

# WARLOCK

16



ELEVEN HELLS

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# A GRAND TOUR OF THE ELEVEN HELLS

by Wolfgang Baur

*The Eleven Hells of Midgard are the least-visited, least-studied, and most-feared planes known to the mortal world, ranking in the realm of whispered horrors and extremely scanty documentation. Those who visit rarely recommend them.*

Often confused with Evermaw (the divine realm of the gods of undeath) and the Yawning Void (a nightmare realm beyond mortal understanding), the Eleven Hells are the homes of demons, devils, and fiends of all kinds, and most are at least theoretically survivable by living visitors. They are ruled by dark forces inimical to those of good and light. While some might seem relatively benign on the surface, all contain horrors, and all are hostile to the goals of righteous folk.

## Cosmology of the Infernal Planes

Some souls migrate over the River Lethe and down the Styx to the hells for punishment in the afterlife, but these planes are primarily realms given over to dark forces and purely malevolent creatures, which seek to corrupt, destroy, and conquer all realms. Their eternal war against the forces of the light is sporadic but persistent, and mortals who visit the Eleven will often find themselves drawn into this struggle by

corruption, selfishness, ambition, or wrath. Thus do the hells turn all the multiverse to their corrupt purposes. Several of the hells themselves are known to send ambassadors to the mortal world, seeking closer ties. Evil nations such as Niemheim and Caelmarath both have (or had) deep connections to the hells, and their people frequently visit. Other wiser nations avoid any and all contact with the diabolical and the demonic.

Structurally, the Eleven Hells follow a progression from Urgennos (the most common entry to the Eleven as a whole) to Chundresh (the most difficult to reach from mortal lands or from Yggdrasil). However, this is not strictly a linear path: Urgennos and its fire connect directly to Efrizarr's ice, Qes-al-Marit's darkness, and the cold waters of Archedantuss and the Styx. No well-attested planar document describes all the connections between the Eleven Hells, though it seems clear that they are roughly ranked from easiest to enter to most difficult. The roads and gates between them are somehow controlled by the archdukes, dark gods, and demon lords who rule

them; they are not dependent on ley lines or similar magic but on transdimensional arcane rites known primarily to fiends and certain trusted cultists.

## Servants and Vassals Among the Hells

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The inhabitants of the Eleven Hells are vast in number, and they include all known demons and devils, many tieflings, great apocalyptic heralds, and purely mercenary fiends and horrors who traverse the hells and make a fortune defending one warlord against another. Other evil races from ogres to derro and even the world-ending satarre (see *Underworld Player's Guide*) can be found among the hells as well, at least in particular sites and cities.

While most reports of the hells emphasize the societies and people therein, it is worth noting that many bizarre and fiend-inflected plant and animal species exist and are unique to these planes. These range from the common sulfur rats and bluewing biting flies to necrotic mammoths, noxious hell weed and shambling brambles, tar melons, head-like ingattet, and bloodsucking thickets of various kinds. Leopard-spotted goats, murderous teal river pigs, and other familiar-yet-twisted species are found in every one of the hells, either feral or as domesticated animals.

### 1. URGENNOS, LUMINOUS HELL OF FIRE AND SULFUR

Urgennos is a plane of choking smoke, sinuous rivers of lava and strangely dancing sky-rivers made of ash, and stony ground, teeming with peculiar fireweeds and black brambles. Clouds of noxious smoke often fill the air, and settlements are few and far between. The dominant life forms are the vast swarms of

slintesh, also called sulfur rats, that devour both plants and the living. (For slintesh statistics, use **wolves**.) Alnaar demons, fire imps, and echo demons are all quite common as well, as are efreeti and malign fire elementals and salamanders.

The primary city of the plane is Ahtesseri, the City of Flowering Fire, known for its magma fountains and its exotic scents, perfumes, and metal works. Among its citizenry are barbed devils, salt devils, and gilded devils, and a large number of efreeti find the place congenial. Looming over the city and staffed with hundreds of barbed devils and fire imps is the Scarred Palace, a frequently blackened and occasional scarlet-painted monstrosity of turrets, heavy walls, and deep-dug barracks. This is the seat of power of Duchess Alsikaya, the Screeching Mother of Volcanoes,



ruling the majority of Urgennos with her occasional consort and favored warlord, Mechuiti, Lord of Apes and Fire. Duchess Alsikaya is a babbling demonic creature of hideous stench, a round-faced and stringy-haired demon with some resemblance to a troll and covered in pustules that resemble small volcanic cinder cones.

Their rival on the plane is Camazotz, the Lord of Bats, who rules the rusted, stony Qëqboo Peaks and the seemingly infinite caverns of explosive gas and teeming insects beneath them. His various demonic hordes are often mistaken for swiftly flying clouds, and they strike and retreat with dizzying speed. Most of these are neophron or echo demons, though some are vrock, fire imps, wind demons, and even stranger species of demon. Camazotz seems to have no particular favorite abode, though the Ubintel Caverns see him often enough to maintain the Singing Shrine to his name, sometimes called the Cayin Shrine of Camazotz.

In addition, the demon lord Typhon, Lord of Monsters (see *Creature Codex*) lives in Urgennos, gathering an army of fiends to some purpose known only to itself. The mustering grounds are called the Brambles, a region of thorny execrable shrubs and devil boughs (see *Creature Codex*). The demon lord seems to have a vast store of coin and lemures to feed to demonic mercenaries, infernal troops, and stranger denizens of the planes. At some point, it is expected it will march against the Storm Court, Valhalla, or the Celestial Stairs.



## 2. EFRIZARR, FROZEN HELL OF ICE AND SILENCE

Efrizarr is a hell of snow and ice, of cities carved into glaciers miles deep, and of entire armies frozen near the gates where they entered without sufficient preparation for the blizzards, frozen tundra, and lack of sustenance that characterize the plane. While the event is rare, the temperature of Efrizarr does rise above freezing from time to time, allowing rivers to turn to churning masses of ice and slush, destroying bridges and wiping away settlements along their banks. These times are also known for chilling fogs, which cover everything in thin rime.

The greatest city of Efrizarr is Azulanta, a deep-blue series of chambers and corridors



beneath the Azulor Glacier, home to demons, devils, imps, and a surprisingly large group of frost giants and dwarves. Rune-encrusted stone tunnels connect the blue ice chambers and corridors to the magma-heated chambers called the Foreigner's Gallery where temperatures are tolerable for most mortal races. This quarter includes the Bitteran Forge, where the ice devils and other creatures of Efrizarr melt, refreeze, and forge various ice spears, craft steel and iron weapons and armor, and mint coinage and melt treasure into bars, for instance. Warmth-tolerant creatures are often taken as slaves to pump the bellows, feed the furnaces, and handle the iron worked in the Bitteran Forge.

The city is ruled by Duke Gletsagrim, an arch-devil of frost and glacial powers who resembles a mummified frost giant with eyes of bitter blue, two additional arms, and a smaller creature embedded in his chest, a fleshbound servitor called Gletsa Minor. This creature seems to be some form of undead, perhaps a wight, with frozen breath and bluish hair and limbs. Gletsagrim himself seems to have powers of prophecy or runelore rarely found in the hells and frequently drinks waters stolen from Hvergelmir (the Well of Nidhoggr at the root of Yggdrasil) to retain these powers. As a result, he often knows exactly when to expect visitors, can address them by name without introduction, and generally seems shockingly well-informed about plots against him. Most of his foes wind up frozen in a glacier or turned into a bloody paste by frost giant clubs.

In addition, the dark god Boreas maintains a residence here as well as his tower in the mortal world. These two are said to be linked by a simple portal that allows the God of the North Wind easy access between his two domiciles.

Efrizarr is well known for its peculiar weather systems: silent storms and

thunderice storms. The silent storms are magical bursts of powerful wind, up to eighty or ninety miles per hour, that tear icicles from overhangs and that kick snow into the sky—and that utter silence any creature that remains within the winds for more than a minute. After the storm passes, voices and sounds return within a minute.

