base attack bonuses and saving throws and caster levels. The character might gain some new abilities and might lose some old abilities as he travels the path he has chosen, but by and large a Life Quest should not have elements that are specific to a particular character class. A character who wishes to achieve the pinnacle of puissance at arms should pursue a prestige class (such as the Grand Master from the *Player's Guide to Arcanis*). Likewise, a character who wants to affect the world around him – perhaps by slaying every Infernal he can find – should pursue a prestige class. A Life Quest is internally-directed. The character isn't changing anybody or anything other than himself, but he is seeking to change

himself in ways that are more profound and more fundamental than any prestige class could ever represent. A character who wishes to purify his soul of the Infernal taint he has carried since before he was born should undergo a Life Quest.

Beginning a Life Quest

Every Life Quest has certain prerequisites which must be met before a character can embark on that Life Quest. Most of the time, it is not really appropriate for a Life Quest to begin at first level, because the character needs some time to really understand himself the way he is and thereby see that there is a different path he wants to take in life. When a character gains a level, after he has completed all of the other steps of the level-advancement process (including selection of his next class level, choosing his new feats, applying his new skill points, advancing his Hit Dice and other characteristics, etc.) he may then enter a Life Quest if he meets the prerequisites. (In other words, you check to see if you qualify for a Life Quest after you advance a level, not before.) Likewise, if a character permanently loses a level, most often because he died and was brought back, he may choose to reassess his priorities and decide to embark on a Life Quest at that time. A character may only begin a Life Quest when he permanently gains or loses a level.



Because a Life Quest is so demanding and so intensely personal in nature, it is generally not the case that any character will ever undertake more than one during his lifetime. Certainly it should not be possible for a character to be on more than one Life Quest at the same time under any circumstances. There are a few rare individuals who have started down the path of one Life Quest and then experienced an event so traumatic or so eye-opening that it completely changed their outlook on themselves and the world around them. Under such extreme circumstances it might be possible for a character to abandon his current Life Quest and instead embark on a different one (usually one that is diametrically opposed to the one he was on before).

Ending a Life Quest

Once a character begins a particular Life Quest, he may choose to abandon it at any time, for any reason. However, once he steps away from the path, the character may never again partake of that or any other Life Quest. Depending on the nature of the particular Life Quest, leaving it may or may not undo the changes that it has wrought in the character. Some Life Quests are completely wiped away if they are abandoned, while others can be stopped without removing the effects that the character has earned thus far.

Progressing in a Life Quest

Each level of a particular Life Quest has certain things that the character must accomplish in order to progress to the next stage. Whenever a character achieves all of the objectives listed for a particular level, he immediately advances to the next level, regardless of whether he is about to advance a character level or not. For example, if a Life Quest requires the character to slay a particular type of foe, he advances to the next level as soon as he accomplishes that task, regardless of whether or not slaying the foe gives him enough Experience Points to gain a character level.

Levels in a Life Quest do not count as character levels or caster levels for any purpose. They are not counted as class levels in any base class or any prestige class. They are simply a convenient measuring stick for determining a character's progress along the journey that the Life Quest represents. Advancing through the levels of a Life Quest does not change a character's Hit Dice, base attack or saving throw bonuses, class features, spellcasting ability, special mount or familiar advancement, or anything else associated with advancement in a particular character class. He gains no feats, no ability score points, or any other benefit strictly associated with advancing in total character level. He simply moves on to the next mile marker, one step closer to his destination.

Effects of a Life Quest

Each level attained in a Life Quest can grant a character certain benefits or drawbacks. Some of the changes might be purely philosophical or internal; other



ers might represent external changes to his physical form. He might gain or lose special abilities. Generally speaking, the effects of a Life Quest should not be tied to any particular character class, because the idea is that any character should be able to undergo this journey. Many times, a Life Quest will demand increasingly painful sacrifices from those who seek its ultimate fulfillment, as they must demonstrate their true commitment and undergo the most wrenching of transformations to arrive at their ultimate state of being.

On the advancement tables, the Requirements and Effects are skewed by one level. The first level of a Life Quest has no effects, only requirements to advance to the next level. This is because the first level of the Life Quest has no effects in and of itself; the character has only just placed his feet upon the long road. He must achieve something before he can see any tangible progress. Likewise, the final level of a Life Quest has no advancement requirements, only effects; gaining that level represents the journey's end. There is nowhere else to go. The character has reached his goal, and the effects of taking that final step should be suitably dramatic to represent that fact.

Life Quests for Dark-Kin Characters

As the subject of this book is those characters who have the bloodline of an Infernal creature, it is only appropriate that we provide examples of Life Quests that such characters might undertake. For Tainted characters, there are two kinds of Life Quests that seem particularly fitting. On the one hand is a good character's struggle to

purge himself of the Infernal taint that is his unwanted legacy and remake himself whole and pure in the light of the Gods, and thereby find peace and fulfillment that he could never know otherwise. On the other hand is an evil character's desire to embrace his fiendish heritage to its deepest depths and become the true paragon of the Infernal that he was destined to be, to cast off the trappings of his mortality and take his place among the Devil-Kings.

Table LD-15: The Redeemed

Life Quest Level	Advancement Requirements	Effects
1st	I Renounce My Heritage	--
2nd	I Seek Understanding	+2 Knowledge (the planes)
3rd	I Seek My Origins (I)	+2 Knowledge (history)
4th	I Seek My Origins (II)	+2 saves against specific type of Infernal
5th	I Confront My Kind	Loss of Tainted abilities
6th	I Confront Myself	Bonus feat
7th	I Release My Brethren	--
8th	I Seek My Origins (III)	Truename of Infernal sire
9th	I Shatter My Chains	Loss of all remaining Tainted qualities
10th	Ascendance	Celestial Transformation

The Redeemed

This Life Quest is appropriate for a dark-kin character who loathes what he is to his very core. He may or may not evince an external hatred for all things Infernal, but deep within his own heart he knows that he is corrupted beyond hope, that no one else could ever truly love him, that he is not deserving of love, that he is different, bad, wrong. No matter how many good deeds he performs they are all meaningless grains of sand washed away by the fundamental endless ocean that he sees as his black, evil heart. He must be cleansed, but corporeal mortification alone cannot do the trick. He must wring out the very last drops of darkness from his soul. He must purge himself of the fundamental evil that defines his existence, even if it means destroying his soul in the process. Better to destroy a Tainted soul than suffer it to exist where it can do nothing save spread its horror to other innocents. He must be redeemed, mind, body, and soul, in order to regain the innocence that was denied him from the very moment of his conception.

To begin this Life Quest, a dark-kin character must be at least 6th level and must have at least one feat of the Tainted type (such as Infernal Taint). It is important that his outward appearance be at least somewhat demonic, an external representation of the internal corruption that eats away at his soul. Because his goal is to seek spiritual purity, he must be of good alignment, which represents his yearning for true redemption.

I Renounce My Heritage: When a character embarks upon this Life Quest, he does so with the solemn vow that he will forevermore depart from the ways of his fiendish ancestors. The character must


swear a Sarishan Oath that he will never again call upon the powers of his Infernal heritage of his own free will. This means that he cannot actively use any natural weapons, extraordinary, supernatural, or spell-like abilities, feats, or other powers that derive from his Tainted background. (Benefits that he cannot consciously choose to activate or control, such as ability scores, energy resistance, resistance to critical hits, etc. do not fall under the bounds of the oath because the character cannot voluntarily forgo those benefits.)

After taking this Oath, should the character ever resort to the use of his Infernal abilities, not only does he suffer the consequences of oath-breaking, he also cannot progress further in his Life Quest until he receives an atonement spell from a priest of Sarish and renews his Oath. Regardless of how quickly he receives the atonement spell, his next opportunity to advance (i.e. his next character level gain) in the Life Quest is forfeited; he must gain an additional level before he may advance, even if he meets all of the other advancement requirements.

I Seek Understanding: In order to progress on the path of self-actualization, the character must seek to immerse himself in an understanding of his true nature. This requires the character to spend at least 2 skill points on Knowledge (the planes) and Knowledge (religion). (Whether the skills are class skills or cross-class skills is irrelevant, as long as he spends the skill points.) He must continue to spend at least 1 skill point on Knowledge (the planes) at each level until he completes the Life Quest, or else he cannot advance in the quest. Once he has spent a total of 5 skill points on Knowledge (the planes) the character gains a +2 bonus on all his Knowledge (the planes) skill checks relating to Infernals and other evil Outsiders.

I Seek My Origins: The character must learn the truth about his own Infernal parentage. The only way to know this beyond any shadow of a doubt is to seek someone who can cast the *legend lore* spell. It requires three castings of the spell in order to gain the full knowledge. Most of the time, the best place to find someone to cast this spell is at the main temple of Sarish in the city of Nishanpur, but other options may be available depending on the character's standing with various nations and factions.

The first casting must occur while the character is on the third phase (level) of his Life Quest. It uses the character himself as the focus. It takes 10 days of prayer and study before the spell can be successfully cast, and the character must provide 250 gold pieces worth of incense, which is consumed during



the casting of the spell. This reveals to the character the source of his Infernal heritage. For most, it is an act of violence, defilement, seduction, or even magical compulsion. For others, it is an insidious program of cross-breeding or an experiment gone awry. For a handful it was in fact a completely willing act, even one that was sought out. Regardless of the truth, this should be a revelation to the character, for the origins of most dark-kin date back to the Time of Terror and there are precious few ways to learn of events that transpired during that bleakest of times. Henceforth, the character gains a +2 bonus on Knowledge (history) skill checks relating to the Time of Terror.

The second casting must occur while the character is on the fourth phase of his Life Quest. It is used to learn more about the sort of Infernal that sired the character's line. The type of demon or devil (for example, a balor or a marilith) is revealed, along with the plane of that Infernal's origin. If the Infernal is bound with the Sigil of Sarish, that information is also made known. This is enough information to allow the character to begin researching his Infernal parent, but it is not yet enough to know the Infernal's truename. This casting takes five weeks and requires the character to sacrifice 1,000 gold pieces worth of valuable gemstones and jewelry. The character may now begin to gain a true understanding of the nature of his Infernal parent, and henceforth receives a +2 bonus on all saving throws against supernatural and spell-like abilities of Infernals of the same type as the Infernal that created him. (This means the exact same type – i.e. if the character was sired by a balor, he gains a +2 bonus on saving throws against the abilities of other balors – not against all demons.)

