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# THE PRISON CITY OF HELL'S REACH

by Mike Mearls

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According to myth, Hell spewed forth a foul seed of its damned terrain that took root in the world and yielded the ruined city known as Hell's Reach. Once a prosperous trading port that harbored pirates, outlaws, and worse within its walls, the gods themselves punished the city for turning its back on its one-time patron deity and embracing decadence, greed, and violence. A tremendous earthquake sundered the peninsula that connected the city to the mainland, leaving it a half-flooded island populated by small bands of desperate survivors. Hell's Reach is now a dumping ground for criminals deemed too dangerous to ever allow back into society and too likely to break free from prison.

Though warships constantly patrol the waters around Hell's Reach, travel to and from the city is not impossible. Smugglers and other criminals use magical means to ferry weapons, armor, and other goods to the ruins, trading such mundane items for poisons and worse. As a one-time prosperous port, many fabulous treasures lie hidden within the city's crumbling walls, and more than a few daring bands have ventured into the city. Those that make it out speak of desperate bands of cannibals, highly organized criminal gangs, and much worse that stalk the streets. Yet these same survivors often return laden with gold, jewels, and magic.



Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®



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This adventure is designed to be easily dropped into your existing *Third-Edition D&D* campaign. It can be run in a just a single session and makes for an excellent evening's gaming. To prepare yourself to run the adventure, you should read it completely at least once to familiarize yourself with the material. You may wish to photocopy the map in the center of the book for ease of use as well. The text on the back of the book can be read to your players to introduce them to the adventure. After that, you're ready to begin. Good luck!

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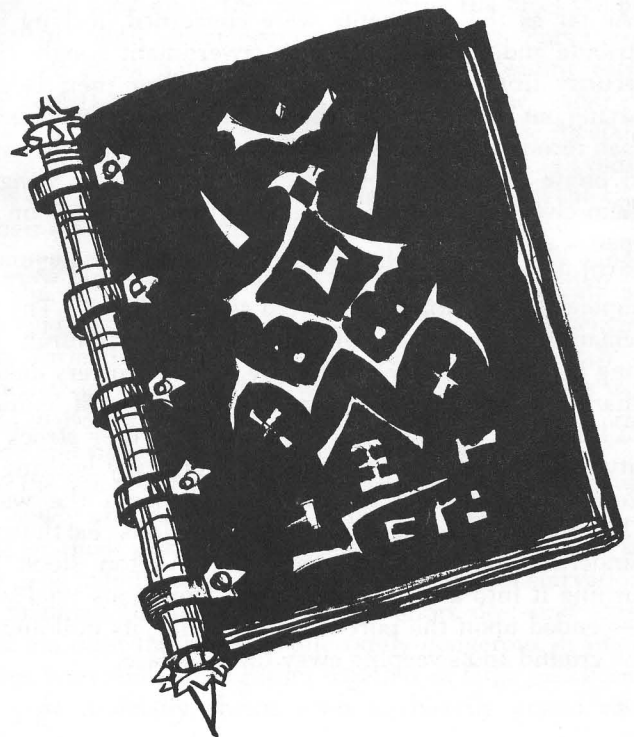
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## GAME MASTER BACKGROUND

Hell's Reach nominally serves as a large-scale prison – in practice. However, magical means of movement and simple stealth are too effective to completely seal off contact between an entire city and the outside world. Hell's Reach serves more as a containment vessel for various scum and villains than as a prison. The way the authorities see it, keeping the worst criminals in the same place with little direct supervision encourages them to kill each other off and helps make the crime problem at least somewhat manageable. The nobility is happy simply to get the worst criminals out of their hair and isolated from society.

Integrating Hell's Reach into an existing campaign is difficult if you have already run a few adventures. The PCs' home kingdom may simply not be involved in the administration or use of Hell's Reach, making it more of a curiosity and distant rumor for the populace than a potential destination for criminals. In addition, you could simply place Hell's Reach far enough from the characters' regular stomping grounds that their not hearing of it is not jarringly strange. Moving Hell's Reach from a maritime location to a landlocked one requires some modifications. The sunken portions of the city could be part of a lake, while foot patrols and a large wall could replace the squadrons of warships that keep watch over the city. Perhaps the cataclysm that destroyed the city took the form of a massive flood that partially submerged the city's remains. The deities central to Hell's Reach's background, Phardon, Velena, and Yollgotha, are described at the end of this gazetteer and easily replaced with similar deities from your own pantheons.