The thunderice storms are powerful hailstorms that combine lightning strikes and hail the size of a fist or larger, often resembling the effects of both *call lightning* and *ice storm* spells. These storms are sent with a purpose: both Boreas and Duke Gletsagrim seem able to command the storms to attack particular targets or chase fugitives, leading to the local expression, “Might as well die fighting since you can never outrun the storm.” The demons of Efrizarr are a stoic bunch.

Connections from Efrizarr are known to lead up a frozen river of black ice (sometimes called the Sable Slush) to the Riverine Hell. Boat fiends on the Slush charge extra; the work of keeping a skiff, barge, or barque afloat among the ice is exhausting even for enormously strong servants of Charun and the river lords.

### **3. QES-AL-MARIT, SHIFTING HELL OF DARKNESS AND BONE DUNES**

Qes-al-Marit resembles a vast open plain under a sky of blinking, often moving lights, a place where darkness seeps into everything, the earth is chill, and white sand drifts in vast constellations of dunes, waves, and even rivers. The shifting sands often seem to whisper to those who listen closely, and some poets are driven mad by the sand of Qes-al-Marit, which retains its slithering and blasphemous voice when removed from the plane.

The Hell of Darkness is not heavily populated. Its demons and devils are quite few but extremely dangerous, including balors, owl harpies, erinyes, various

sphinxes, malakbel demons, as well as salt devils, nalfeshnee demons, crystalline devils, and harvester devils. Barbed devils are also quite common as are a variety of blue-skinned tiefling rarely seen elsewhere.

The Qes-al-Marit is home to nomadic groups of fiends, some shepherding flocks of souls while others are more warlike and given to banditry. Its greatest city is Sa-Mozan, the City of Silences, the home of Alquam. Its walls are made of black glass ten feet thick, carved with hideous protective wards, resembling glass shards or spikes that project from the walls, which cut everything they touch. These walls are often bathed in the blood of creatures executed there, enemies of its people.

The ruler of Sa-Mozan is the owl-like Alquam, the Demon Lord of Night, Prince of Nocturnes, Master of Silence, and King of the Whispering Wastes. His rule is capricious, and he plays favorites against one another constantly; new visitors (especially mortal ones) are sometimes brought to his palace atop the city's acropolis, among a dozen ruined temples to other rulers or dark gods, to stand and wait upon Alquam's curiosity, surrounded by twenty or a hundred lunar devils. Sometimes this takes the form of an awkward, painful staring contest when the eyes of Alquam seem to dissect a visitor, leaving them paralyzed or confused. Other times, the demon lord asks a few questions about the mortal world and quickly grows bored. On rare occasions, a visitor is eaten or held hostage for reasons that are rarely shared with the victim; other members of the fiendish band or adventuring company are let go with a prophecy in hand or a blade of lunar steel. Some whisper that it was Alquam who created the Scepter of Silence, which Shelesorra stole from him via some peculiar bargain or through subterfuge.

Another important figure in Qes-al-Marit is the Queen of the Ghuls, her majesty Aicha

Qandisha, and her various followers. Exiled from Evermaw by Vardesain and his legions, the queen seeks to prove her strength and increase her following among necromancers, ghouls, and cultists throughout the planes and is known to readily grant arcane and divine favors to her faithful.

#### **4. ARCHEDANTUSS, RIVERINE HELL OF THE STYX & LETHE**

The plane of Archedantuss is sometimes proposed as the entryway to the Eleven Hells as the rivers that feature so prominently in its topography also connect to less maleficent places and water the roots of Yggdrasil. However, others believe that this knot of waters, marshes, and riverbanks is more akin to a maze or labyrinth, meant to keep planar travelers from any further progress into the hells. This is because while the rivers lead into Archedantuss they rarely seem to lead out. The god Charun the Boatman deposits souls here hourly as do other psychopomps and gods concerned with the great passage from life into afterlife, arriving from all the mortal worlds with a few coins on their eyes—small fiery souls seeking forgiveness, mercy, punishment, absolution, but finding only the fog and despair of this hell where nothing is ever forgiven, where fiends never display pity, and where punishment is plentiful but absolution is unattainable. Souls brought here writhe in shame and torment and are quickly enslaved, devoured, or cheated by the many devils and soulstealers who frequent its shores.

Duke Mammon (see *Tome of Beasts*) collects all the coins from the dead souls, surrounded by legions of gilded devils and hezrou who patrol the rivers, seeking easy prey among the lost souls. His throne sits in the city of Plutus, a lavish and ostentatious settlement of gilded pillars and glittering roof tiles, where the Castle Oriel contains both stymphalian birds of bronze, an

entire legion of devils, and a fraction of Mammon's great wealth in the form of coins, rings, necklaces, and other golden objects. The streets of Plutus are paved with a golden shade of copper, and its doors are worked silver. As a result, visitors are often confounded by how any such place can feel so empty and impoverished, but the inhabitants of Plutus are miserly, cruel, and ungracious, often cursing at strangers, denying any hospitality, and holding themselves about the "penniless tourists" who dare visit them. Instead they spend their time on an endless round of one-upmanship with other devils, which consumes their energies entirely. Compassion, a friendly greeting, or even an honest smile are unknown to Mammon's followers.

No other great cities stand in Archedantuss, though the Nebbuzzar Cove is a gathering place for riverfolk, including charonadaemons, hezrou, angels of judgement, and priests of Charun. The Boathouse Temple there stands along the riverbank and is said to be eternally full of ghosts and spirits.

## 5. BZELETALET, BUZZING HELL OF INSECTS

Bzeletalet is a plane of forested hills, mild climate, and abundant prey and herd animals, from infernal swine to vast flocks of flightless birds. Throughout are dozens or hundreds of tosculi cities and colossal shrines to Arbeyach and similar diabolical figures, for the tosculi consider Bzeletalet a paradise rather than any kind of hell at all.

Duke Arbeyach is a power here along with the arch-devil Ia'Affrat (see *Tome of Beasts*), though by most standards the realm of Bzeletalet is considered a minor hell at best. Its people are tosculi, infernal wasps, and similar things, all buzzing and chitinous and eager to devour softer visitors whole.

The many hive-cities of Bzeletalet are named after their founders and include the

extremely ancient halls and honeycombed chambers of Usmarrek, Ysetet, and K'kar'iket. Each of these hive-cities is devoted to a diabolical lord, and each generates vast legions of ice devils, tosculi diabolists and warriors, automata devils, and more. The tosculi system of totally devoted service to their hive queens fits very neatly with the devils' system of hierarchy, and the two seem to strengthen one another not only when they serve in a planar army but more generally.

The partnership works like this: tosculi are builders and farmers, able to generate a vast array of foodstuffs, walls, weapons, and more. The devils and archdevils provide arcane might and planar portals for the tosculi to raid not just their neighbors but mortal races far distant from tosculi homelands. When one of the insect armies of Bzeletalet arrives out of a hell portal, the world might as well be ending for any humans, dwarves, or goblins nearby—their system of conquest and strip mining of food, metals, slaves, and magic is extremely well-developed, and a region plundered by an infernal army may never recover at all. All that remains in these places is usually an ancient portal, half-powered, that awaits someone foolish enough to link a ley line to it or that uses liminal magic to empower and restore the connection to the hells and step through to Bzeletalet. When this happens, the tosculi often know that a region has recovered somewhat and might be worth returning to for an additional round of plunder, raiding, and blood sacrifices.

## 6. SNOECKSUBO, LINGERING HELL OF PLAGUES

Snoecksubo is a strange hell, a place that in many regards seems a normal, if oppressive, plane of millions of tielfings, greater fiends, hobgoblins, ogre magi, wasteland dragons, and other creatures living and working to serve dark gods such as Malena, the White



Goddess, and the Hunter. It resembles a string of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of islands in a rust-red sea with enormous hive-like cities on the biggest of these and smaller fishing villages and farms on smaller islands.

The duke of Snorecksubo is the Shogun Ai-Tai-Anma, a bearded arch-devil usually dressed in an Eastern and courtly manner and sometimes in lamellar armor and holding a green mace of malachite infused with the power of disease, called the Arbiter Mace of Snorecksubo. Some believe that Ai-Tai-Anma is an Eastern mask of the death god Anu-Akma, but this may simply be a too-literal conclusion drawn on the linguistic similarity of their names. Others point out that devils are rarely masks for one another. In any case, Ai-Tai-Anma uses his mace to start plagues among courtiers who displease him—merely touching someone with the mace is usually fatal, and the victims are exiled from the palace, spreading their contagion further.