The third and final casting must occur while the character is on the eighth phase of his Life Quest. This most powerful and most important ritual is used to learn the truename of the character's Infernal sire (or dam). This casting takes a full twelve weeks and requires the character to sacrifice 10,000 gold pieces worth of magic items, as well as perform a service on behalf of the individual casting the spell (the nature of which should be relevant to the patron, not necessarily to the character himself). Upon learning the truth of his origins, including the identity of the Infernal whose legacy flows through his veins, the character is ready to take the next step on his Life Quest. He now has the ability to summon his Infernal sire for a final confrontation.

I Confront My Kind: The fifth level of the Life Quest involves an external purification to match the purification that the character hopes to engender within his own soul. He must seek out and slay a number of Infernals whose total Hit Dice are at least 10 times his own. (For example, if the character is 10th level, he must destroy 100 Hit Dice worth of Infernals to fulfill this requirement.) The Infernals do not need to be of any particular type, but they must be powerful enough that the character gains experience for each

kill. (In other words, a 10th-level character can't kill 200 dretches, because a dretch is not worth any XP to such a character due to its CR being too low.)

After he has completed this task, the character suddenly finds that the strength of the Taint within him is beginning to diminish. He loses the benefits of all feats, supernatural abilities, and spell-like abilities that have the Tainted descriptor or that derive only from Infernal power. This leaves him only with his base Infernal qualities. Although his outward appearance is unchanged, inside, he is beginning to feel the faint stirrings of the being he truly wishes to become.

I Confront Myself: Having destroyed a suitable quantity of the evil in the multiverse around him, the character must now turn his focus entirely upon his own soul and seek to destroy the evil within. During the time that he is on this stage of his journey, the character must spend at least two hours per day in meditation, seeking to identify and isolate all of the aspects of his personality and behavior that are derived from his Infernal parentage. This is an intensely personal process and not one that anyone else can help him with. In order to purify the stains upon his own soul, the character must not introduce any evil into the world of his own free will. This means that he cannot voluntarily take the life of any being that is not of an evil alignment, or commit any other evil act. His conduct must be above reproach; he must, in essence, become the antithesis of the Infernal.

Should he fail in this task for any reason, he cannot advance to the next stage of his Life Quest until he gains an additional level. It is during this time that many penitents seek to become members of a monastic or religious order. This is not required, but the spiritual solace is often a powerful balm to the character during his time of introspection and self-doubt. Upon completing this stage of his Life Quest, the character has unlocked doors within his mind and spirit that he did not know existed previously. He may draw upon this knowledge and inner strength. The character gains a bonus feat, which may be any feat for which he meets the prerequisites.

I Release My Brethren: For almost all dark-kin, society is a cruel and unforgiving place. They are mocked, scorned, feared, driven from their homes and communities, ostracized at every turn. The penitent must seek to prevent this evil from being perpetrated upon children who are now as he once was. In order to complete this stage of his quest, the dark-kin must find five children who are themselves dark-kin and give them solace and shelter from the world. This may be accomplished by taking them into the character's own household and ensuring that they are given the love and care that they need, or it may be accomplished by providing for them in their own communities, but the character must ensure that these five children have the chance to grow up believing that they are not evil simply because of the way they were born. In short, he must give them the childhood that he himself never had, in hopes that they will not have to suffer the things that he has suffered.

There are no tangible rewards for completing this stage of the Life Quest, but the spiritual and emotional rewards should be great indeed.

I Shatter My Chains: To end the stain of the Taint that has defined his existence since before he was born, the character must confront the very Infernal that created him. Depending on the power level of the Infernal in question, the character may well need assistance from companions in order to accomplish this deed. The Infernal need not be permanently slain; indeed, if it is a being of sufficient power, such a task may well be impossible. However, because he has the truename of the Infernal that created him, the character can force that Infernal to manifest itself on the Mortal Plane of Arcanis by means of the *gate* spell. Regardless of how the battle plays out, it must be the character himself who strikes the final blow that destroys the Infernal and sends it screaming back to the Hell from whence it came. This final act of defiance and repudiation acts as the trigger that unlocks the character's true potential and enables him to be reborn, freed from his legacy of damnation.

Upon striking the final blow against his Infernal sire, the character loses all remaining dark-kin or other Infernal special qualities and traits, including ability score adjustments, forms of vision, etc. He becomes a normal human in every aspect. He does not gain any feats or skill points as a result of the transformation; he simply loses all of his remaining Infernal heritage and the qualities and traits derived therefrom.

Ascendance: For many dark-kin who seek redemption, the journey ends after the character has confronted and slain his Infernal parent. But for those who seek true spiritual enlightenment, the process of purification may be taken to the other extreme. Having rid himself of all evil, the character becomes the embodiment of good. This step should only be undertaken if the campaign allows for PCs to have contact with divine emissaries or the Gods themselves. In order to ascend, the character must receive the blessing of a Valinor. Doing this may require the character to complete some great task on behalf of the God whose Valinor he wishes to serve, or it may be simply a matter of going to the right temple and offering a suitable prayer. The details should be appropriate to the campaign and the significance of the transformation.

Upon receiving the benediction of the Gods, the character has finally achieved true purity. His soul has been stripped down to its component parts, every last iota of the Infernal taint has been removed, and he has been remade, new and whole. He is in a state of grace, and in grace he ascends partway to the Gods themselves. The character gains the Half-Celestial template. His type changes to Outsider [Good, Native].

The Apotheosis

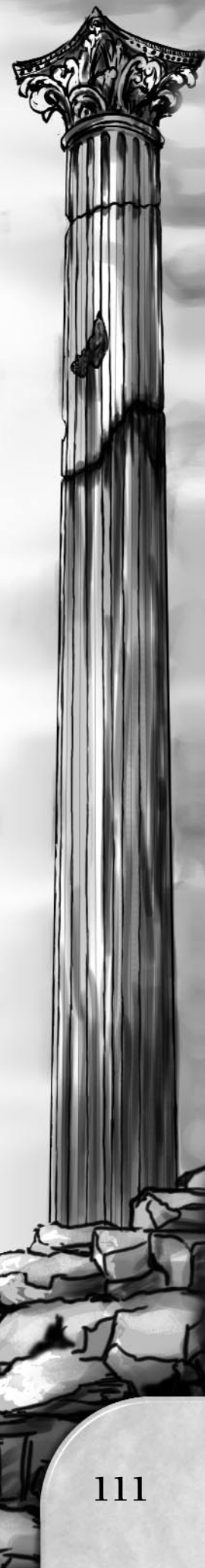
This Life Quest is appropriate for a dark-kin character who truly desires nothing more than to fully embrace the fiendish birthright he has been gifted with. He wants to become just like the fiend that spawned him – no, he will surpass that fiend, he will make that fiend's dark deeds look as though they were mere trifles. He will make himself the epitome of all things demonic, he will delve to the depths of evil that even other Infernals are afraid to plumb. He will make himself a Demon Prince, a Devil-King, and the master of all others; he will lord over the breadth and depth of Hell itself. He was created for a purpose, and that purpose is to become the apotheosis of all the power and all the evil that exists in the universe. His Tainted nature is not a curse, it is a gift that but waits to be fully awakened so that he can achieve his destiny.

To begin this Life Quest, a dark-kin character must be at least 6th level and must have at least three feats of the Tainted Type (such as Infernal Taint). It is important that his outward appearance be a reflection of the fiendish heritage he seeks to embrace and extend, an external representation of the internal corruption that eats away at his soul. He must obviously be of evil alignment, as indeed he aspires to become so evil that “evil” itself cannot suffice to describe the depths of his depravity. In most campaigns, this Life Quest will only be suitable for NPCs, but for helping to flesh out a campaign-defining villain it can be very useful.

Table LD-16: The Apotheosis

Life Quest Level	Advancement Requirements	Effects
1st	I Embrace My Heritage	--
2nd	I Cast Off My Humanity	Bonus Tainted feat
3rd	I Seek My Origins (I)	+2 Knowledge (the planes)
4th	I Seek My Origins (II)	+2 Knowledge (history)
5th	I Spit Upon Goodness	Ability to smite good 3/day
6th	I Drink the Tainted Blood	Corrupted servants
7th	I Betray the Trust of Men	Knowledge of own truename
8th	I Seek My Origins (III)	Truename of Infernal sire
9th	I Seize My Birthright	Ability to plane shift
10th	I Start the Cycle Anew	Infernal Transformation

I Embrace My Heritage: When a character embarks upon this Life Quest, he does so with malice aforethought. He must plunge himself so deeply into the depths of his fiendish heritage that he can never again be mistaken for a mere mortal. From this point forward, the character must spend all of his general feats (i.e. the feats gained every three character levels) on feats with the Tainted subtype. He may spend bonus feats and feats from other sources (such as fighter bonus feats) on non-Tainted feats, but



should always do so with an eye towards improving his personal power and demonic prowess.

Furthermore, the dark-kin who chooses this path makes the conscious decision to acknowledge no power higher than his own. He must forswear all lords, both mortal and divine; never again shall he call man or God his liege. He may not advance in levels of classes that require a patron deity, nor may he swear an oath of fealty or service unless he does so perfidiously in order to eventually betray the person or organization to whom the oath was given.

Finally, the character may never spare a life of his own free will unless doing so would advance his own purposes. Any time he has the chance to kill instead of capture, to maim instead of merely harm, or to use the coup de grace action upon a fallen foe, he must take it. Evil acts are the meat and drink upon which his soul must feast forevermore.