## HISTORY

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One hundred years ago, the blasted city now known as Hell's Reach was the prosperous port town of Alleton, an important stopover point on the trade routes to the distant east. Silks, spices, weapons, and bizarre magic flowed through the town, bringing all sorts of travelers and wanderers with them. The goods that entered Alleton were not strictly material in nature. The influx of travelers brought with it all manner of faiths, beliefs, and prophets. Amongst these was the worship of a deity known as Phardon of the Lash, patron of tyranny. Phardon's cult began as an underground organization, but with careful planning (and a few bribes) it took hold amongst the highly competitive and aggressive merchant princes who governed the city. Soon, the worship of Velena, the previous patron goddess of Alleton, gave way to that of Phardon. The city fell under the rule of a council of five despots. These five forced the poor, homeless, and other undesirables into workhouses or crewing merchant ships based out of the city. Alleton became a merchant's paradise due to its low tariffs and attitude that any privilege, no matter how debased, had a price. The city ran by and for commerce, with no thought to any other purpose.

Within two decades, Alleton was a debased city of thieves, murderers, and decadence. The ruling council's laissez-faire attitude allowed cutthroats and pirates to openly meet and plan their crimes so long as did not target those merchants who dropped anchor in Alleton's harbor and paid tariffs into Alleton's coffers. Neighboring kingdoms moved to blockade Alleton and refuse shipments from merchants who did business with the city, but too many trading houses and shipping concerns moved their products through Alleton for such a plan to work.

As far as the merchants were concerned, forking over tribute and bribes to Alleton's government bought them security from pirate attacks. Looking over their ledgers, paying out tribute was, in the long run, more cost effective than recouping the loss of ships, goods, and men destroyed in pirate raids. The governments of the region resigned themselves to a system of semi-legitimate piracy on the open seas.

While Alleton's enemies in the material world were left impotent, other forces conspired against the city. The few remaining patriarchs of Velena, whose church had long ago fled the city after many of its followers died by Phardon's minions, plotted the downfall of Alleton. Calling upon the power of their goddess, they struck the city with a terrible curse. Fire fell from the sky, igniting the ships at anchor and sinking them beneath the waves. The ground rocked with a tremendous earthquake, sundering the peninsula on which Alleton stood and turning it into an island. Finally, a monstrous tidal wave descended upon the port town, smashing its buildings to the ground and sweeping away the populace.

A fleet of ships representing a coalition of nobles and governments from the region surrounded the city, leaping on the chance to pounce on the few pirates and other criminals who survived the disaster. To this day the island city of Alleton, now dubbed Hell's Reach, serves as a prison and sanctuary for the damned. Outsiders ferry pirates, murderers, and other criminals to the ruins, and leaving them to prey upon one another as a flotilla patrols the sea surrounding the city.

## GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL ORDER

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Hell's Reach falls under the control of a group of gangs that range in size from a dozen to nearly a hundred members. Few of the city's approximately one thousand inhabitants claim no allegiance to a criminal group, as only a few extremely powerful individuals can survive on their own within the ruins. The remaining priests and followers of Phardon transitioned from running the city of Alleton to dominating the ruins of Hell's Reach with relative ease. Though many survivors blamed Phardon and his clerics for the city's downfall, no other clergies had survived to operate in Hell's Reach, making the surviving Phardonite clerics the only source of such divine magic as *create food and water*. In the lean times after the disaster this advantage proved critical.

Most gangs form around a single, charismatic leader. Gangs run a single section of the city, turning the ruins into a series of armed camps. The Sea Furys, a group composed mainly of ex-pirates, thieves, and murderers banished to Hell's Reach, is the second largest group in the ruins. They survive primarily through smuggling weapons, armor, and food on to the island, running the blockade by night in small outrigger canoes. The Sea Furys are organized along naval lines, with a captain leading each crew, and the captains in turn reporting to the leader of the entire organization — a halfling dubbed *the Admiral*. Few gangs are as well-organized as the Sea Furys, but most of the ones that have managed to claim a portion of the city as their own run a similar, though smaller, operation.

Smugglers represent the sole link between the gangs and the outside world. While some of them operate as independents and do business with any willing gangs, most form long-term business relationships with a particular gang or criminal warlord. Most smugglers use magic to evade patrols, and a few enterprising wizards utilize *teleport* and similar magic to travel to and from the ruins.

At the bottom of the totem pole are the bands of outlaws and newly arrived criminals yet to earn membership in a gang, or those either too unstable or lacking any skills to gain gang membership. Teetering on the edge of starvation and madness, these poor souls live a short, desperate existence amongst the ruins. While rarely dangerous in small groups, they sometimes gather together in large packs that can pose a deadly threat even to heavily armed and

armored gangs. Many of these lost souls, as the others call them, have turned to cannibalism, demon-worship, and anything else that might assuage their pitiable condition.