All creatures of Snorecksubo rush to seek shelter in locked homes or in overcrowded temples when the plagues come. The plagues burn through entire towns and cities but disappear as quickly as they come. While some might see thousands or tens of thousands of infected creatures as a chance to rally magical healing and show mercy, in this hell, no curing touch or spell seems to work. The fickle hand of the plague strikes down rather at random and weeds out the elderly and the young with special ferocity. Mass graves are common. Empty cities are certainly known. And no inhabitant knows when next the plague will come.

While most of the plagues of Snorecksubo merely kill their victims, a few worse plagues are also well-known here. The zombie plague turns its victims into undead,



the spore plague devours the bodies from within and then explodes it in a messy set of spores, and the burning plague generates a fever that eventually becomes a literal fire, often leading to a combination of plague and citywide blazes.

## 7. EMWABBIK EM, ALIEN HELL OF THE ACID ABYSS

Emwabbik Em is a place of tall tales and few believable reports. It contains entire continents filled with vast forests of xichar columns, a species of fiendish or at least malevolent tree that carries vile, burning fluid from the swampy ground up to enormous heights where it is sprayed as a corrosive mist or rain over all beneath them. Visitors must be immune to the dissolving power of these sprays in most of

the territory of Emwabbik Em as the mists are carried far from the forests, scouring grasslands into yellow husks, destroying the few crops (primarily tar melon and the nutty, somewhat gritty sanga grain, but also headfruit—see Fleggesun for details).

The acid abyss has thousands or tens of thousands of small villages, formed where fiends have placed slate stones or racks of campareash leaves in between the xichar columns, forming dry spaces as shelter and then planting tar melon vines or harvesting headfruit for sustenance. Most of these villages are a few dozen ill-tempered fiends, but about a third of them are populated by enormous hezrou demons or similar major figures—ruled by a xecha king or queen—who use the villages to gather up soul coins, ambush neighboring villages, and seek to carve out small fiefdoms.

The layer's ruler is Xecha Zecha Amblamar, the Lady of Pure Distillate. While her form is generally humanoid, twelve feet tall, her flesh is a translucent green and turquoise, somewhat like a humanoid gelatinous cube. Sometimes she surrounds and absorbs smaller humanoids, slowly peeling them from the outside in, and (it is said) absorbing all their magic, talents, and memories as well as their flesh and bone. The ahu-nixta (see *Creature Codex*) are her most devoted and capable servants, and she commands many oozes, worms, and evil elementals.

The acidic oceans of Emwabbik Em are home to the demon lord Chemosh, Lord of Conquest, and his sahuagin, shark-jaw skeletons, and deep one legions. Almost nothing is known of his Great Shark Citadel other than that its walls are said to be made of entire generations of whale bones, and its interior tunnels are lit only by bioluminescent coral. Maze-like and meant to confound any intruder, some of the citadel's tunnels are said to be filled with pure acid distillate; visitors may not

notice until their eyes and armor are already half-dissolved. The very heart of the Great Shark Citadel is said to be a gathering place of leviathans and godlings bent on the conquest of mortal oceans and the death of entire nations of sea elves, locathah, and similar creatures.

## 8. FLEGGESUN, FETID HELL OF CANNIBAL ROT

Fleggesun is a hell of decay, fungal growth, lush green and purple jungles, and stench-ridden marshes along pestilential riverbeds. Its inhabitants are mushroom folk and oozes, demons of decay, mud-spattered, surface-dwelling derro, and a particularly aggressive species of subek (see *Tome of Beasts*). Everywhere you look is mud, whispering reeds, and frequent, oily rain. The smell of the place is almost



impossible to remove from wool or linen.

The largest city of Fleggesun is a reeking pile of crumbled stone and rotting reed rooftops called Hargemissan, the Halls of Necrosis, City of Leather and Worms, filled with towering temples to all the dark gods and inhabited by trollkin, tieflings, trolls, ogres, barbed devils, subek, and minotaurs as well as oozes and various forms of mushroom folk and even derro. The place is enormous but decayed and decrepit, a city that looks as if it were once wealthy and powerful with entire quarters partly underwater and other sections overgrown and inhabited only by flies and lizards. Hargemissan sits on the banks of a tributary of the river Styx with good connections by river barge to Archedantuss.

All the races of Fleggesun are headhunters, cannibals, or otherwise depraved and evil, and they practice the rearing or conjuration of ingattet (in-GAH-tet, or literally “headfruit”). This is an alchemical process that transforms the head of an enemy into a shrunken sphere the size of an apple or even a plum and retains its rough shape. These small items can be devoured by their owner with the effect of a *potion of healing*, or they can be eaten and used to grant advantage to a single die roll. Ingattet are sometimes used as primitive currency, and creatures wearing large necklaces of them are generally either extremely lethal combatants or extremely high-status rulers among the plane’s various tribes and factions.

The Lord of all Rot is better known as Qorgeth, Demon Lord of the Devouring Worm, a servitor or at least ally of the hunger god Vardesain and an ancient entity of evil in its own right. It maintains an audience chamber at the shrine city of Kneccor where the flow of blood and sacrifices to its gullet is constant. Visitors are few. Most of the city inhabitants are ghouls, members of Qorgeth’s cult, or wrymhearted suffragans (see *Tome of Beasts*).

## 9. NAKHOL, VANISHING HELL OF IGNORANCE

In Nakhol, all creatures are stunted and stupid, and visitors to the realm quickly realize that the plane itself is hostile to knowledge and learning through strange mechanisms that are quite difficult to discern. Scrolls and books (even magical ones) brought into Nakhol quickly fade with cantrips and non-magical writing disappearing within hours, 1st-level spells within a day, 2nd-level spells within 2 days, and so on. All Knowledge rolls made on the plane are made at disadvantage.

The landscape of Nakhol is pleasant enough: rolling plains, wide rivers, copper and crimson forests, all interspersed with cloud-shrouded mountains and winding roads that always seem to circle back to the great city of Luret-Moire at its heart. This is a place entirely built to confound visitors: it has a very tall city wall set with more than twenty impossibly thin, 600-foot-high towers, each of which has a commanding view over the plains. Within, its streets curve and spiral and sometimes fail to intersect properly as one street sometimes bridges over or dives under another; at other times, streets simply dead-end without warning. Luret-Moire is all about function at some level; its squarish and hexagonal buildings are connected via skybridges and floating streets and barges at the upper levels, and tunnels below the streets are comfortable terrain for the tieflings, satarre, and lesser devils who make up most of the city’s population. There is no map, and there are no street signs; natives know their way around, and giving directions is an unknown custom. Visitors are encouraged to hire a guide to help them get anywhere specific.

And the tone of the place is quite unlike the rest of Nakhol. It seems, in some ways, as if all the elegance and wisdom and skill that has been drained from elsewhere on

this plane are presented here in baroque and florid form. Everything is decorated, embellished, gilded and overblown. Demons wear pocket watches, and devils offer elaborate courtesy to visitors (before attempting to draw them into depravity and evil of course). Flattery, poetry, and even scholarly discussion can be heard on the streets, even if nothing is ever written down. Songs and jests and incredibly filthy jokes pass through Luret-Moire like fair winds. It is a strange thing to hear laughter, even cruel laughter, in the hells, but it is found here.

Nakhol is ruled by Parzelon, Arch-Devil of Secrets (see *Creature Codex*). All knowledge in Nakhol belongs to Parzelon and him alone, for he controls the magical Library of Sondre-Fillieux where all the disappearing knowledge and fading writing of the plane is pooled and somehow retained. Secret shames and dark deeds useful for extortion find their way into Archduke Parzelon's many dossiers and files. Cryptic prayers and lost arcana are found in his golden books of dark piety and forgotten spellcraft. While he lacks anything like the armies of other arch-dukes, he is rarely at war with any of them, for he knows everyone's secret weaknesses, fears, and frailties, and those who cross him find their reputation in tatters, their fiefdoms undermined by rumor, and their most important servitors and proxies mysteriously absent.