I Cast off My Humanity: In order to become a pure Infernal being, the character must slough off all of the trappings of his pitiful half-mortal self. He must never make any attempt to hide his twisted appearance nor mask his unnatural aura unless doing so is necessary to further one of his schemes or plots, and even then he should always reveal his true form at the earliest possible moment. Indeed, he should revel in these things, taking every opportunity to terrorize and mock the puny humans that he finds all around him.

In order to advance to the next stage of this Life Quest, the character must cut the ties that bind him to his former human self. He must either slay his human parent, or if his human parent is already dead, he must slay someone who played an important role in his childhood. This could be the people who adopted him as a foundling, the headmaster of the school where he was educated, the parish priest who kept him locked up in the basement beneath the church, etc. Ideally this would be a person to whom the character might feel some sense of gratitude or affection, to maximize the impact of slaughtering that person in cold blood. The murder must be committed in a grisly fashion and the fact of the deed (although not the killer) must be made public for this step to be completed.

Upon completing this stage of the journey, the character feels his humanity slipping away, to be replaced by more of his Infernal self. He gains a bonus feat, which must be of the Tainted subtype and for which he must meet the other prerequisites.

I Seek My Origins: To realize his full potential, the character must gain a full understanding of the Infernal realms from which he was created. He must learn the full details of his own parentage. This works the same way as described under the Life Quest for the Redeemed, but in each instance the purpose of gaining this knowledge is to increase the character's own power. When he finally confronts his Infernal ancestor,

it will be to take that being's place and thereby assert his true rights of succession.

Furthermore, due to the fact that a character on this Life Quest is a being of evil, all of the *legend lore* spells must be cast by evil spellcasters, and the character will no doubt have to either perform a service or compel the spellcaster to assist him. Gaining that assistance (indeed, just finding someone qualified to cast the spell in the first place) could be a quest unto itself.

In addition to the 10,000 gold pieces of magical items, in order to obtain the truename of his Infernal parent during the eighth stage of his Life Quest, the character must also sacrifice an innocent being during the casting of the spell. This must be a creature of pure innocence, untainted by the world of mortals, such as a newborn babe.

The benefits gained at each level are similar to those of the Redeemed Life Quest. The character first learns more about his own kind, gaining a +2 bonus on Knowledge (the planes) skill checks pertaining to the specific type of Infernal from which he is descended. He then learns more of the circumstances of his creation, gaining a +2 bonus on Knowledge (history) checks relating to the Time of Terror. Finally, he gains the truename of his Infernal parent, which he will use to challenge that Infernal to a duel in the final stage of his quest.

I Spit Upon Goodness: To prove his strength and worthiness to become a champion of evil, the character must seek out and slaughter a number of champions of good. In order to complete this stage of his Life Quest, the character must kill a total of 100 Hit Dice of creatures with a palpable aura of good. (This includes good-aligned clerics, paladins, etc. as well as good-aligned Outsiders and other creatures with an Aura of Faith.) It is not enough to defeat these beings in combat; the dark-kin must destroy them utterly, consuming their bodies in a feast of blood and death. The creatures that he slays and consumes in this fashion cannot be brought back from the dead by any magic save that of a *true resurrection*. There is no particular list of creatures that the character must slay, but each of them must be powerful enough for him to gain experience from each kill. (In other words, a 10th-level character can't kill 100 1st-level clerics of Illiir, because a CR 1 cleric is not worth any XP to him.)

After he has completed this task, the dark-kin suddenly feels that the strength of the Taint within him has grown much stronger. He is now able to draw upon that well of evil to strike directly as goodly beings. The character gains the ability to *smite good* 3 times per day. If he already has the smite good ability from another source, then he gains 3 additional daily uses of the ability.

I Drink the Tainted Blood: Having fought and destroyed a number of champions of good, the dark-kin is now ready to consume the essence of his own kind. In particular, he must find individuals who were once like himself – half-mortal and half-fiend, but not under-

standing the truth about themselves. The character must seek out five other dark-kin that have not yet come into their full power (i.e. they are children or otherwise unaware of their Infernal heritage), kill them, and drink their blood. By so doing, he strengthens the Infernal blood within his own veins, and he also demonstrates that he has the ruthlessness to crush potential opposition to his rule before it has the chance to grow strong.

As a reward for completing this task, the powers of Evil reward the character by turning the five creatures he has slaughtered into his fiendish servitors. These creatures gain the Corrupted template (see page 124) and become the character's bonded servants, unable to disobey his will in any way. They will serve faithfully and without question until they die of natural causes. If they are ever slain, they cannot be replaced or brought back from the dead.

I Betray the Trust of Men: In order to prove that he has the cunning to take his place upon the Infernal Lords, the character must commit an act of truest betrayal. (This is one instance where it is okay for him to disguise his Infernal nature, so that he can gain the trust of the person or group he is to betray.) The character must attain a position of trust to some agency or person of a goodly nature – advisor to a noble, officer of a church, member of the inner circle of a knightly order dedicated to good works – and then betray that trust in such a fashion as to cause the death or downfall of the individual or group in question. The noble must be cast from his throne or die to a rival's blade, the church must be brought to ruin and scorned by the faithful, the knightly order must have its members broken and either turned to evil works or killed. This should be an elaborate and lengthy quest unto itself, but the end result should be most satisfying.

Upon completing this stage of his Life Quest, the character gains a moment of truest insight – in which he comes to understand his own truename. This is a gift of great power, but also carries with it great risk, for by his truename he can be bound and compelled to serve others. He can now be marked with the Sigil of Sarish; if this happens, he will never be able to complete his Life Quest unless he finds some way to break the binding (highly unlikely but not absolutely impossible).

Once he has learned it, if the character wishes to draw upon the power of his truename, he may; once per day as a free action, the character can speak his truename out loud (this cannot be masked or concealed in any way, and it must be loud enough to be heard by anyone within 30 feet). Doing so grants him a +5 luck bonus on the next attack roll, skill check, or saving throw he makes, but it risks exposing his truename, so he should be sure and kill anyone who might have heard.

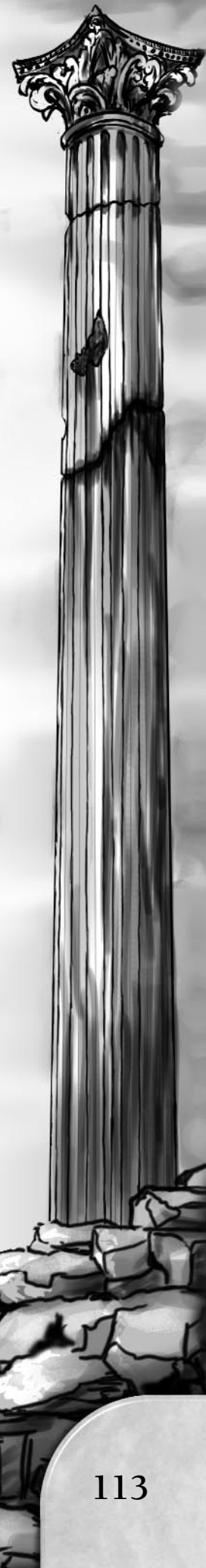
I Seize My Birthright: The only way to gain power as an Infernal is to take it. The character must now confront his Infernal parent and destroy that creature in order to take its place. Using the knowledge of his sire's

truename and the gate spell, the Infernal can call his parent to the Mortal Plane of Arcanis. The Infernal must be present in both body and spirit so that when it dies, it is permanently dead. This may require the character to embark on other quests to gather ritual components or other items that will be needed to take advantage of the Infernal's weaknesses or otherwise allow the plan to succeed. When the battle is joined, the character must specifically state that he is challenging the Infernal for its rank and station, and although he may have assistance during the battle (nobody said that evil has to fight fair) it must be the character himself who delivers the death-blow to his parent or else the attempt fails.

Upon slaying his Infernal sire, the character must consume the creature's heart (or equivalent organ) and must then step through the *gate* to the plane on which the Infernal made its home. (If that plane is the Mortal Plane because the Infernal parent is bound to the Sealed Lands, then the *gate* leads to whatever place that Infernal has been using as its base of operations in Arcanis.) The character is now master of that place and gains the ability to transport himself back and forth between the Material Plane and the Outer Plane or other base of operations that formerly belonged to the Infernal he has just slain. This functions as the *plane shift* spell (or *word of recall* if the destination is on the Material Plane), is treated as a spell-like ability, requires a standard action to activate, and may be used once per day in each direction. The character now has the right to assume that Infernal's rank and station in the hierarchies of Hell; however, keeping his new position may be another matter entirely.

I Start the Cycle Anew: The character's ascendance is now complete. He has taken the position of the Infernal that sired him and has demonstrated that he has all the qualities of a true Devil-King. There is only one task left for him to complete, and that is to plant the seeds for the next generation of dark-kin. The character must sire his own line of Infernally tainted children by finding a mortal of the opposite gender and mating with that mortal. Once the creation of Infernal progeny is assured, the character has no further obligation to the children of the union, just as his Infernal sire had no obligation to him. This last, greatest act of evil leads to his ultimate apotheosis.

Infernal Transformation: The character has plumbed the depths of such evil that the fiends of the multiverse cannot help but recognize him as one of their own. He has scourged away all traces of goodness and humanity from his soul. He is remade in his own dark image, the paragon of evil that he always knew he could be. He is ready to take his place among the Lords of Darkness. The character gains the Half-Fiend template. His type changes to Infernal [Evil, Native] and he loses all remaining traits of his former type.



New Domains and Magic

New Domains

The city of Bastion is home to many priests of Sarish, taught from the lips of one of the Binder's own fallen Valinor. Due to the unique nature of the Wall of the Gods, the traditional summoning magic used in Sarish's Daemonology domain is of no use in the Sealed Lands. As a result, Xabal and the priests of Sarish have developed a new Binding domain to take its place.



Binding Domain

Granted Power: You may control or rebuke demons and devils as an evil cleric controls or rebukes undead. Use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier. The Extra Turning feat may be used to increase this number of attempts rather than the number of undead turning attempts, but the decision must be made at the time the feat is taken.