In addition to the gangs and wandering packs of desperate men, a few solitary figures maintain abodes in the city. Primary among these is Malachai the Disfigured, an archmage of considerable power who chose to seize a tower in Hell's Reach and make it his lair. Malachai's primary area of expertise lies in summoning and binding demons. He correctly reasoned that his work would attract undue attention in civilized lands, but none would care what research he pursued in Hell's Reach. Furthermore, he often culls the surrounding ruins for sacrifices to his otherworldly allies.

The final power players in the city are small bands of sahuagin who hunt the criminals through the ruins for sport. The sea devil tribes consider a pilgrimage to Hell's Reach for a hunt, followed by a feast of human flesh, an excellent holiday from the typical raids on shipping and battles with sea elves. A few degenerate bands of lost souls actively work with the sahuagin, guarding their temporary lairs and helping to keep them abreast of which gangs represent the best hunting prospects.

## ECONOMICS

Obviously, no legitimate trade flows into Hell's Reach, and the ruins produce few exports. Still, Hell's Reach is an important gateway for illicit drugs, illegal magical artifacts, and other banned or heavily restricted goods. Since the authorities venture into the ruins only in the direst circumstances, illegal trade and the production of dangerous goods can take place in the open without fear of a crackdown. Most of the gangs grow or produce illegal substances and trade them to smugglers for weapons, armor, and — most important — food. Getting people off the island is a little more difficult than merely hiding a sack of flour on the way in, but it is known to happen. A limited amount of trade occurs between gangs, primarily as an offshoot of non-aggression and co-defense pacts.

Torred's petal is the most commonly grown narcotic. A hallucinogen purported to have magical properties, would-be druggists have difficulty growing this black flower in secret, as it requires direct sunlight and copious amounts of water. In the lawless ruins, however, patches of the flower grow wild. Poison ranks right behind narcotics as the most common export, as such herbs grow and reproduce in openly. Many gangs either maintain an alchemist's lab or arrange for part of their payment to be made in finished poisons and drugs.

## LOCATIONS AND IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS

### 1. THE IRON KEEP

Built in the heyday of Alleton's power, this small castle served as the primary temple to Phardon for the entire region. Now it is a fortified camp from which the Phardonites rule over the northern half of the ruins. Canon Peltrach ur'Raskor is an ironfisted commander who tolerates no disobedience. Patrols regularly sweep through the areas claimed by the Phardonites, killing or capturing all they encounter. This area is perhaps the safest section of Hell's Reach, yet the stifling tyranny and steep penalties for unauthorized criminal activity drive most to settle in other areas. Each inhabitant of this area must wear an metal collar fitted with a holy symbol of Phardon that marks one's status and position in the Phardonite hierarchy. Laborers and other commoners wear steel ones, clerics, wizards, and mid-ranking commanders wear silver, and the uppermost leaders gold. This entire section of the city runs like a military encampment. Walled off and heavily patrolled, this area reacts poorly to strangers, attacking them on sight and either killing or jailing them in the cells beneath the keep. Everyone has a place in the hierarchy of the church, from the lowliest sailor, to each warrior or cleric, up to Canon Peltrach himself.

The Phardonite Iron Guard maintains order and serves as the primary defense force. Composed mostly of clerics of Phardon, it wields absolute authority over any that wear the steel holy symbol. While the clerics' word is law, they obey the edicts handed down by the ruling council. Still, the vast majority of those who inhabit this area are at the mercy of Iron Guard patrols.

The Phardonites engage primarily in the narcotics trade. While they count few wizards amongst their allies, they have extensive ties to the church hierarchy throughout the world. Most of the smugglers and traders they work with are ardent Phardonites. The church in this region uses the Iron Keep as its headquarters, plotting the overthrow of neighboring kingdoms from within its walls.

Many clerics make forays into the surrounding ruins to prove their mettle and reclaim lost artifacts of Phardon. The cataclysm that destroyed Alleton caused the loss of many holy relics, and though the church has made a concerted effort to reclaim each lost item, many still lie within and beneath the ruined city. In addition, a secretive splinter sect of Phardon occasionally sends expeditions into the deeps, the caverns and old sewers beneath the city. Unknown to Peltrach, these clerics have subverted some of the Iron Guard to the worship of Yollgotha. The demon lord's sleeping form has sent these heretics visions in their dreams, bidding them to come free it from its slumber in the earth. More information on Yollgotha is provided under the descriptions of areas #2 and #7.

Peltrach is a quiet, grim man. While he wields considerable influence as the head cleric of one of the most important bastions of Phardon's worship, he holds little power outside of the temple's walls. While other clerics of Phardon plot to usurp governments and institute their own dictatorships, Peltrach works as little more than an administrator, helping coordinate but not command Phardonite efforts across the region. He longs to make a name for himself, and secretly hopes for a promotion to a more exciting post. Unfortunately for Peltrach, his increasing boredom with his current assignment has allowed others to seduce some of his clerics to the worship of Yollgotha.