## **10. SOOLEEED, MIRROR HELL OF LIES**

The deeply disquieting plane of Soolee'd (SOH-leh-lead) is a world of illusions and shadows where very little is real and most creatures, objects, and even features of the landscape are not as they appear. Items routinely melt and reform over a period of hours; some lakes and hills are little more than mirror-trickery, and entire villages may be reflections of a single building or a mirror maze of real and illusory places.

Likewise, the inhabitants of Soolee'd are shapeshifting, skilled at deception, and often spin webs of arcane deception impenetrable to even the keenest eye. Add to this the truly bizarre weather of the place: whirlwinds that carry illusions away or coat entire landscapes in bright colors or hellish spikes, rains of acid that dissolve all lies for a time, washing away deceptions and leaving the plane's creatures in their true form until their illusions are restored, and night time when all shadows are animated and all darkness grows hungry. In most ways, strangest of all are the mirror shard winds, a silvery wind that chills creatures and deposits a peculiar mirror coating on all surfaces, turning everything reflective. Soolee'd is a place where nothing can be relied on, even the ground and sky are subject to change and subject to vanishing into something else entirely. Nothing can be trusted.

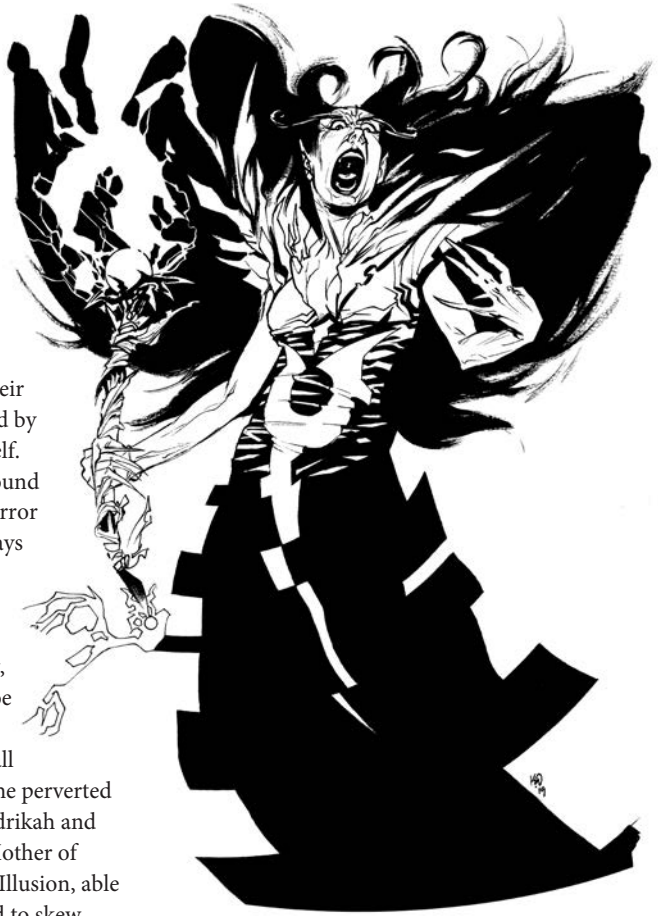
While it might seem that a plane of shifting reality and constant deception would be a terrible place to attempt to build a large settlement, the will of the Duchess of Lies has made it possible to build a city of great splendor. This is Traumahof, the City of Beautiful Dreams, which changes its face daily to suit the ruler's whims and which retains a simple, effective structure underneath thick layers of illusion, glamour, and arcane frosting. At its center is the Palace of Perfection, a mirrored hall with diamond pillars that is quite difficult to navigate without careful attention at all times as the whole building seems optimized to confound the eye. A passive Perception of 15 or better is required to move through the palace without stumbling into walls or mistaking mirrors for doors.

The city's primarily inhabitants are fiends, possibly doppelgangers, and many other shapeshifters and shadow creatures, including voidlings, shadows, and satarre (see *Underworld Player's Guide*). Many

are here for the prominent college of illusion magic, the College of Subtle Mirrors. The archmagi at its heart are Speega Narra and Sporra Vet, two Khandirian humans who came to learn from this plane and found that their talents were appreciated here. The students are generally evil aligned but not always, and their mastery of illusion is enhanced by the properties of the plane itself. Many of the students walk around with a particular variant of mirror image, meaning that they always appear to be three or four identical selves in class.

Duchess Shelesorra, the Demoness of Lies and Cruelty, rules the plane as the sworn foe of Totivillus, the Diabolical Scribe, and as the nemesis of all gods of truth and justice. As the perverted and depraved daughter of Addrikah and Mammon, Shelesorra is the Mother of Doppelgangers and Queen of Illusion, able to bend reality around her and to skew anyone's senses into a conflicting welter of jarring, blurred, and deceptive sights. She maintains a perpetual ability to see through all lies, illusions, and deceptions used against her, though she seems to have a particular vulnerability to radiance and fire.

In addition, Shelesorra either created or stole the Scepter of Silence, a deep-black artifact bound in spirals of demon-skin leather and topped with a bright-red sphere of pure arcane energy, capable of stilling the tongue of foes and rendering them temporarily or permanently mute as well as destroying the minds of lesser souls entirely. In this manner, she delights in destroying the songs of bards, the prayers of the faithful, and the arcana of wizards and



sorcerers, leaving them with no words to call for help.

The arch-devil Belphegor (see *Creature Codex*) also maintains a court in a distant corner of Sooleeled (and seems to be allied with Parzelon and a rival of Shelesorra). His court is a place of maleficent constructs and devices, built and tended to by the inhabitants of Endekkor, a city full of tieflings and gnomes. Diabolical automatons and spiked walls, streets, and even taverns are common in Endekkor, a place more suited to barbed devils and spider fiends than anything else. Some believe that Belphegor has recently become enmeshed in studying the Void itself, and that this explains his growing power over enormous



undead such as death barques and bone colossi (see *Warlock* #15). It's unclear whether this is just the clack that he spreads about to warn off enemies while he lolls about in perpetual sloth and idleness.

## 11. CHUNDRESH, HUNTER'S HELL OF BLOOD AND FEAR

Chundresh is a place of dark forests and narrow ravines, of hilly uplands roamed by vast herds of hellish goats, peculiar black sheep, and red-eyed, white-furred deer. It is a place where predators roam free to kill for sport and for sustenance and where some souls are set loose in the bodies of prey, the better for them to be hunted, chased, and dragged down to a messy end.

While most of the plane of Chundresh is devoted to blood hunts, it does also have a few scattered cities and keeps, all devoted to the worship of the Hunter or to various demon lords of a similar stripe. The greatest of these cities is Verdano, a noisy place of hounds and leatherworkers, falconers and butchers. Its inhabitants are almost all tieflings with a scattering of trollkin and even orcs. They maintain large packs of hunting dogs, from hounds of the night to mastiffs and lich hounds, for the use of the lords and ladies of the hunt (almost all major cultists of the Hunter or impressive demons). Dog fights in the street are a common entertainment, and anyone who is without some form of guardian animal is treated as a servant (for servants are forbidden from owning animals in Verdano).

When not hunting game and souls, the lords and ladies of Chundresh hunt one another; this is more dangerous than game but also leads to greater status and greater prizes as each lord and lady has at least one and often dozens of small keeps and castles to defend. Small-scale raids, midnight ambushes, and everyday assassinations are common in Chundresh, and rare is the

Chundran keep that has not changed hands a dozen or a hundred times. A Chundran demon lord or arch-devil on the move from place to place is always accompanied by at least a few hundred fiends if travelling informally or an entire army on a more public round of visits to its holdings and estates. The use of body doubles and illusions is very common in Chundresh, and many of the illusions and transmutations used in this manner are purchased from the College of Subtle Mirrors or from Sooleed generally; the two planes share at least one major gate, the Reflecting Cloud. Entering it to traverse between the two planes has been described as somewhat akin to walking into a cloud of flesh-stripping flies and being vomited forth on the other end. Few mortals enjoy it.