Binding Domain Spells

- 1 **Command:** One subject obeys selected command for 1 round.
- 2 **Pierce *:** Weapon bypasses damage reduction of Tainted creatures.
- 3 **Magic Circle Against Evil:** As *protection* spells, but 10-ft. radius and 10 min./level.
- 4 **Pin *:** Bind targets in place, preventing movement.
- 5 **Dispel Evil:** +4 bonus against attacks.
- 6 **Forbiddance ^M:** Blocks planar travel, damages creatures of different alignment.
- 7 **Repulsion:** Creatures can't approach you.
- 8 **Holy Aura ^F:** +4 to AC, +4 resistance and SR 25 against evil spells.

- 9 **Imprisonment:** Entombs subject beneath the earth.

* *New spell in this book.*

To combat the ability of Sarish and his followers to bind the Infernals into service, several of the more powerful fiends have worked for centuries, poring over research materials and performing unmentionable experiments on mortals and Infernals alike. They have finally found a solution: The Infernal Domain.

Infernal Domain

Granted Power: You grant all Tainted creatures within 10 feet turn resistance equal to your Charisma modifier.

Infernal Domain Spells

- 1 **Command:** One subject obeys selected command for 1 round.
- 2 **Darkness:** 20-ft. radius of supernatural shadow.
- 3 **Magic Circle Against Good:** As *protection* spells, but 10-ft. radius and 10 min./level.
- 4 **Fear:** Subjects within cone flee for 1 round/level.
- 5 **Dispel Good:** +4 bonus against attacks.
- 6 **Symbol of Fear ^M:** Triggered rune panics nearby creatures.
- 7 **Blasphemy:** Kills, paralyzes, weakens, or dazes nonevil subjects.
- 8 **Unholy Aura ^F:** +4 to AC, +4 resistance and SR 25 against good spells.
- 9 **Reversal *:** Attempts to bind or call the subject are met with domination of the caster.

* *New spell in this book.*

New Spells

Bone Burst

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One living creature/three levels, no two of which may be more than 30 feet apart

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Fortitude half

Spell Resistance: Yes



A target affected by this spell has their bones suddenly experience random growth spurts in unnatural directions. This growing process often leaves the target physically deformed and is very painful. The target experiencing this painful process takes 1d4 points of damage per caster level. A successful Fortitude save halves this damage. Targets who fail their saving throw also take 1d4 points of Charisma damage and have their movement rate halved until the damage caused by this spell is magically healed.

Corrupting Touch

Evocation [Evil]

Level: Clr 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 3 rounds

Range: Touch

Target: Living creature touched

Duration: 24 hours

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

With a touch, you taint the target's soul with Infernal energies. Your successful melee touch attack causes the victim to suffer the corruption-touched condition (see page 124 for details). For the next 24 hours, effects that would normally heal the victim function at a reduced level of power. The victim also gains the Tainted subtype, which makes him vulnerable to certain spells and effects that specifically target Tainted creatures. However, the victim cannot be turned or rebuked by characters with the ability to turn or rebuke Infernals, unless he is normally vulnerable to such abilities.

The corruption-touched condition can only be removed by the passage of time or by a successful *break enchantment* or *remove curse* spell.

Infernals and Corrupted creatures are immune to this spell. Creatures with the Tainted subtype gain a +4 bonus on their Will save to resist the spell's effects.

Flesh to Ice

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 6

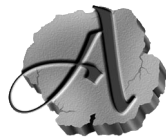
Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One creature

Duration: Instantaneous



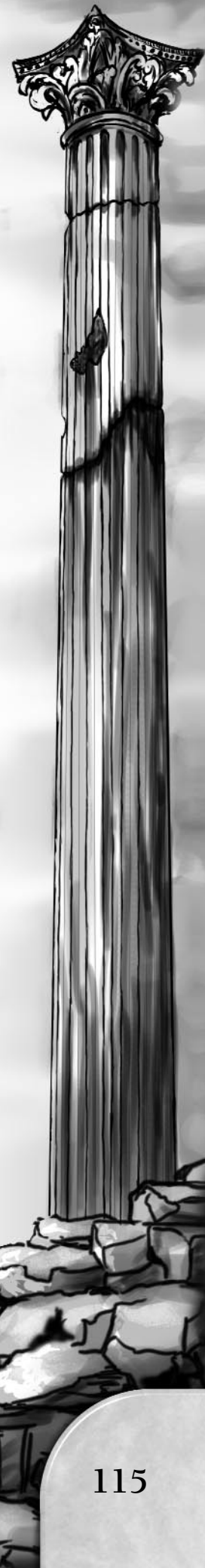
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

The target, along with all its carried gear, turns into a mindless ice statue. If this ice statue is broken or damaged, the target (if ever returned to its original state) has similar damage or deformities. The creature is not dead, but it does not seem to be alive either when viewed with spells such as *deathwatch*. Only creatures with flesh are affected by this spell.

The frost giant of Magadan are particularly fond of this spell and often use it to turn Infernals into ice statues, partially melt them, then return them to their fleshy form and release them.

Arcane Material Component: A small crystal prism.



Ice to Flesh

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One ice statue

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: see text

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell restores a creature that was turned to ice to its normal state, restoring life and goods. The creature must make a DC 15 Fortitude save to survive the process. Any creature that was changed to ice, regardless of size, may be restored.

Painful Harmonic

Evocation [Sonic]

Level: Bard 3, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: 20-foot radius spread

Duration: Instantaneous & 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude half

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell creates a series of high pitched sound waves that shred and destroy doing 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum of 10d6) to every creature in the area of effect. All creatures in the area of effect get a Fortitude save for half damage; creatures that are deaf take only half damage from the spell, and may save for quarter damage. Creatures who fail their Fortitude save are deafened for one round per caster level.

Arcane Focus: A tuning fork.

Pierce

Enchantment

Level: Binding 2, Clr 2

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Weapon touched

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: None (harmless)

Spell Resistance: None (harmless)



This spell is a valuable weapon in the Infernal-hunter's arsenal, and has become quite popular among other adventurers as well. By casting this spell, a single manufactured weapon (or ten rounds of ammunition for a missile weapon) may be temporarily enchanted to bypass the damage reduction of Infernals. The weapon is also blessed if the caster is good aligned or serves a good-aligned deity. This spell has the Good subtype if the weapon is blessed.

Pin

Enchantment

Level: Binding 4, Clr 4

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One creature/three levels

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

A target affected by this spell is rooted to the spot where it stands, unable to leave that particular space. It can still move the rest of its body allowing it to make melee or missile attacks, cast spells, etc. However, it cannot leave the square it was in when the spell was cast. The creature takes a -4 penalty to Dexterity, and a -2 penalty on all attack rolls. Flying and swimming creatures hang suspended in air (or water) where they were when the spell was cast. If the spell is cast on a single target, that target receives a -4 penalty to its saving throw.

This spell counters *Freedom of Movement* and is countered by *Freedom of Movement*.

Reversal

Abjuration (Mind-affecting)

Level: Infernal 9

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 day

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 day/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

Anytime the target would be bound by a Sarishan, or affected by a spell with the calling subtype, a contest of wills occurs. The caster who is attempting to bind or call the target of this spell must make an opposed Charisma check with the target of this spell. The recipient of this spell receives an insight bonus equal to one-half your caster level on the check. If the binder or caller succeeds on the check then the recipient of this spell has been successfully affected by the effect. Should that caster fail, then they have fallen under the effects of a *dominate monster* effect. They receive no save versus this effect, and remain under its effects until the duration of this spell ends.

Wild Ride

Transmutation

Level: Clr 2, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Caster and mount

Area: Caster and mount

Duration: 1 day (D)

Saving Throw: None (harmless)

Spell Resistance: None (harmless)

This spell, first developed by the Yhing hir many years ago, is known well throughout Onara, and is immensely valuable to those few within the Sealed Lands who know it. Though the spell is quite limited in its

application, its utility is unquestionable, particularly in an area where magical transportation is extremely rare and overland travel horrendously dangerous.

Before casting this spell, the caster selects a location and pictures it in her mind; the caster must have visited the location previously. Then, with a few short words, the caster invokes the spirit of the storm horse, which possesses the caster's mount. The mount and the rider then immediately become incorporeal and start to move at incredible speed. For an entire day (twenty-four consecutive hours) the mount will run at ten times its normal movement rate, in a straight line, to the destination pictured by the caster at the time of the casting. Neither the mount nor the caster need food, drink, or rest during the duration of the spell. However, neither mount nor caster can do anything requiring more concentration than a free action.

The destination may not be changed after the spell is cast; the course is set as soon as the spell is cast. The effect may be dispelled at the caster's whim, but may not be resumed without recasting the spell. Any mount subjected to *wild ride* requires eight hours of rest before they can be affected by the spell again. Attempts to do so before then simply fail.

Word of Xabal

Evocation [Good, Sonic]

Level: Cleric 4, Good 4

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 30 ft.

Target: Non-good, or Tainted creatures in a 30 ft radius centered on you.

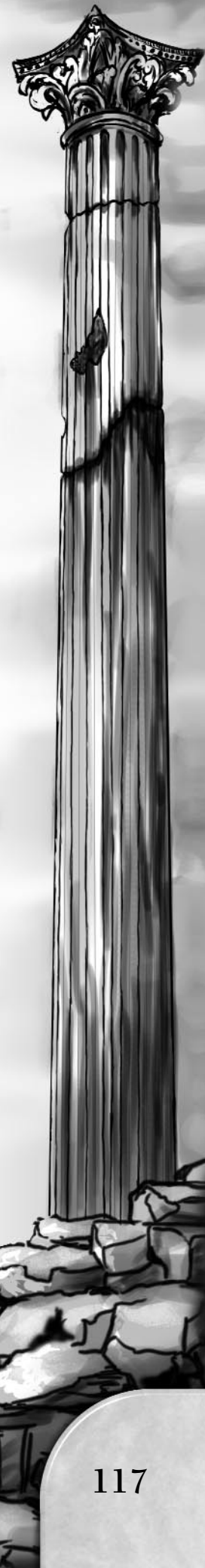
Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will half

Spell Resistance: Yes

When this spell is cast, all non-good targets within the area of effect suffer 1d8 points of damage per two caster levels (maximum 5d8). All good-aligned Tainted individuals within the area of effect instead suffer 1d6 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d6). All non-good-aligned Tainted individuals within the area of effect suffer the full brunt of the spell, suffering 1d10 points of damage per caster level (maximum 10d10). In all cases, a successful Will save halves the damage from this spell.