Peltrach carries a +3 *heavy mace* that he calls *Phardon's blessing*. To help ease his boredom, he often takes an active role in repelling attackers and patrolling the area just outside the Iron Keep. Were it not for direct orders from his superiors, Peltrach long ago would have enacted a campaign to conquer and subjugate the pirates of Admiral G'ort. He sees their existence as an insult to Phardon and in his free time, plots theoretical campaigns against them.

**Iron Guard, Human Clr 1:** CR 1; SZ M (humanoid); HD 1d8; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (+5 chainmail, +2 large wooden shield); Atks Heavy mace +3 melee (1d8+2), +0 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); SQ Spells; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 10; AL LE. Skills: Concentration +4, Knowledge (religion) +4, Spellcraft +4. Feats: Combat Casting, Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (heavy mace). Spells (3/2+1): (0) *create water, detect magic, light*; (1st) *command, cure light wounds, magic weapon*.

## 2. BLACK SPIKE

Malachai the Disfigured calls this bleak, stone tower home. Within its walls he works to summon and bind his demonic allies, often turning a demon loose on the city below in order to observe its capabilities in battle. For this reason, the locals have deserted the surrounding area. Trespassers in the surrounding area risk reanimation as skinless zombies to patrol the area. Malachai's tower has neither doors nor windows, though a trap door rests atop the roof. Filling the six-story tower are labs, workshops, and other chambers staffed by quasits and undead servitors. In addition, a tunnel connects Malachai's basement to the deeps, giving the archmage access to the creatures that dwell there and their treasures.

Malachai has had his skin flayed from his body. He acquired this distinctive trait as a punishment after losing control of a demon prince he attempted to summon years ago. Malachai's wounds bleed steadily and he often wears white robes stained with his own blood. The archmage rarely speaks, but when he does his voice is a quiet, harsh rasp. Rumor has it that Malachai avoided death at the demon's hand only by offering it his soul. Supposedly, the archmage works tirelessly to fulfill some strange mission the demon charged him to complete. Once his task is done, Malachai's soul returns and his skin restores itself.

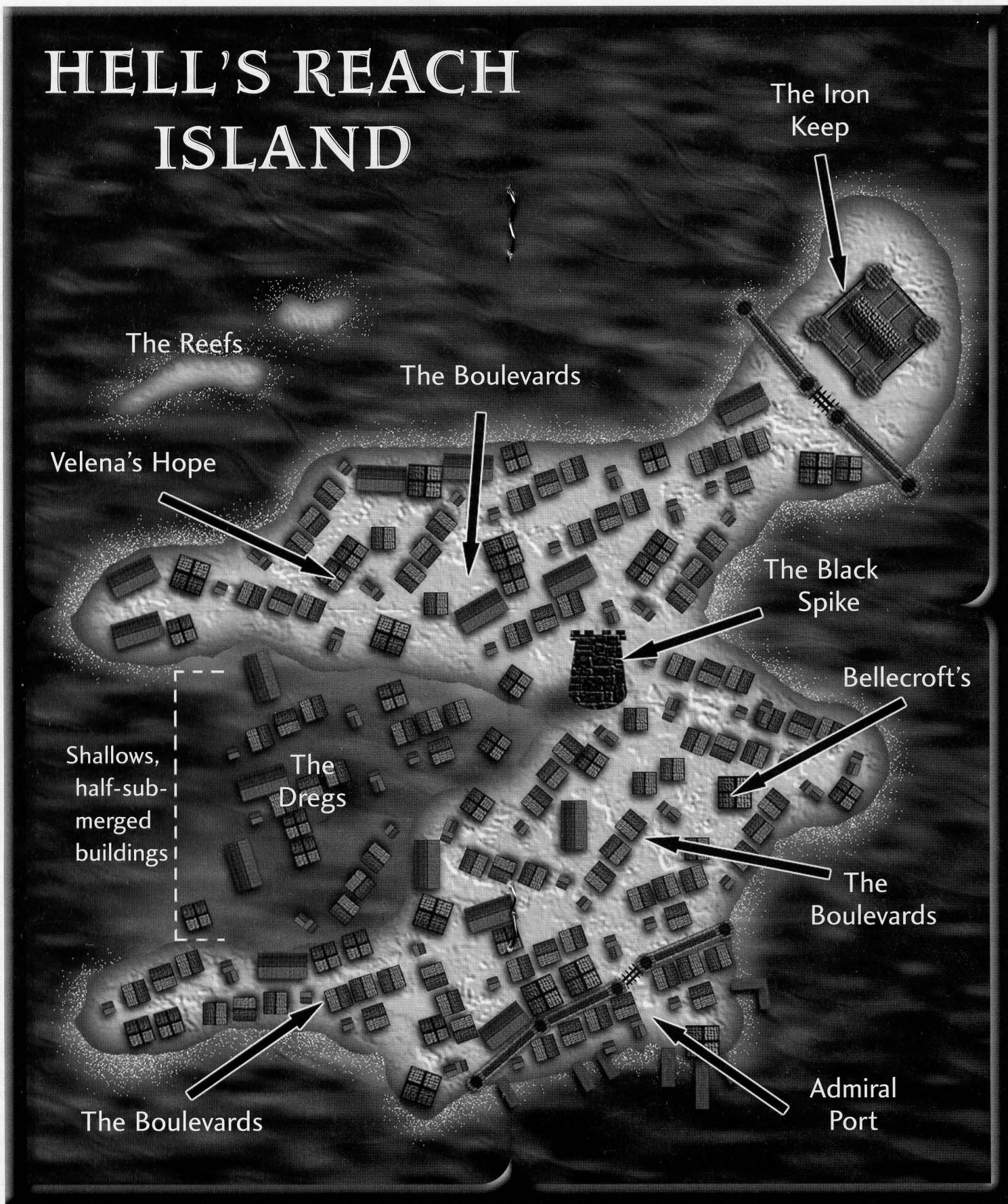
These rumors are at least partially true. Malachai is driven to discover a method by which the demon to which he is dedicated — Yollgotha of the Skinless Hordes — can once again walk the earth. According to Malachai's research, Yollgotha's physical form is buried deep beneath the ruins of Hell's Reach. The archmage willingly had his skin torn from his body as a sign of devotion to his dread lord.