Sleep and rest are quite difficult for non-natives on Chundresh. Each short rest brings a sense of unease as if something is watching. And indeed, often birds or other small, unnaturally colored animals will seem to observe creatures at rest and occasionally call with a peculiar whistling tone said to bring wolves, hounds, or hunters. Each long rest brings disturbing dreams of being chased, torn apart, and devoured by demons or other horrors—a successful DC 15 Constitution check is required for non-natives to rest successfully in Chundresh.

## In Summary

While the Eleven Hells are home to sentient creatures and complex societies, they are hostile and xenophobic enough to ensure that travelers are unwelcome and visitors unwanted. True heroes and scholars might visit and survive long enough to bring some word of these places back to the mortal realms of Midgard and thus ensure that other travelers continue to avoid them. A grand tour of the Eleven Hells is, after all, far less of a joy than a grand tour of just about anywhere else in the multiverse.

# THE TOWN OF SMOKE

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by David “Zeb” Cook

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*“Where is Smoketown? Gods blessings, that I cannot say. I don’t think anyone really knows where it is, but I can tell you how to find it. Just take the northeast road from here, and when you get to a big bend with a standing rock, look for a trail going more north. You follow that over the ridge, and once it goes into the mist, Smoketown will find you.*

*“But I must ask, why? Only the lost and fools go to Smoketown.”*

—Deacon Tunburga Swinhall

Of all the towns and villages of the Shadow Realm, Smoketown is something different. True, it is home to an assortment of mismatched folk, mostly tielflings, just like other places. True, it is a backwater, just like many other places. And true, it is a marketplace, and there are many of those in the Shadow Realm. But Smoketown sells something no other town has—pathways to the Eleven Hells. Its most important goods are the services of the guides who make it home.

While the gates to the Eleven Hells are open to anyone, those are the gates for the dead and damned. Only the foolhardiest of mortals bang on these doorways, demanding entrance. Few do, and fewer still survive to regret it. No, to get in—and maybe out—of the hells safely requires a guide, someone who knows the secret pathways the demon and devils overlook.

And the place to find those guides is Smoketown.

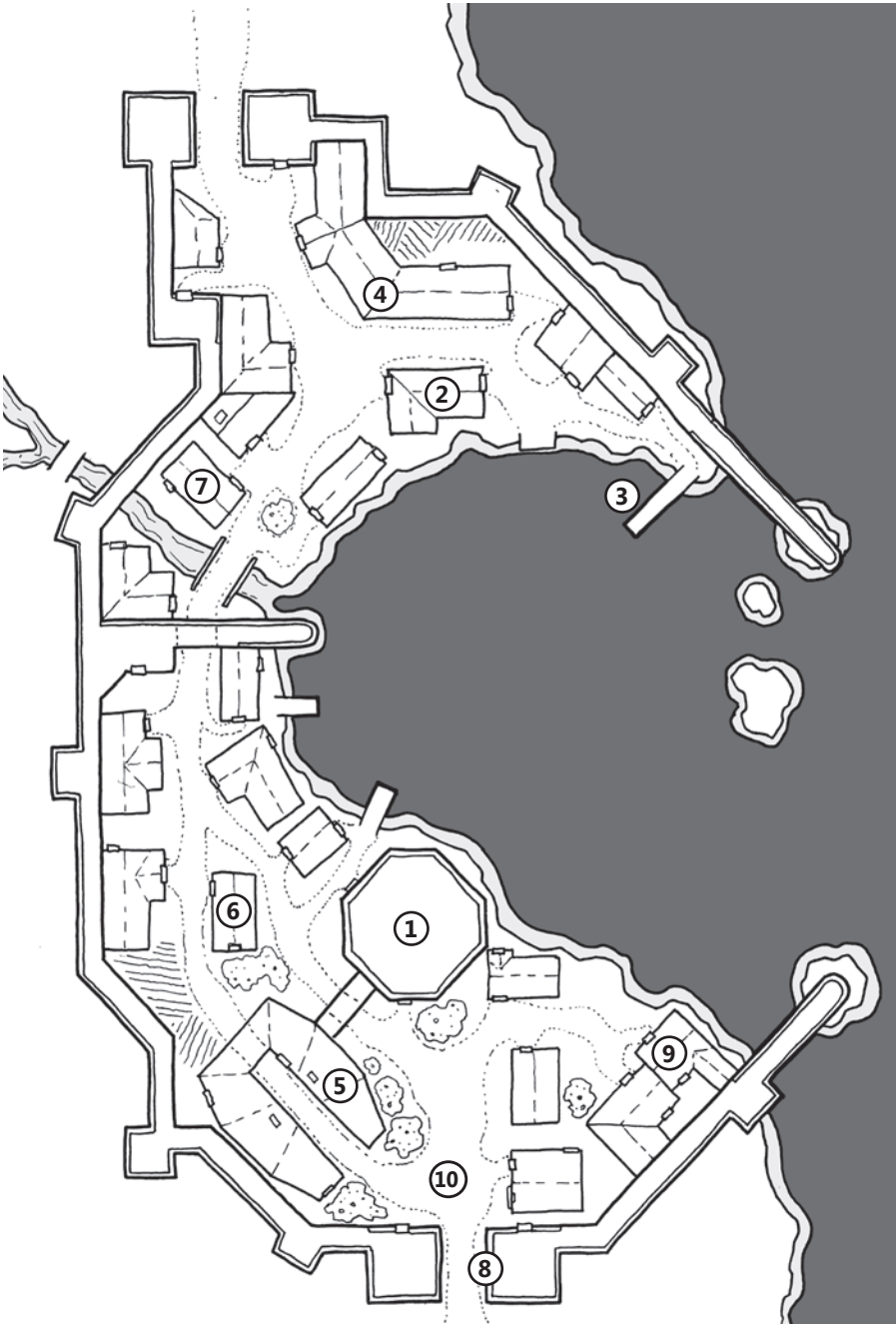
In addition to the guides or because of them, Smoketown draws the desperate and broken. There are hell’s refugees and asylum seekers, broke and trapped; mad twisted dreamers, looking for dark enlightenment; con men, fortune hunters, and collectors of the grotesque and arcane; cults, good and foul, competing for the faithful; noble paladins, planning heroic raids; and even the occasional demon or devil on diplomatic duty.

## Getting There

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Sometimes called the “shifting village,” the “town in the mist,” or simply the “lost place,” Smoketown hovers in the indefinite border between the Shadow Realm and hell, all of the Eleven Hells. It borders all

# ONE CONFIGURATION OF SMOKETOWN



eleven or none at all, all at the same time. The geometaphysicians who have studied it say parts of the town, specifically the gateway and the road up to it, exist in the Shadow Realm while the rest of the town exists in a psychic no-man's-land, a vague realm that touches all of the hells. Others disagree of course. They say the town is a psychoresonant entity that responds to the yearnings of travelers. Thus it appears where it is needed or wanted and takes the traveler to where it thinks they belong.

The facts are that Smoketown is able to appear anywhere on the border of the Shadow Realms and connects to various places in all of the Eleven Hells. Where exactly it exists is unknown as it is always shrouded behind a wall of mist and fog, but more so, its exact location in the Shadow Realm changes frequently, so finding it is never a simple case of following the directions used by the last traveler.

Through trial and error, seekers have settled on two ways to find Smoketown. Both are rituals of sorts. In the first, the traveler writes a contract expressing their Secret Desire—the passion that drives them to seek the hells in the first place. The contract must state the hell being sought and the fare the traveler is willing to pay. Fares can be almost anything: gold, magic, years of life, dreams, living sacrifices, knowledge, promises of future reward, or whatever seems suited to where the traveler is trying to go and the urgency of their journey. The contract is buried in the dark on a well-traveled path, and the petitioner waits. If everything was correctly worded and the price reasonable, an emissary contacts the person to settle the deal. The emissary may be almost anything: a raven, a one-legged man, a dream, a talking goat, a pattern in the fallen leaves, even a newborn child. There may be haggling over the price, but once that is settled, the emissary provides a place and time where Smoketown will be found.