After speaking the Word of Xabal, a mortal caster is drained and lethargic due to the massive discharge of heavenly energies, which were not meant to be routed through mortal forms. The caster immediately gains the fatigued condition and may not cast this spell again for a period of 24 hours. If the caster was already fatigued, he becomes exhausted; if he was already exhausted, he falls unconscious and cannot be awakened by any means short of a *heal* spell for the next 8 hours.



New Magic Items

Bit of Control

Hermits and shamans among the Yhing hir have been crafting these devices for centuries. While no self-respecting Yhing hir would admit to using one, they are sometimes necessary to break the most recalcitrant of mounts. They are also extremely popular among horse thieves.

This unassuming bone bit looks like a normal piece of horseman's gear. However, it radiates a continuous charming effect on any creature in whose mouth it is placed. These bits, of which there exist three varieties, all only affect creatures of up to Large size, and all have a Will save to resist the effect. The Least and Lesser varieties only affect animals, while the Greater variety will affect animals and magical beasts. The three varieties are:

Least: The target animal is affected with a *calm animals* spell. It receives a DC 11 Will save to resist this effect, and the spell only affects the target creature.

Lesser: The target animal is affected with a *charm animal* spell. It receives a DC 13 Will save to resist this effect.

Greater: The target animal or magical beast is affected by a *charm monster* spell. It receives a DC 16 Will save to resist this effect.

Whatever type of bit is involved, the effect lasts until the bit is removed, which it must be to feed the animal as with any other bit. If the spell is broken, but the bit remains in the target's mouth, the target must make a new saving throw each round until the bit is removed. Putting the bit into the mouth of an uncooperative creature requires a grapple check.

Weak enchantment; Caster Level 2nd (least), 3rd (lesser), 7th (greater); Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *calm animals* (least), *charm animal* (lesser), *charm monster* (greater); Market Price 4,000 gp (least), 12,000 gp (lesser), 28,000 gp (greater); Weight: 1 lb.

Cloak of the Unbound

This cloak was created by power Infernal spellcasters during their lengthy exile in the Sealed Lands. It is designed to conceal the true nature of an Infernal or Tainted creature. While the cloak is worn, its wearer is immune to all spells and abilities that detect the presence of Infernals or Tainted creatures, as well as

all spells and abilities that would detect the wearer's alignment. The spell's caster does not know that anything unusual occurred; the cloak's wearer simply does not detect as having any aura of the Infernal or any alignment-

based aura. The cloak cannot conceal the presence of the Sigil of Sarish if its wearer is so marked, however.

The cloak's wearer is also able to conceal his appearance so that he does not have the look of an Infernal or Tainted creature. This functions exactly as a *hat of disguise*, except that the cloak itself can be made to appear as any article of clothing. The wearer of this cloak also gains a +2 resistance bonus on all saving throws against spells and effects that specifically target Infernal or Tainted creatures, and +1 Turn Resistance against attempts to turn or rebuke Infernal or Tainted creatures. This stacks with the creature's own Turn Resistance, if any, against such attempts.

Moderate abjuration and faint illusion; Caster Level 9th; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *disguise self*, *non-detection*, *resistance*, creator must have the Tainted subtype; Market Price 45,000 gp.

Minor Artifacts Tomes of Binding

Wizards and priests with knowledge of the appropriate spells are capable of binding demons, devils and other extraplanar entities by virtue of their own magical powers. However, such summonings are risky at best, since the caster is never sure exactly what he will conjure up or how it will react. Still, the power offered by controlling an outsider is a potent lure, and no matter how dangerous the art may be, there are always those who are willing to practice it. Those who engage in such practices are always seeking any edge they can use to maintain control of their fiendish servants, and some of the most potent edges can be found in the diverse books known collectively as *tomes of binding*.

Each tome is a collection of information on various extraplanar creatures and the optimal techniques used to summon and control them. Most tomes name specific individual beings, but some have more general information which can be applied to all creatures of a certain type (indicated as "general" in the book listing below). For example, if a tome features information on "osyluth (2), kyton (2), and erinyes (1, general)," it can be used to summon and bind one specific osyluth and one specific kyton, but has information that is applicable to all erinyes. The number in parentheses is the bonus applied to appropriate summoning and binding attempts, as follows:

When a caster tries to summon and/or bind a creature for which he has the appropriate tome of binding at hand and easily accessible, he receives the indicated modifier as an insight bonus to all rolls involved in controlling the target, including opposed Charisma checks for *planar binding* spells (including the *lesser* and *greater* varieties).

Similarly, the summoned creature subtracts the indicated modifier as a circumstance penalty to all rolls made to resist the binding spell (saving throws, SR rolls or Charisma checks to break out of a binding circle, etc.). These penalties also apply to *banishment* or *dismissal* spells cast against creatures for which the caster has direct access to the appropriate tome of binding.

Tomes of binding may also contain written examples of various summoning and binding spells, which may be used by arcane casters exactly as an ordinary spellbook.

Most tomes of binding are based on extremely old texts, many dating back to before the Time of Terror. Over the centuries, as the books have been copied and recopied, small but crucial errors have sometimes slipped into the detailed summoning diagrams. In addition, certain evil outsiders have deliberately created flawed texts in order to punish would-be summoners. As a result, when a specific tome of binding is used to summon or bind a certain creature (or type of creature) for the first time, there is a 5% chance that the creature(s) will arrive unbound, immune to the effects of any circles or diagrams used to contain it, and almost certainly hostile towards the summoner. A character who has at least one level in the Summoner prestige class, or one who has chosen the Daemonology domain, or is a wizard specializing in Conjuraton, may reduce this chance to 1% with a successful Spellcraft check (DC 20 + the summoned creature's CR). If this does not occur the first time the tome is used for that type of creature, it will not happen in the future, as the contents of the book have proven to be accurate, at least with respect to that creature.

Sample Tomes of Binding

The Black Pages of Pazap

This ancient tome is written in Infernal, and only those who can read that tongue can make any use of it; previous attempts to translate the book have never resulted in a usable copy. The book, written in silver ink on black pages, contains copies of the *magic circle against good* and *greater planar binding* spells, plus binding information on the following creatures: lemures (3, general), barbazu (2), erinyes (2, general), hamatula (2), cornugon (1), pit fiend (1), Xabrac the Reaver (1). *Strong Divination; Caster Level 20th; Weight 1 lb.*

The Hunter's Journal

This small tome seems to be nothing more than a diary, and is mostly comprised of a long, rambling travelogue about the strange and often surreal adventures of a traveling dark-kin assassin. However, contained within the text is enough information to make the text usable as a tome of binding against the demonic hunters known as bebiliths (3, general). *Strong Divination; Caster Level 20th; Weight 1 lb.*

Huntzbet's Libram of Deception

This book, bound in val hide, was written by Huntzbet, a fiend well versed in summoning and binding rituals, and represents his life's work in researching how to subvert and avoid such rituals, including his discovery of the Infernal Domain. This book was last seen being carried by Huntzbet in the city of Tuvulem when the Patience of Sarish destroyed

all the city's Infernal residents, including Huntzbet. Since that time, many powerful Infernals have been searching for this book to no avail. Contained within it are various rituals of summoning including the vulnerable areas of the many different summoning circles commonly used in such rituals. While the Libram is not itself a Tome of Binding, no other Tomes of Binding will have any effect on an Infernal possessing the Libram. This, in and of itself, makes the book highly sought-after. But the real value of the Libram is derived from its detailing of several new spells, including *reversal*. *Strong Divination; Caster Level 20th; Weight 1 lb.*

Libram of the Firehoof

This leather-bound book, written by one of the Riders in the early days after the raising of the Godswall, can be used as a tome of binding against nightmares (3, general). *Strong Divination; Caster Level 20th; Weight 1 lb.*

The Nacreous Book

Written in squid ink and bound between covers made from enormous scallop shells, this book contains the spells *magic circle against chaos* and *control water*, plus binding information on water elementals of all sizes (4, general). *Strong Divination; Caster Level 20th; Weight 1 lb.*

The Spool of Choreoptis

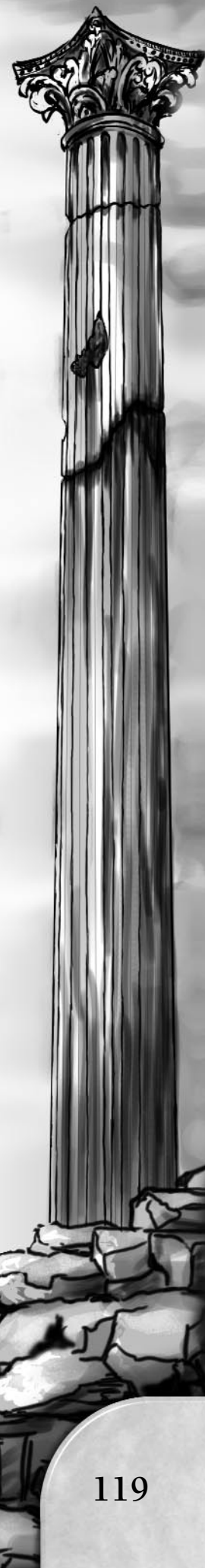
This document is a single, massive scroll, with detailed summoning diagrams and accompanying text written in several languages. It contains copies of the *magic circle against good*, *dimensional anchor*, *lesser planar binding*, *planar binding* and *greater planar binding* spells, plus binding information on the following creatures: lantern archons (4, general), hound archons (2, general), avoral (1), ghaele (1), trumpet archon (1), astral deva (1), planetar (1), solar (1). Note that using this book to summon, bind, or control a celestial is an evil act. *Strong Divination; Caster Level 20th; Weight 1 lb.*

New Materials

Blood Iron

This metallic substance, while seeming like iron to all normal means of examination, has a far more sinister origin (see Chapter 2 for the true source of Blood Iron). The name is provided for players' convenience only; the devils of the Iron Lordship never refer to it as "blood iron," and the secrets of its manufacture are (thankfully) unknown outside that vile realm. The metal itself can be forged and worked just like normal iron, although both the metal and any tools used to work it tend to develop a faint reddish tint over time. Those unfamiliar with the nature of blood iron sometimes ascribe this color to impurities in the metal, or perhaps the beginnings of rust, but in truth it is merely the awful nature of the material making itself known.