Currently, Malachai searches for any signs of Yollgotha's presence. He spends much of his time in the deeps amongst the degenerates who embrace Yollgotha as a god. As of yet, Malachai is no closer to freeing the demon. His greatest concern is that the Phardonites and Sea Furys may form an alliance that could bring an unacceptable level of order and safety to Hell's Reach. Malachai knows that any would-be warlord of Hell's Reach would have to confront him at some point. He often sends his demonic servants on missions to ambush and slaughter Phardonite and Sea Fury patrols in the hopes of ratcheting up tension between the two groups. This plan has not yet yielded open conflict between the two groups, but Malachai's spies assure him that it is only a matter of time before one side or the other declares open war.

**Malachai the Disfigured, Human Wiz18:** CR 18; SZ M (humanoid); HD 18d4–18; hp 40; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 24 (+3 Dex, *ring of protection* +3, *bracers of armor* +8); Atks +2 *dagger* +12/+7 melee (1d4+3), +14/+9 ranged (1d4+3, +2 *dagger*); SQ Spells, *ring of sustenance, staff of fire* (48); SV Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +14; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 8, Int 22, Wis 16, Cha 14; AL LE. Skills: Alchemy +27, Appraise, Concentration +20, Craft (metalworking) +27, Diplomacy +10, Heal +8, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Listen +5, Scry +27, Spellcraft +27, Spot +13. Feats: Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Forge Ring, Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Focus (invocation), Spell Penetration. Spells (4/6/6/5/5/5/5/3/3/2): (0) *daze, detect magic, detect undead, mage hand*; (1st) *cause fear, change self, chill touch, magic missile* (x3); (2nd) *flaming sphere, melf's acid arrow, mirror image, protection from arrows, spectral hand, web*; (3rd) *dispel magic, fireball, protection from elements, stinking cloud, vampiric touch*; (4th) *charm monster, dimension door, enervation fire shield, stonkskin*; (5th) *animate dead, cloudkill, feeblemind, summon monster V, wall of force*; (6th) *chain lightning, circle of death, globe of invulnerability, summon monster VI, true seeing*; (7th) *finger of death, forcecage, teleport without error*; (8th) *Bigby's clenched fist, greater planar binding, horrid wilting*; (9th) *imprisonment, wail of the banshee*.

Assume that Malachai has access to any scrolls and potions he may need.

# HELL'S REACH ISLAND



### 3. THE DEEPS

The sewers, caves, and caverns beneath Hell's Reach flooded out in the wake of the disaster that destroyed the city, but isolated pockets remain accessible from the surface. Many strange creatures, the product of the divine energy that destroyed the city, lurk below. The more aggressive monsters move about the city ruins by night, hunting down lone travelers or small groups. A small colony of sahuagin lairs within the sewers and often plays host to warriors from allied tribes who have come to prove their skill in bravery by hunting within the ruins. These creatures are the bane both of those who live within Hell's Reach and the smugglers who attempt to run the blockade. The sahuagin prize the poisons and narcotics the smugglers carry, making them extremely attractive targets for raids.