Others say Smoketown can also be found by those who passionately need it even if they don't realize it. They claim Smoketown senses the desperate and opens a path to draw them in. When this happens, the traveler simply finds the town without ever realizing they were searching for it in the first place. The traveler has found their way to Smoketown

Whatever the method, the journey to Smoketown always leads the traveler to a trail that will be gone the next time they pass by that way. The path winds through familiar to increasingly unfamiliar terrain. The land becomes shrouded in thick mist as it plunges forward. After an unexpected turn, bend, dip, or rise, Smoketown appears out of the nothing as if it had always been there.

## Arrival

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New arrivals are invariably greeted by a distinguished older man dressed as a seasoned warrior, possibly a nobleman. He introduces himself as the Captain, the master of Smoketown. If the town was summoned, the Captain produces the contract the player wrote and buried and politely asks for the payment. Once the payment is made, both sides mark the contract fulfilled. The Captain explains they are now free to find and hire a guide to continue their journey onward. If asked, he points people toward the First Hope Tavern as a good place to begin their search.

If for some reason the player refuses to honor their contract, the Captain will press them to change their mind. He warns they will not like the consequences but makes no overt threats or hostile moves. Instead he asks the players to come with him to the town square. Whether they come or refuse, he still goes to the square and stands under an ancient, hanging gibbet to read out their sentence.

*“Citizens, by the voice of your Captain and the authority granted him, know that [name of the one sentenced] has refused just and legal payment for our services. Let no person provide guidance or charity until the proper payment has been made twice over. So the justice of Smoketown is declared!”*

With that, he nails the contract to the gibbet pole, and the sentence is complete.

Once the sentence is passed, no one in Smoketown will agree to guide the sentenced out of town, regardless of their destination. Likewise, no one will offer them any free lodging, food, or supplies. These things can be bought, but prices may be dear. The sentence will be lifted when the player(s) pay double whatever they promised in the contract. Sometimes this is easy to figure out, but if not, the GM should make clear to the players what will fulfill the sentence. In no case should the GM present them with terms that are completely impossible to fulfill.

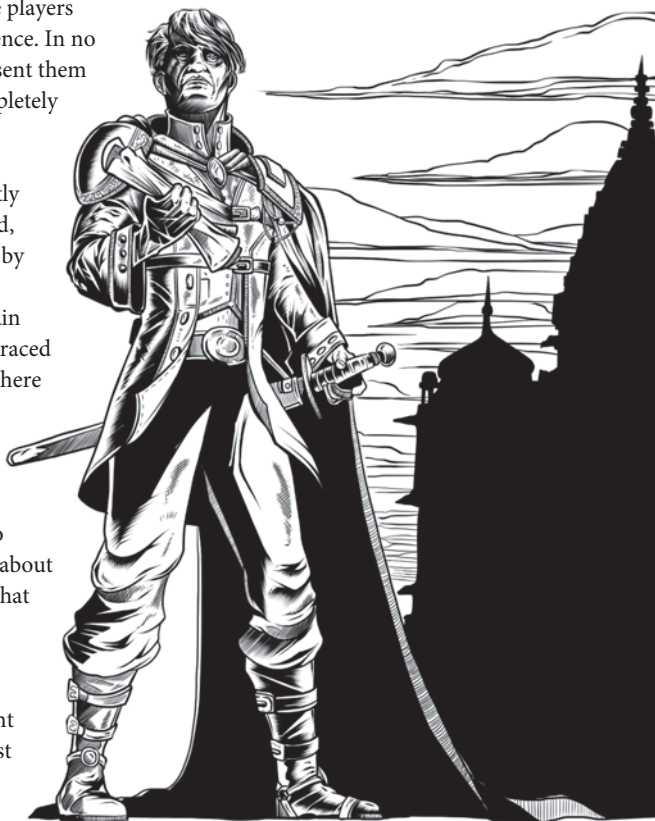
For players who arrive without a contract, strictly based on passionate need, the Captain greets them by name on their arrival. If questioned, he can explain that they have been embraced by Smoketown and that here they can find the service they need. The GM can use the Captain to provide semi-cryptic guidance to players who are unclear about why they are here and what they should do next.

If players attack the Captain, he and any guards with him will fight without mercy to the best of their ability.

## Leaving

Getting out of Smoketown is no easier and possibly even harder than getting into Smoketown. The town’s existence in a place that is neither here nor there makes it almost impossible not to get lost in the mist without a guide. That is the point of Smoketown; people come here to hire guides to lead them into whatever hell they want to visit. Trying to make that trip without a guide is foolishness.

Of course, some people will be foolish. Those not under sentence can pick a road and plunge into the mist whenever they want. However, there are no road signs or markers to guide them once beyond the town. While the players blunder around in





the fog, the GM should determine where they eventually wind up by making a percentile check:

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01–45 After 2–3 days of wandering, the group stumbles back into Smoketown. They have wandered in a great circle.

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46–95 After a day's journey, the group arrives at a random\* hell.

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96–00 Through amazing luck, the group manages after two days of wandering to reach their desired destination.

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\*Random, of course, can mean a hell where the GM has an adventure ready to use.

For those under the Captain's sentence, leaving is even more difficult. No guide will work for anyone under sentence. Those who leave without a guide will wander in the mist for 1–2 days only to return to Smoketown. No matter what precautions are taken, the result will always be the same. Short of using extraordinary magical means, the only way to leave is to pay the Captain's fine and hire a guide.

## Duels and Deals

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Smoketown is home to and hosts a wide range of beings with beliefs ranging from self-righteous virtue to abhorrent evil. With such a mix, one might expect the town to be a field of open warfare. However, the opposite is the case. A tenuous understanding keeps all this from exploding into outright slaughter. It is an accepted tradition that Smoketown is a place of truce—except when it isn't.

Demons and devils love no one, even their own. The righteous fume about the evil around them. The vengeful see Smoketown as a place to settle scores. Therefore, knowing the nature of his visitors, the Captain turns a blind eye to dueling—provided some rules are followed.

- The duelist must formally challenge his target and establish a time and place. Simply attacking a foe in the middle of the street is a violation of this rule.
- The duel must be fought away from people and buildings. With wizard spells, breath attacks, and worse, the risk to others is too great. There are a number of accepted dueling grounds on the fringes of town, even fitted with pavilions for spectators.
- The duel must be one-on-one. This is to prevent large mob battles from erupting.

The Captain and his guards will arrest anyone who defies these basic rules. It may take time and effort to arrest a demon lord intent on destroying the town, but the Captain will persist.

Because the town is a mixing point for folks noble and vile, it also serves as a neutral ground for those times when two sides must sit down face-to-face. There are times when a celestial arrives on one road while an archdemon enters by another. These meetings are carefully planned in advance and the Captain makes special effort to make sure everything goes smoothly.

## The Town

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First-time visitors often gape at the collection of diabolic souls who live in Smoketown. Depending on the visit, the town has 200–500 residents. The majority are tieflings who have found occupations and shelter here. The next largest group are humans, followed by trollkin, shadow fey, gnolls, dragonkin, dhampir, elves, and elfmarked. Dwarves, gnomes, halflings, gearforged, kobolds, and others are rare.

Travelers who have been here more than once are amazed that the streets and buildings of Smoketown are completely different from visit to visit. It may on one visit be a walled hamlet with well-made stone buildings and on the return trip be a

sprawling, defenseless village of mud-brick buildings. Each time a traveler arrives, the layout of streets, the placement of buildings, even the very nature of the town is different.

Still, elements of Smoketown remain unchanged even if appearances are altered. There is always a river or stream that runs through or past the town, and it is always plied by boats bringing goods and travelers. The businesses and homes are always present—there is always the First Hope Tavern, the Captain’s Manor, the Gibbet, the Smoke Gate, and others. The buildings will look different and be in different places, but the inhabitants will be the same.

The locals do not find this unusual, and many aren’t even aware that their surroundings are different. It is not clear when the change happens since the town never seems to alter its appearance while the player characters are staying there.