Armor and *shields* made from blood iron have fire resistance of 2, and add +1 to their saves against fire attacks. In addition, any of the following enchantments may be placed on blood iron armor and shields



for only half of the normal cost in gold (though the cost of other enchantments, including any normal enhancement bonuses, is unchanged): *fire resistance*, *slick*, *shadow*, *spell resistance*. However, any devils attacking the wearer of blood iron armor or shields ignore all enchantments placed on the blood iron equipment, and such armor only provides half of its normal AC bonus (round down) against the attacks of devils.

Weapons made from blood iron have fire resistance of 2, and add +1 to their saves against fire attacks. They also have a natural +1 enhancement bonus to damage; this does not stack with damage bonuses for masterwork or enchanted weapons. In addition, any of the following enchantments may be placed on blood iron weapons for only half of the normal cost in gold (though the cost of other enchantments, including any normal enhancement bonuses, is unchanged): *flaming*, *flaming burst*, *greater spell storing*, *hexing*, *spell storing*, *unholy*, *tainted weapon*. However, the *holy* enchantment can never be placed on a blood iron weapon, and even attempting to do so will cause the weapon to shatter. Furthermore, any enchantments placed on blood iron weapons have no effect on devils (though indirect effects, such as spells cast from a *spell storing* weapon, may still affect them), and devils are considered to have an additional 5 points of DR against blood iron weapons.

Any enchanted items made of blood iron radiate evil (as per “evil magic item or spell” in the description of the *detect evil* spell).

Item	Market Price Modifier
Light Armor	+1,000 gp
Medium Armor	+3,000 gp
Heavy Armor	+9,000 gp
Shield	+1,000 gp
Weapons and other items	+200 gp/lb
Hardness/Hit points:	10/30 per inch

Sarishan Steel

This special material was originally presented in *Forged in Magic*; the new version updates and supersedes the original.

Some say that the techniques used to create this alloy were first taught to humans by a Valinor of Sarish during the Time of Terror. Others point to the incredible advances in weapon-smithing and metallurgy that occurred during the glorious First Imperium of Man. Though its origins may be clouded in mystery, the simple truth is that the gift of Sarishan steel is one of the most potent secrets that has ever been revealed to the children of the Gods.

There are two known ways to create this special material. The first and most common involves the blessed smiths of the Church of Sarish, who work alongside priests and clerics of the Binder to bless a forged item as it cools, enacting various rites including the spilling of a consecrated spellcaster's blood into the iron. The second, and far more dangerous, method involves taking the still-smoking metal straight off the anvil and quenching its heat by bathing it in the blood of a living Infernal.

Regardless of how they are created, Sarishan steel items have particularly efficacious properties against Infernal creatures.

Weapons forged of Sarishan steel bypass all forms of damage reduction of Infernal creatures that are not native to the Mortal Plane of Arcanis. Furthermore, if the Infernal creature has the regeneration special quality, then the damage dealt by a Sarishan steel weapon is considered to be of a type that the creature cannot regenerate.

Armor forged from Sarishan steel assists its wearer in resisting the influence of Infernals, granting a +2 sacred bonus on all Will saves made against spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural abilities employed by Infernal creatures.

Note that Sarishan steel is only effective against Infernals of extraplanar origin. It has no special effects on Infernals of native origin. See page 69 for more details.

An item made from Sarishan steel weighs the same as the same item would if made from other metals. Items not primarily made of metal are not meaningfully affected by being partially made of this substance.

Sarishan steel has the same costs, hardness, and hit points as described above for Blood Iron.

Tainted Blades

Tainted blades are evil-aligned weapons that may only be forged from blood iron. The blades gain certain qualities due to the nature of their construction and the materials they are created from. Tainted blades inflict an additional 1d6 points of damage to any non-evil target they hit. Anytime a critical hit is confirmed using this weapon, the recipient of the critical hit also receives one negative level. The wielder of this weapon receives 5 temporary hit points that last for one hour for each negative level so bestowed. The negative levels granted by this weapon disappear after 24 hours, but if at anytime a creature has as many negative levels as Hit Dice, they are dead.

Strong necromancy; Caster Level 12th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor; *bane*, *enervation*, blood iron weapon; Price +3 bonus.

New Magic Weapon Property

Corrupting

A *corrupting* weapon taints the souls of creatures it strikes. Any creature that takes damage from this weapon must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or suffer the effects of being corruption-touched (see page 124 for details). Missile weapons enchanted with the *corrupting* ability bestow its effects upon their ammunition. Infernals and Corrupted creatures are immune to this ability, and other creatures with the Tainted subtype gain a +4 bonus on the saving throw.

The corruption-touched condition persists for 24 hours, unless the victim is the recipient of a successful *remove curse* or *break enchantment* spell. Multiple strikes from a *corrupting* weapon do not increase the corruption-touched condition's effects but they do reset the duration if the target fails the save multiple times.

Faint evocation [Evil]; Caster Level 5th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *corrupting touch*; Price +1 bonus.

New Creatures

DEMONS

Graatzu

Medium-Size Infernal (Chaotic, Evil, Native)	
Hit Dice:	4d8+8 (26 hp)
Base Attack/Grapple:	+4/+8
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft.
AC:	18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 16
Attack:	Claw +8 melee
Full Attack:	2 claws +8 melee and bite +6 melee
Damage:	Claws 1d8+4 (20/x2), bite 1d6+2 (20/x2)
Space/Reach:	5 ft. / 5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Spell-like abilities
Special Qualities:	Damage reduction 5/magic, SR 10, immunities, resistances, telepathy
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 12
Skills:	Intimidate +8, Jump +12, Spot +8, Tumble +9
Feats:	Combat Reflexes, Multiattack
Climate/Terrain:	Any land and underground
Organization:	Solitary, gang (2-4), squad (4-16) or platoon (10-40)
Challenge Rating:	4
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement:	5-9 HD (Medium-Size), 10-12 HD (Large)

The graatzu (the name is both singular and plural) comprise the rank and file of demonic armies; they are more intelligent and thus more useful than the mindless dretches, but still common enough to be committed to battle in huge, disposable waves. They are well aware of their role as spear fodder, and almost seem to relish it under normal circumstances, since the worst thing that can happen to them is to return to the nether planes and be reborn as a dretch. However, those graatzu living in the Sealed Lands are cognizant of the fact that death here is permanent, and those that have survived for the past thousand years are recalcitrant to the point of being paranoid. Only the threat of immediate dismemberment by a more powerful demon is enough to get them to do anything even remotely dangerous.

The graatzu are slender, wiry humanoids with pale green skin and wicked black talons and teeth. They wear no clothing, and appear to be completely genderless. They tend to swarm around their enemies in a constantly moving mass, never staying in one place long enough to make an easy target.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *darkness*, and *scare*. 1/day – *flame arrow*, *true strike*. These abilities operate as if cast by a 6th-level sorcerer (save DC 11 + spell level).

Immunities (Ex): Graatzu are immune to poison and electricity.

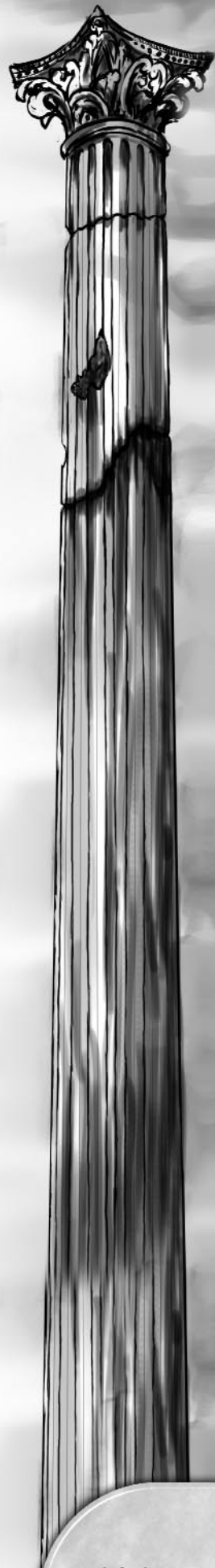
Resistances (Ex): Graatzu have cold, fire, and acid resistance 20.

Telepathy (Su): Graatzu can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

DEVILS

Tiagon

Medium-Size Infernal (Evil, Lawful, Native)	
Hit Dice:	4d8+12 (30 hp)
Base Attack/Grapple:	+4/+9
Initiative:	+1 (Dex)
Speed:	30 ft.



AC:	18 (+1 Dex, +7 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 17
Attack:	Halberd +9 melee
Full Attack:	Halberd +9 melee
Damage:	Halberd 1d10+7 (20/x3)
Space/Reach:	5 ft. / 5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Spell-like abilities
Special Qualities:	Damage reduction 5/magic, SR 10, immunities, resistances, see in darkness, telepathy
Saves:	Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 20, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10
Skills:	Hide +8, Intimidate +7, Jump +12, Spot +8
Feats:	Combat Expertise, Improved Trip
Climate/Terrain:	Any land and underground
Organization:	Solitary, gang (2-4), squad (4-16) or platoon (10-40)
Challenge Rating:	4
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always lawful evil
Advancement:	5-9 HD (Medium-Size), 10-12 HD (Large)

Tiagons represent the common soldiers of the Lordship of Iron and other devil-led kingdoms. While they are not as mindless as the lemures, they might as well be, because they show an extraordinary tendency to follow orders, no matter how suicidal or idiotic they might seem. While they are not particularly clever, they are quite dangerous, especially when wielding their wickedly hooked halberds in packs. They are quite adept at hooking their enemies' legs out from under them and then hacking the prone opponent to pieces before it can arise again. They tend to concentrate on one opponent at a time, finishing it off completely before moving on to the next.