A variety of horrors stalk and swim through the subterranean passages. Carrion crawlers, giant lizards, and spiders are common in the deeps. In addition, the undead spirits of those who perished in the collapse of Alleton linger on here. Packs of ghouls and ghouls, occasionally spill forth from the depths to wreak havoc on the surface and slaughter all whom they encounter. The clerics of Phardon have supposedly struck an alliance with some of the more powerful undead creatures, and on several occasions gangs that have struggled against the Phardonites have found themselves assaulted by undead.

In addition to the bizarre creatures that live here, the deeps are home to the more degenerate and desperate ranks of the lost souls. Many of these poor men have succumbed to madness by their lives in Hell's Reach. Most practice cannibalism, surging out of their tunnels to grab victims from the city above to devour in their feasts. Many lost souls worship the dormant form of Yollgotha, carrying out debased rites in his name. Rumors abound of passages deep beneath the city lined with human skulls and caked with ice no matter what the season.

Lost souls are normal humans, elves, dwarves, and other humanoids driven to madness and cannibalism by their imprisonment or by exposure to Yollgotha's twisted rituals and corrupting influence. Most revere the sleeping demon as a god, though few are coherent enough to name him or study his secrets. Lost souls refer to their lord as "He Who Sleeps," or "the Quiet Chaos." Malachai the Disfigured regularly walks amongst the lost souls in an effort to learn more of his master's resting-place. Thus far, he has learned nothing.

Generate lost ones as you would a normal NPC, though they are armed only with crude clubs, padded armor, and the occasional shield. Lost one spellcasters are all either adepts of Yollgotha or sorcerers.

### 4. ADMIRAL G'ORT

Located at the southern end of Hell's Reach, the fortified docks of Admiral G'ort is the richest and most luxurious section of Hell's Reach. A visitor to this enclave would be hard-pressed to imagine the squalor and desperation that

exist just outside its walls. Inhabited by a strongly unified and well-directed band of ex-pirates, thieves, and bandits, Admiral G'ort functions as an important way station for smugglers and other criminals. The leader of Admiral G'ort, the pirate captain known as the Admiral, has invested quite a fortune into bribing a few of the naval captains that patrol the waters around Hell's Reach. Whether directing them to destroy rival smugglers or escort her own crews to safety, the Admiral considers herself to be not only the head of her own smuggler's port, but also the de facto commanding officer of the fleets surrounding Hell's Reach.

Admiral G'ort resembles a rowdy seaside town rather than a blasted city of the damned. Shops and taverns line the streets, and though no large ships drop anchor at port, a few catamarans and other smuggling boats are always tied up at the docks. The area is home to patrols of Sea Furys pirates (Ftr1, race and gender variable) charged with keeping the peace. All violations of the Admiral's rules have the same punishment: banishment to Hell's Reach. The Sea Furys wear the blood red bandanas as identification. Higher-ranking Sea Furys are often rogues, wizards, or fighters.

The one commodity that the Admiral does not offer is freedom. Per her agreement with the sea captains who accept her bribes, her smugglers deal solely in goods and passage for non-prisoners. The Admiral and her allies are too worried of some criminal's capture and admission of how he escaped from Hell's Reach to risk their very profitable arrangement.

The Admiral is above all a businesswoman. In fact, she was never sentenced to Hell's Reach, instead leveraging her bribes with the navy to access to the city and, later, into her own smuggling empire. Many thieves' guilds use Admiral G'ort as a safehouse and storage area for recently stolen goods, confident that the authorities would never dare investigate Hell's Reach. The Admiral's living quarters easily equals that of any mainland noble's, and her personal fortune grows daily. The people of Admiral G'ort are strongly loyal to the Admiral. Before her arrival, Admiral G'ort was only a marginally better place to live than the rest of Hell's Reach. After defeating the former leader of the Sea Furys in personal combat, the Admiral set about building the newly dubbed Admiral G'ort into the world's preeminent destination for high price stolen artifacts and smuggled goods. The influx of money and goods has led to a dramatic upturn in Admiral G'ort's fortunes, and many of the Sea Furys and others who call this area home credit the Admiral with personally ushering in the current era of prosperity.

Relations with the Phardonites are the sole remaining problem for the Admiral. As the self-styled lords of Hell's Reach, they see her as an impudent upstart. Thus far, competition has remained solely with smuggling and trade operations, but a few isolated melees between the Iron Guard and Sea Fury patrols have erupted in recent months. Over the last few months, the disappearance of a few patrols near Phardonite territory have spurred a core of

pro-war captains to make bolder and louder call for actions.