Collecting travelers’ reports, there appear to be eleven different configurations of Smoketown. These are:

1. A stereotypical human town, walled with a single gate, half-timbered buildings with shingled roofs.
2. A walled town with mud-brick buildings laid out in a very rectangular grid.
3. A ramshackle collection of wooden buildings and shacks within a rotting wooden palisade.
4. A collection of tribal huts surrounding an old temple.
5. A village of stone-and-thatch buildings enclosed in an earthen wall ring
6. An unwallled village of elaborately carved wooden buildings with high-peaked roofs and dragon-headed ridgepoles.
7. A prosperous town of brick buildings and cobbled streets inside a crumbling ancient stone wall.
8. A landscape of crystalline buildings with sharp edges lit in smoky blue hues.
9. A walled town of ancient, polished stone buildings with a majestic but crumbling plaza at the center.
10. A town of mildewed townhouses where the streets are all canals crisscrossed by bridges.
11. A log-walled stockade with thick timber blockhouses, enclosing wood-and-hide lodges.

Metaphysicians have tried to calculate if the town’s appearance is linked to whichever hell is nearest and if the town maintains a fixed order to the hells it visits. Unfortunately, knowing both of these things requires going to each hell and coming back, sometimes repeatedly—something no scholar has yet managed to do.

In play, it is best to have at least two different town layouts, even if the players only expect to visit Smoketown once. However, it is not necessary to map every iteration of Smoketown. Simply describe the look of the buildings using one from the list above and keep the locations vague. “Down the street” or “across town” is enough to provide directions without requiring an exact survey.

## Guide to Smoketown

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Regardless of the layout, the town will always have the following locations. The buildings are described in general terms of size and purpose along with suggested appearances for different manifestations of Smoketown.

### 1. THE CAPTAIN’S HALL

The Captain’s Hall is always one of the largest and most important buildings in Smoketown, as befits the lord of this strange village. Here the Captain both lives and manages the daily business of ruling Smoketown. Regardless of form, the hall always has a space where the Captain receives ambassadors and hears the day’s

cases if there are any. In addition, there will be a small armory, his private quarters, kitchen, and at least one storeroom. Depending on the town configuration, there may be additional rooms or outbuildings for guards, servants, and special guests.

- The Hall is an unadorned stone keep with a great set of iron-clad doors and arrow slits in the walls. The building is three stories tall with a main feasting hall overlooked by an upper gallery and many side rooms.
- The Hall is a grand tribal building built on stilts, so it stands 6 feet off the ground. A swooping palm-leaf roof has wide eaves to protect from the sun and rain. Lavish rattan weavings cover the floors and walls where the Captain receives visitors, eats, and sleeps.
- The Hall is the best of the leaky shacks that make up the town. Worn cowhide covers the holes in the roof. Inside there are benches and stools around a warming central firepit. In the shadows are sleeping mats, baskets, and chests.

The Captain is a human man, grim and heartless but scrupulously proper. He enforces and is part of the unstated laws that govern Smoketown. He is a classic tyrant with absolute power over Smoketown and a dedication to protect it. While his judgements are harsh, they are scrupulously fair by Smoketown standards. He adheres to the absolute letter of the law regardless of the suffering this causes the guilty or the innocent. He has never been known to display favoritism or mercy and has a well-earned reputation for being incorruptible.

The Captain is a powerful fighter of indeterminate level. He should provide a severe challenge to any group that threatens him, always being at least equal to them if not better in power. However, he is not invulnerable or unkillable—he can be defeated by those with enough skill and

luck. If he is killed, he will reappear the next morning as if nothing had happened. He literally holds no grudge or ill-will against anyone who kills him, at most advising his killers their efforts are futile and unproductive. Killing him will not lift any sentence he set on a player character.

## 2. BY-WATER INN

Always located on the town's riverbank, the By-Water Inn is Smoketown's only, and thereby finest, inn. It provides lodging for travelers and some permanent guests, victims of the Captain's sentence still looking for the way to pay their sentence. Overall the inn is less-than-stellar. The food and drink are both thin and sour, the staff cross and suspicious of all their guests. Regardless of the rest of the town, the inn buildings are always in need of repair and cleaning.

- This is a traditional half-timbered building in clear need of repairs. The mud-and-wattle walls are cracked, and large chunks of the plaster have fallen away in places. The place is a maze of little rooms, most windowless, on a variety of floors and uneven hallways. The main room is dingy and overheated with soot-stained glass windows that barely let any light in.
- The dusty mud-brick inn's main room is a cantina with bare dirt floors and a mismatched collection of tables and benches. The second floor is mostly two large rooms where a traveler can rent a pallet on the floor. A few private rooms have doors that don't latch and windows without any glass or coverings.
- This crystal building has seen better days. The walls are marked by spiderweb cracks and unwashed grime that diminish the luster of the crystal. Throughout there are too many sharp-edged projections for anyone to sit comfortably anywhere.

The landlord is a one-eyed, one-horned tiefling man named Holst Nactwier, as surly a host as one might ever find. He seems to actively resent all his guests and believes every one of them is trying to cheat him in some way. His only concern is to be paid upfront at whatever gouging price he can get. Complaints about the inn's cleanliness, bad food, lack of service, or anything else are met with a churlish snort and the offer to throw "your ungrateful hide" out into the street. Nor is his partner, an elf woman named Twiletta, any better—shrill, sharp-tongued, and altogether un-elflike. She is quick to flourish a boning knife as a way to make her point clear.

### 3. THE QUAY/DOCKS/LANDING PLACE

Located on the river, the docks are only used by boats carrying travelers in and out. Mostly deserted, especially at night, the docks are a popular place for clandestine meetings with guides, infernal agents, and robbers. It can be hard to tell one of these from the others.

The docks, regardless of the town's appearance, always look like standard docks appropriate to the rest of the town.

### 4. FIRST HOPE TAVERN

The tavern is always located near the Smoke Gate, ready to greet new arrivals to town. No matter the appearance of the town, the First Hope Tavern sports religious symbols that are the antithesis of the Eleven Hells. The yard in front of the tavern is a thicket of protective idols, lucky horseshoes, warding posts, spirit bundles, painted charms, and inspiring holy symbols.

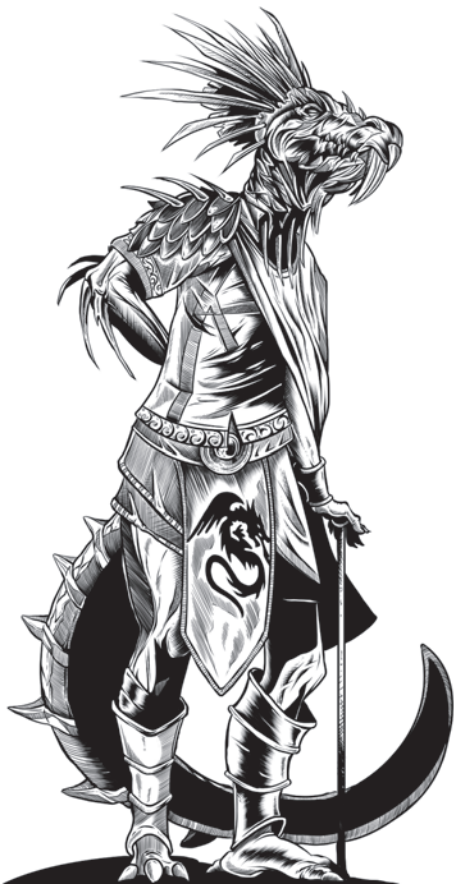
- The building is a long, wooden mead hall. The path to the door is lined by holy iconography while the doorposts



and lintels are carved with protective prayers of many different religions.

- The tavern is a simple outdoor space with shade-providing trees. A small shack serves as the storeroom and bar front. Charms and icons hang from the branches of the trees over the guests.
- Amid the dingy shacks of the town, the tavern is notably clean and well-repaired, making it one of the few solid structures in the town. Inside the warmly lit main salon, the walls are lined with protective idols. Paper charms are plastered over the door and window frames, doing more than keeping out drafts.

The tavern is run by o-Gromma Hakkir, a dragonborn. He is elderly and needs a cane to get about but is still filled with determination and hope. His body shows



the scars of battles fought long ago, but as o-Gromma readily admits, those days are long past. Big of body and spirit, o-Gromma presides over the tavern with gruff good cheer and a devout reverence for the “noble” gods. He is open with his advice and counsel for those who seek it and often teaches new travelers the ropes of Smoketown.