Physically, tiagons are broad and muscular, with grotesquely oversized arms and legs and extremely flat

faces. Their skin is a dark charcoal gray, and most have a small growth of reddish, wire-like facial hair.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *darkness*. 1/day – *cause fear*. These abilities operate as if cast by a 5th-level sorcerer (save DC 10 + spell level).

Immunities (Ex): Tiagons are immune to poison and fire.

Resistances (Ex): Tiagons have cold and acid resistance 20.

See in Darkness (Su): Tiagons can see perfectly in darkness, even magical darkness.

Telepathy (Su): Tiagons can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

HELL-HORSE

Large Magical Beast

Hit Dice:	4d10+12 (34 hp)
Base Attack/Grapple:	+3/+11
Initiative:	+6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	80 ft.
AC:	17 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 15
Attack:	Hoof +6 melee
Attacks:	2 hooves +6 melee and bite +1 melee
Damage:	Hoof 1d6+4 (20/x2) and bite 1d6+2 (20/x2)
Space/Reach:	10 ft. / 5 ft.
Special Attacks:	–
Special Qualities:	Scent
Saves:	Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +2
Abilities:	Str 18, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 13, Cha 10
Skills:	Jump +30, Listen +7, Spot +7
Feats:	Endurance, Improved Initiative
Climate/Terrain:	Any land
Organization:	Solitary or herd (4-16)
Challenge Rating:	2
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Usually neutral
Advancement:	5-9 HD (Large)

Hell-horses are the product of a centuries-old breeding program in which the Riders of the Sealed Lands have mated the fastest, strongest and smartest of their horses with captured nightmares from the demon horse-men of Tarmalen. The result is a powerful, intelligent animal that cannot quite fly, but races along the ground in long, graceful, gliding leaps. These bounds give the hell-horse speeds that no other land animal can hope to match. They are willful and difficult to train, and clever enough to give even the most skilled horse trainer fits.

But if a rider can win the respect of a hell-horse, he will have a mount unmatched by any earthly horse.

Hell-horses are black, with manes and tails that range from bright yellow to deep auburn, but are most often a fiery red color. Some also possess small tufts of hair around their hooves, reminiscent of the flaming hooves of their ancestors.

Skills: Hell-horses have a +10 racial bonus to Jump checks.

PITSPIDERS

Huge Infernal (Evil, Native)	
Hit Dice:	10d8+20 (55 hp)
Base Attack/Grapple:	+10/+24
Initiative:	+9 (+5 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	30 ft., climb 20 ft.
AC:	19 (-2 size, +5 Dex, +6 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 14
Attack:	Bite +14 melee
Attacks:	Bite +14 melee and 2 claws +9 melee
Damage:	Bite 2d6+9 plus poison (19-20/x2) and claws 2d8+4 (20/x2)
Space/Reach:	15 ft. / 10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Poison, web, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 ft., immunities, resistances
Saves:	Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 23, Dex 21, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 4
Skills:	Climb +19, Hide +22, Jump +19, Listen +2, Move Silently +9, Spot +19
Feats:	Alertness, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will
Climate/Terrain:	Any land and underground
Organization:	Solitary, colony (2-5) or swarm (6-11)
Challenge Rating:	8
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement:	11-23 HD (Huge)

Pit spiders, the unnatural result of a union between monstrous spiders and one of the arachnoid demons known as a bebilith, come in all sizes; the one listed here is a fairly average specimen. They appear as furry, tarantula-like spiders with blood-red fur and strange spikes on their forelimbs. Thankfully, they have to date only been encountered in the Taiteng Forest in the Sealed Lands.

Poison (Ex): The Fortitude save required by a pit-spider's bite is DC 17. Primary and secondary damage are the same and deal 1d8 Strength damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

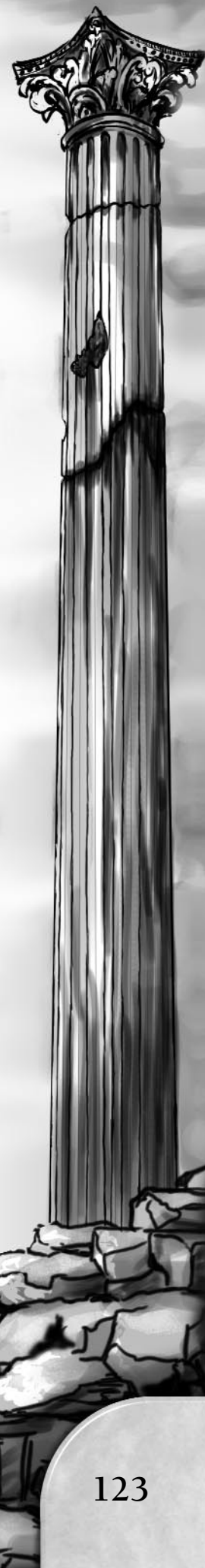
Web (Ex): Pit spiders can cast a web eight times per day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against targets up to one size smaller than the pit spider. The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement. An entangled creature can escape with a successful Escape Artist check (DC 28) or burst it with a Strength check (DC 34). Both are standard actions. Pit spiders often create sheets of sticky webbing up to 25

feet square. They usually position these sheets to snare flying creatures but can also try to trap prey on the ground. Approaching creatures must succeed at a Spot check (DC 20) to notice a web; otherwise they stumble into it and become trapped as though by a successful web attack. Attempts to escape or burst the webbing gain a +5 bonus if the trapped creature has something to walk on or grab while pulling free. Each 5-foot section has 14 hit points, and sheet webs have damage reduction 5/fire. A pit spider can move across its own sheet web at 20 feet per round, and can determine the exact location of any creature touching the web.

Spell-like abilities: 3/day – *darkness*, *poison* (DC 15). 1/day – *contagion*, *desecrate*, *unholy blight* (DC 14). Caster Level 10th. The save DCs are Wisdom-based.

Immunities: Pit spiders are immune to poison, and have acid, cold, electricity and fire resistance 20.

Skills: Pit spiders gain a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Spot checks.



New Template

THE CORRUPTED

Corrupted creatures are those who have fallen under the sway of powerful Infernal creatures. This template is most often applied to those mortals who worship the mighty Devil-Kings, like the Forsaken in the Lordship of Iron or the Thorn Hills. A corrupted creature is infused with the touch of the Infernal, undergoing transformations that make it more like the beings it venerates. Many humanoids willingly accept the transformation into Corrupted creatures in the hopes that they will gain the power of the Infernal; however, most of them gain only a higher degree of indentured servitude to their thankless and uncaring Infernal masters.

Creating a Corrupted Creature

“Corrupted” is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal or incorporeal aberration, animal, dragon, elemental, fey, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, ooze, plant, undead, or vermin of non-good alignment (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A Corrupted creature uses all the base creature’s statistics and abilities except as noted here. Do not recalculate the creature’s Hit Dice, base attack bonus, saves, or skill points.

Size and Type

The Corrupted creature’s type and size are unchanged. It gains the Augmented subtype. It also gains the Evil subtype (regardless of its alignment) and the Tainted subtype.

Armor Class

The Infernal energies cause the creature’s skin or hide to transform, becoming scaled and scarred, like a demon or devil. Its natural armor improves by +2. (If the base creature has no natural armor bonus, it gains a non-magical natural armor bonus of +2.)

Special Attacks

A Corrupted creature retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following special attack.

Corrupting Touch (Su)

Any creature struck for damage by any of a Corrupted creature’s natural weapons or by any manufactured weapon wielded by a Corrupted creature must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 plus one-half the Corrupted creature’s Hit Dice plus the Corrupted crea-

ture’s Charisma modifier) or suffer a tainting of its essence. Infernals and creatures with the Corrupted template are immune to this ability. Creatures with the Tainted subtype gain a +4 bonus on their Will saves to resist this ability. Once a particular creature has been affected by this ability, it is said to be “corruption-touched.”

A corruption-touched creature suffers a reduced effect from spells and effects that would normally heal it. Any *cure* spell that would normally heal the creature (or any *inflict* spell in the case of creatures that are healed by negative energy) has its effectiveness reduced to the next-lower spell. This means that a *cure minor wounds* spell has no effect on a corrupted creature, a *cure light wounds* spell is treated as if it were a *cure minor wounds* spell, and so on. A *heal* spell is treated as if it were a *cure critical wounds* spell. The mass versions of cure spells are similarly affected (but the spell still has its normal effect on its targets that are not corruption-touched). The caster level of the affected spell is unchanged. The Infernal energy that infuses a corruption-touched creature is neither positive nor negative; it is of its own unique type and it inhibits whatever form of energy would normally heal the victim. Any form of energy that would damage the victim instead of healing it is ignored by the corruption-touched condition and functions at full strength.

Supernatural and spell-like abilities that heal specific amounts of damage (such as a paladin’s ability to lay on hands or a monk’s ability to mend her own wounds) affect a corruption-touched creature as if it had a level of resistance equal to the Hit Dice of the Corrupted creature that inflicted the corrupting touch on the subject. For example, a character who was struck by a Corrupted Ghoul (2 Hit Dice) would ignore the first two points of healing from any supernatural or spell-like ability. This resistance also applies to any natural healing that the character would normally undergo; for example, a living creature normally heals a number of hit points equal to its Hit Dice with a night of rest. A creature struck by a Corrupted Ghoul would heal 2 hit points less if it rested while it was still corruption-touched. A creature cannot directly lose hit points as a result of being corruption-touched; if the amount of resistance exceeds the amount of healing, then the amount of healing is simply reduced to zero.

Magic items that heal characters are inhibited exactly as described above. If the magic item is a spell-trigger or spell-completion item (such as a *wand of cure light wounds* or a scroll of *cure moderate wounds*) then it is reduced to the next-lower spell; if the item heals a specific number of hit points then the corruption-touched creature resists the item’s healing based on the Corrupted creature’s Hit Dice, as described above. Any magic item that would damage the corruption-touched creature has its full normal effect.