## 5. THE DREGS

Located at the western end of Hell Reach, the dregs are so named because the weakest and least influential gangs call this area home. The alleyways and streets of the dregs all flooded with seawater, making it difficult to grow most narcotics and poisons. The gangs here live primarily by raiding each other, the more prosperous gangs, and fishing. Most gangs claim the upper floors of a building as a lair and travel via pole-driven skiffs. Such buildings collapse soon after their load-bearing members soak up too much water. Gangs in this area usually have about a dozen members, none of whom are above second or third level. Most skilled warriors or thieves chose to live in the more secure and profitable boulevards, but occasionally a powerful figure may choose to become a big fish in the Dregs.

Most newly arrived convicts spend at least a few months in the Dregs proving themselves as capable warriors or thieves. The more powerful gangs often come here on raids, not only to deal with raiders but also to scout for potential recruits. Of all the sections of Hell's Reach, the Dregs are probably the safest for a group seeking to infiltrate the city. There are enough active gangs here that powerful monsters aren't too common, and no warlord can marshal a powerful force to deal with intruders in the area.

## 6. THE BOULEVARDS

A battleground for gangs that rank above those who inhabit the Dregs and below the Sea Furys or the Phardonites, the Boulevards are those portions of Hell's Reach that still stand above sea level. The gangs here deal primarily in smuggling, tending small plots of narcotics or poisonous plants and either trading them with the Phardonites, Sea Furys, or the occasional independent smuggler. The majority of Hell's Reachers call the Boulevards home. While pitched battles are less common here than in the Dregs, violence is still commonplace. The gangs here are prosperous enough that they can take care of most of their basic needs, but a single raid or poor growing season can doom a gang. Most gangs have between ten and 30 members (with the largest having almost 50), and all claim a single building or block as home. The gangs typically fortify their territories, with many blocks turned into miniature castles by carefully scrounging materials from buildings at the center of the block to build walls along the edges.

## 7. VELENA'S HOPE

This small fortress of Velena worshippers hides among the ruins of the Boulevards. While most sages assume that Alleton met its fate for turning its back on the worship of Velena, the truth is far more sinister. In ages past, the warrior queen Velena defeated the demon Yollgotha and imprisoned him beneath the earth directly below the city. Over time, the demon's influence helped lead to the influx of Phardonites into the city. On the day of Alleton's

destruction, a small band of necromancers and Phardonite clerics gathered to commit the final ritual that would free Yollgotha and allow him to once again walk the earth. Velena's clerics, out of favor with the government and lacking the resources to directly challenge the cabal, called upon their patron and destroyed the city in order to contain Yollgotha. Since then, a small, highly dedicated sect of Velenans has secretly taken root in the city. Led by Fergus the Just (human Pal10) these warriors carefully watch for signs of Yollgotha's presence. The archmage Malachai worries them greatly, as they know they lack the resources to confront him. The sect hopes to tip off the Phardonites and their rivals in Admiral G'ort to the danger posed by Yollgotha and bait them into attacking Malachai. However, the archmage has seen to it to help exacerbate tensions between those two camps, unwittingly foiling Fergus's plans.

Velena's Hope appears as just another minor fortification amongst the Boulevards. In addition to Fergus, it is staffed by Anamira the Crusader, Dougal the Just, several lower level clerics, and a small group of paladins and fighters. The followers of Velena help the more pitiable cases of Hell's Reach when possible, but dare not reveal themselves unless the situation is utterly dire. Thus far, this chapel remains a secret. Should Malachai learn of its existence, he will likely wipe the sect out within a week.

Ian Spectre understands tactics. He retains the memories of a seasoned veteran who commanded over one hundred successful battles. He remembers how to defend the pass and will stop at nothing to do so.

## 8. BELLECROFT'S

One of the few inns in town, Bellecroft's is neutral ground by all the major and minor gangs of Hell's Reach. The place serves as a meeting ground for mercenaries, smugglers, and delegations from gangs. Bellecroft (female dwarf Ftr8) takes a personal hand in keeping the peace. She and her staff of dwarves, gnomes, and humans sailed to Hell's reach after banishment for piracy. Bellecroft always wanted to run a tavern and saw a gaping hole in the Hell's Reach market. Using her unique combination of martial, brewing, and cooking skills, Bellecroft's quickly became the only place in the Boulevards where gang members could meet and talk business in peace.

Bellecroft values her neutral status and takes great pains to treat all guests equally. The tavern lacks a common room primarily to keep tensions and the chances for a bar brawl to a minimum. Instead, patrons rent curtained, private booths for their use, or bedrooms upstairs for extended stays. Most customers pay in goods ranging from weapons and armor to imported food. Bellecroft's husband, a dour dwarf named Servik, brews the thick, black ale that this place is known for. Bellecroft's fame has even managed to extend beyond the city. On the mainland, "Stopping for a brew at Bellecroft's" is a common euphemism for making a smuggling run to Hell's Reach.