In addition to the effects described above, a corruption-touched creature temporarily gains the Tainted subtype, regardless of its alignment. This has no direct effect on the corruption-touched creature, except that it can now be detected by spells and abilities that detect Tainted creatures, and it is now vulnerable to spells and abilities that specifically target Tainted creatures. However, the corruption-touched creature cannot be turned or rebuked by characters who have the ability to turn or rebuke Infernals, unless it is normally vulnerable to that ability. A corruption-touched creature cannot spread the corruption-touched condition to other creatures.

A single Corrupted creature cannot inflict the corruption-touched condition on the same target, but multiple different Corrupted creatures can individually inflict the condition on the same target. This only matters if the Corrupted creatures have different Hit Dice. If a particular target is struck by more than one Corrupted creature, the most powerful corruption-touched effect takes precedence (in other words, the conditions overlap, they do not stack).

The corruption-touched condition lasts for 24 hours. A *remove curse* or *break enchantment* spell can remove the corruption-touched condition. A *dispel magic* spell has no effect.

Special Qualities

A Corrupted creature retains all the special qualities of the base creature and also gains the following.

- Choice of a single special quality available to dark-kin. Upon becoming Corrupted, the creature chooses one special ability to reflect the specific effects of its Tainted blood. This is chosen from the same list used by dark-kin (see page 71). Some of the available abilities may not be appropriate choices depending on the type of the base creature.

- Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- Damage reduction (vulnerable to good-aligned weapons; see table). If a Corrupted creature gains damage reduction, its natural weapons and any manufactured weapons it wields are treated as evil-aligned weapons for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction.

Damage Reduction

Hit Dice	Damage Reduction
1-3	—
4-7	5 / good
8-11	10 / good
12 or more	15 / good

Corrupted Undead

Special rules apply when a creature with the Undead type gains the Corrupted template. The template can never be applied to an existing Undead creature; it can only be applied to a new Undead creature that is specifically animated using Infernal energies. The Corrupted Undead still has a type of Undead and all the normal

qualities of that type, but it is unaffected by positive or negative energy. This means that *cure* spells do not harm it and *inflict* spells do not heal it. Spells that deal damage strictly through the application of positive or negative energy have no effect on Corrupted Undead. In fact, it cannot be healed at all, except by spells and effects that specifically heal creatures with the Tainted subtype. Likewise, spells and effects that specifically damage creatures with the Tainted subtype affect a Corrupted Undead normally, even if the spell would not normally work on Undead creatures. A Corrupted Undead with an Intelligence score heals damage on its own as normal. The fast healing special quality works for a Corrupted Undead regardless of the creature's Intelligence.

A Corrupted Undead cannot be turned, rebuked, commanded, or destroyed by characters who channel positive or negative energy. All such attempts simply fail as if the creature had an unbeatable Turn Resistance. However, it can be turned, rebuked, commanded, or destroyed by characters who have the power to channel energy against Infernals and/or creatures with the Tainted subtype, such as clerics of Sarish with the Daemonology domain. Because it is only partially infused with Infernal energy, however, the Corrupted Undead gains +2 Turn Resistance against such attempts. This completely replaces (does not stack with) any Turn Resistance that the base creature would normally possess.

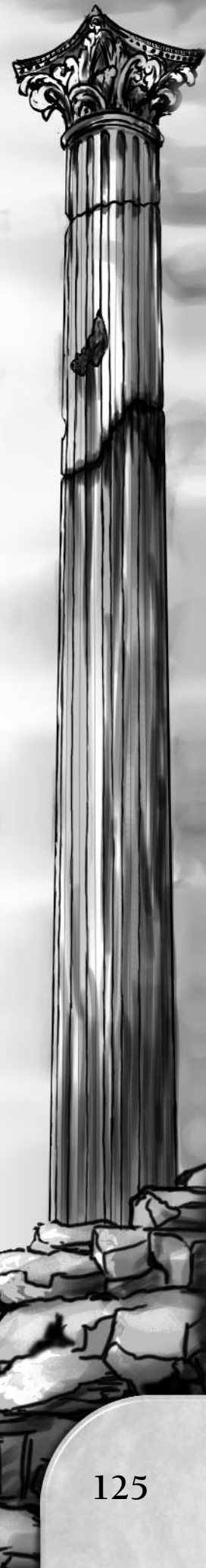
If a Corrupted Undead has the ability to create other undead as a result of slaying them or draining their abilities, then any undead created in that fashion arise with the Corrupted template themselves. They are under the control of whichever Infernal controls the Corrupted Undead that created them (if any). The effects of the undead-creating special ability are otherwise unchanged from the base creature.

Abilities

A Corrupted creature becomes twisted and deformed by the touch of the Infernal. Its physical form becomes more powerful, but its mind is warped and its mental capacity is diminished as it becomes slavishly devoted to the Infernal being it venerates. Change the creature's ability scores as follows: Strength +4, Constitution +2, Intelligence -2, Wisdom -4. The creature's Intelligence and Wisdom cannot drop below 3 because of this template, but a creature that has an Intelligence score of zero before the template is applied (such as a non-intelligent undead) can still be a Corrupted creature. If the creature does not have a Constitution score then increase its Charisma by +2 instead.

Environment

Any Corrupted creatures are most commonly found on the Material Plane as worshippers of the Devil-Kings, but any Infernal being of sufficient rank and power numbers Corrupted beings among its followers. Some of the Devil-Kings have found a way to fuse



the essence of Infernal energy with the energies that are used to animate the dead; Corrupted Undead are a particularly terrifying sight.

Challenge Rating

As base creature +1; for Undead, as base creature +2 because the immunity to positive and negative energy alike generally makes the creature more dangerous. In a home game, if you know that there will always be a char-

acter in the party who can affect Infernal creatures with spells or special abilities, then consider only increasing the CR of a Corrupted Undead creature by +1.

Level Adjustment

Same as the base creature +1, including for Undead; the immunity to positive and negative energy is not really a specific advantage for PCs in this case, so it does not affect the Level Adjustment.

Sample Corrupted Creature

Corrupted Ghoul

Size/Type:	Medium Undead (Augmented, Evil, Tainted)
Hit Dice:	2d12 (13 hp)
Initiative:	+3
Speed:	30 ft (6 squares)
Armor Class:	17 (+3 Dex, +4 natural); touch 13, flat-footed 14
Base Attack / Grapple:	+1 / +4
Attack:	Bite +4 melee (1d6+3 plus paralysis)
Full Attack:	Bite +4 melee (1d6+3 plus paralysis) and 2 claws +2 melee (1d3+1 plus paralysis)
Space/Reach:	5 ft. / 5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Corrupting touch, ghoulish fever, paralysis
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 ft., fire resistance 2, positive and negative energy immunity, undead traits, +2 turn resistance (Infernal only)
Saves:	Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 17, Dex 17, Con —, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 14
Skills:	Balance +7, Climb +7, Hide +7, Jump +7, Move Silently +7, Spot +5
Feats:	Multiattack
Languages:	Low Coryani
Environment:	Any
Organization:	Solitary, gang (2-4), or pack (7-12)
Challenge Rating:	3
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always chaotic evil
Advancement:	3 HD (Medium)
Level Adjustment:	+1

Ghoul Fever (Su): Disease – bite, Fortitude DC 13, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex. The save DC is Charisma-based. An afflicted humanoid who dies of ghoulish fever rises as a ghoul with the Corrupted template at the next midnight. A humanoid who becomes a Corrupted ghoul in this way retains none of the abilities it possessed in life. It is under the control of the Infernal that controls the Corrupted ghoul that created it (if any). It hungers for the flesh of the living and behaves like a normal ghoul in all other respects.

A humanoid of 4 or more Hit Dice rises as a Corrupted ghoul, not a ghoul.

Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by a Corrupted Ghoul's bite or claw attack must succeed on a DC 13 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Elorii are not immune to this paralysis. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Corrupting Touch (Su): Those hit by a Corrupted Ghoul's bite or claw attack or any manufactured weapon it wields must succeed on a DC 13 Will save or gain the corruption-touched condition for 24 hours.

Energy Immunity (Su): A Corrupted Ghoul cannot be healed or damaged by positive or negative energy. Spells and effects that rely entirely on positive or negative energy have no effect on a Corrupted Ghoul. Spells and effects that specifically heal or deal damage to creatures with the Tainted subtype function normally when used on a Corrupted Ghoul even if they would not normally work on Undead creatures.

Turn Resistance (Su): A Corrupted Ghoul cannot be commanded, destroyed, turned, or rebuked by any character using positive or negative energy. Only characters with the ability to turn or rebuke Infernals may turn or rebuke a Corrupted Ghoul. The Corrupted Ghoul is treated as if it were a 4 HD creature for the purpose of resolving such attempts.

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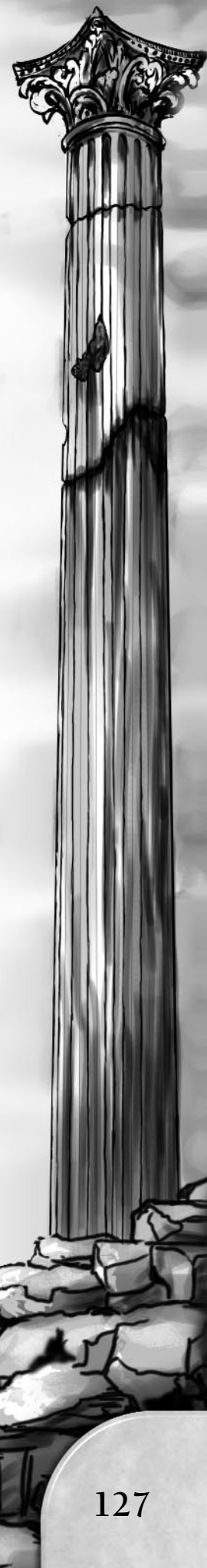
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