## CURRENT SITUATION AND DEVELOPMENTS

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Hell's Reach is a continual battleground. Gangs continually battle for turf. A few extra square feet on which to grow Torred's petal can spell the difference between starvation and prosperity. The Phardonites and Sea Furys are the only gangs that have managed to carve out strong, enduring power bases, the Phardonites relying on their divine magic and the Sea Furys getting by with their strong ties to the outside world and military discipline. Sometimes a charismatic individual pulls together a coalition of gangs, but these groups often collapse with the death of their leaders. Drawing too much attention from the Phardonites or Furys is the best way for a would-be warlord to meet his end on an assassin's blade. The Furys and Phardonites accept each other as competitors, and often work more to keep other gangs down than to undermine each other's position. Both sides know that fighting is bad for business, and neither currently believes the risks of open conflict outweigh any benefits. Still, a faction of fanatical Phardonites clamors for an unholy crusade to drive all non-Phardonites from the ruins. Some Sea Furys feel that conflict with the Phardonites is inevitable and whichever side strikes first has the advantage in the conflict. The two sides are one major incident away from igniting a firestorm of violence throughout the ruins. With Malachai working to insure such an incident comes to pass, it is only a matter of time before Hell's Reach explodes.

Ironically, the one thing that all gangs agree on is that both the lost souls and the intruding sahuagin must die. Both groups pose an equal threat to all gangs and therefore pose the best tool that a would-be warlord could use to cement a large-scale alliance amongst the criminals.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

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### THE RACE

The characters uncover evidence that a cabal of necromancers plans to journey to Hell's Reach in order to claim a powerful, evil artifact long thought lost in the disaster that created Hell's Reach. The characters must journey to the ruins and either defeat the necromancers before they can claim their prize, or beat them to the goal and either destroy it or escape the island with it. While the necromancers may have the advantage in this situation, the characters could easily bribe or ally with a gang and work with them to defeat the necromancers.

### SETTLERS

If you are just starting a campaign and do not mind running games that revolve around non-heroic characters, the PCs could be inmates freshly deposited on Hell's Reach. The characters must deal with hungry lost souls and rampaging gang members before either establishing their own

gang or joining up with an established one. Over time, the PCs can struggle to make the best of their situation, either striving to escape to the outside world to working to carve out a safe niche within Hell's Reach. Not only must the characters deal with direct physical threats but politics in the form of forging truces with gangs and gaining new allies and resource management. Building a viable base of operations and contacts in various illicit trades are critical components to success in this sort of campaign.

### YOLLGOTHA AWAKENED

The PCs stumble across evidence that the demon Yollgotha is on the verge of awakening. They must journey to Hell's Reach, work with the groups that live there to topple the archmage Malachy, and journey deep within the bowels of the city to find Yollgotha's resting place and seal it off forever. This story could easily adapt to any of the other ideas listed above, and could form the backbone of an entire campaign.

## NEW DEITIES

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### PHARDON

This grim deity is the lawful evil patron of tyrants and anyone who uses their strength to dominate and subjugate the weak. Phardon appears as a hulking, bearded brute that wears full plate armor and an eye patch. His face bears many scars from his mighty struggle to defeat and claim lordship over devils and other powerful creatures. Phardon's clerics often scar themselves in tribute to their lord. Phardon grants his clerics access to the law, evil, strength, and war domains. His favored weapon is the heavy mace.

### VELENA

A lawful good demi-goddess and patron of paladins, Velena appears as a raven-haired, pale-skinned woman of slender build. Long thought to be the civic deity of Alleton, Velena's followers in fact settled in that city to watch for signs of the return of Velena's sworn enemy, the demon lord Yollgotha. Velena's symbol is a golden triangle painted flat side down, with a black "V" painted in its center. Velena grants her followers access to the law, good, protection, and war domains. Her weapon of choice is the greataxe.

### YOLLGOTHA

The demon lord of pain, and patron of torturers and cannibals, Yollgotha is depicted as a tremendous, pale white worm that devours all in its path and excretes them out as tortured, skinless monstrosities. Yollgotha is chaotic evil and delights in the degeneration and destruction of formerly respectable people. His symbol is a skinless, bloody hand displayed palm outward and fingers spread. His favored weapon is the whip, and he grants his clerics access to the evil, chaos, destruction, and death domains.

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## THE PRISON CITY OF HELLS REACH

Author: Mike Mearls

Art Director and Project Manager: jim pinto

Editor: Dave Lepore, Erik Yaple

Creative Director: Mark Jelfo

Graphic Design: Justin Lawler

Illustration and Cartography: Chris Dornaus

Playtesting and Advice: James Sparling, and the a-team

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