His staff is a collection of the trapped and the lost—travelers needing a job before they can move on or those under sentence who find comfort and understanding from the old dragonborn. It is clear he cares for their well-being. What he does not tolerate though are slackers and con men. Those hoping to take advantage of his generosity often find themselves hustled out the door at the point of his sword.

## 5. THE CARAVAN YARD

This is the arrival and departure point for the large overland caravans that sometimes pass through Smoketown. Thus it is a good location to gather information on the route ahead and the latest news from the hells. It is run by the tiefling Missara Curved-Blade. Running one of the few successful businesses in town, she keeps a close watch on the comings and goings of all strangers—and more than a few of the guides. Realistic and hard-nosed, she is very guarded, but those who prove themselves worthy of her trust are rewarded with her guidance and insights as to the reliability of the various guides and mercenaries found in the town, along with their schemes and secret alliances.

- The business consists of a large stable, able to house 30 or more animals, along with an attached corral where more beasts can be kept. Missara maintains a small office just inside the stable doors.
- The caravanserai is a single large building with only two heavily barred gates. Inside is a large courtyard where the animals care kept. Surrounding this are two stories of galleries with rooms for supplies, gear, trade goods, and sleeping for the caravan crews.
- It is a stone plaza on the edge of town, dominated by a magical fountain with the power to refresh the weary and restore stamina for the long journeys ahead. Outbuildings line the plaza—stables, ordered by beast, plus warehouses, flop rooms, and fodder cribs.

## 6. FERISSON SMITHY

Run by a pair of hill dwarf brothers, Kelka and Trav Ferisson, this small ironworks provides the needs of Smoketown and the travelers that pass through. The brothers came here to make their fortune and they are well on their way. Kelka, the older, is a sharp dealer who will never give a discount to even a loyal customer. Trav does most of



the work at the forge and seldom has a kind word to share with anyone although he can spare time for those who know anything of infernal smithing. His metalwork is not amazing but good enough for Smoketown.

- It is a stone shed with a massive forge and a bellows powered by a water sluice drawn from the river. A coal bunker fills the rest of the space and Trav's anvils sit under an awning out front.
- The forge is a clay pit in a dusty courtyard surrounded by mounds of coal and wood. Large flat stones serve as anvils, and reed mats are Trav's workbenches.
- Built into the hollow of a great dead tree, forge smoke has charred the interior of the natural chimney to the point where it can no longer burn. Nearby, a fine building of wood and iron serves as the workshop and shop front for the brothers.

## 7. THE OLD TEMPLE

It is hard to know which god was served by this crumbling old ruin. Once it was a modest but fine structure to a deity of good will and intentions, but whatever symbols it bore are long missing. Were they removed or were they defaced? There are signs and suggestions that either could be true. The grounds still carry a faint aura of good, but there is also a strong trace of evil. Was the temple attacked and overrun? Abandoned? Desecrated? Or is it a steadfast reminder that even here goodness can be found?

- The ruin is little more than a few wooden poles, burnt long ago and moldering with age. The altar, carved from a single massive log, still remains, charred but solid.
- Clearly this was once a small but soaring crystal structure. Now it lies in a jumble of broken shards with only the archway of the main entrance still standing.

- Once it was a small clay-brick ziggurat with elaborate decorations on the sides. Time and weather have eroded these to be almost unrecognizable. The ritual brazier at the top still stands with signs of recent ashes.

Still, the ruin is not abandoned. A tiefling cleric, Manar Inkala, has a small hovel near the ruin. He is ragged and wild-haired. He speaks in cryptic phrases and lies more than he tells the truth. Most in town figure he is mad—just another of the lost who have drifted into Smoketown. In truth, Manar is a cleric of Sarastra with a particular passion to use his divine skills of deceit to save the lost from the treacheries found in Smoketown. Those who can decipher his twisting wordplay and riddles can learn useful advice about the guides in town—who knows a true path and who is likely to lead their client into an ambush.

## 8. THE SMOKE GATE

No matter what form the town takes, there is always the Smoke Gate at the road leading into town. It marks the boundary between Smoketown and frayed edges of whatever lies beyond, Shadow Realm or one of the hells. The gate serves a powerful protective function for the town because the gate can only be found by those who live in Smoketown or have made a contract with the Captain, and no one can properly enter Smoketown except through the gate. It is believed that the ghosts sometimes seen in the streets are the images of those who skirted the gate on their way in.

- The Smoketown gate is a stout stone structure with heavy, banded doors protected by a wrought-iron portcullis of snakes and flames. The Captain's banner hangs over the top of the archway.
- The gate is a living archway of thorny vines. The wilted flowers and brown leaves don't reveal what plant this is or

was. A sign for Smoketown hangs at the top in the faded blooms.

- The gate is a massive bronze door decorated with lapis lazuli and gilded designs. It is set in a wall and flanked by two polished marble pillars flying the banners of the Captain and the town.

## 9. THE SOUL MILL

At the bank of the river is the second-oldest building in Smoketown—a water-powered grist mill. Day and night, the stone wheel turns without stop whether there is anything to grind or not. The villagers do bring their grain here to turn into flour and meal, but it's known that the miller has other goods to sell.

The mill is owned and run by Hezapah, a spawn of Parzelon. If asked why she is here, she tells a tale of how she angered Parzelon and was banished to the Shadow Realm. After much wandering, she found her way here. Unable to go closer to home, she has settled in Smoketown and is making the best of it. Why a miller? The mill was available, and the job is easy, according to her.

Of course, nobody else in town believes a word of it. The popular theory is that Hezapah is still serving the Lord of Secrets by passing on information she learns to her infernal lord. Supporting this theory, she is particularly well-informed about visitors to Smoketown along with any sentences the Captain has pronounced.

For a devil spawn of the Lord of Secrets, she is cheerful, talkative, and helpful, especially to those who cannot pay the Captain's fines. For those willing to pay her price, Hezapah can persuade the Captain to modify his sentence. Whatever secrets she knows, the Captain is determined to keep



them hidden. Her price varies by person. It may be a secret of great power or it may be a soul. Whatever is paid, she casts it upon the millstone and makes it forever hers.

- The wooden building's mossy walls shudder slightly as the great water wheel turns. With each turn, the gears slowly thump as the stones grind together.
- An isolated tower stands on an island in the river. Driven by water powered gears, the tower steadily turns, the entire base acting as a millstone.
- The rhythmic beat of hammers resounds from the brick building on the bank. The wheel turns the clockwork gears that drive this hammer mill.

## 10. THE GIBBET

This skeletal structure where prisoners are caged and hung exposed to the elements day and night is always at the center of Smoketown, regardless of its configuration. Furthermore, it's appearance never changes—an ironbound cage hung from a crossbeam that gently twists and swings at the slightest breeze. Sometimes it is empty but more often occupied. It might be a traveler pleading for mercy, a minor demon who dared to challenge the Captain's power, a rotting corpse, or a raving madman. Whatever is inside is held by powerful wards woven into the very metal of the cage.

The gibbet is reserved for criminals caught in Smoketown, mostly murderers and thieves. They are sentenced by the Captain and caged in the gibbet until their sentence is served. It might be several days exposure or to remain in the cage, without food or water, until dead. The townsfolk know better than to release anyone sentenced to the gibbet. That is another serious crime in the Captain's ledger sheet. Yet that does not prevent them from hiring or tricking adventurers into staging a breakout. That would certainly mean the adventurers committed the crime and not their would-be employer.

On the gibbet post are contracts for travelers currently under the Captain's sentence. They can be read by anyone. It may be that a group of adventurers has the means to pay off a trapped traveler's sentence. Who knows what might come of that?



## The Guides

The entire point of Smoketown is to find a guide. This should be simple. There are plenty of guides here, but finding a reliable one is another matter. They range from trustworthy to treacherous and none of them know the paths to every hell.

There are ten guides in Smoketown.

### Thena Farrow

**Paths Known:** *Archedantuss (Riverine Hell of the Styx & Lethe)*, *Urgennos (Luminous Hell of Fire and Sulfur)*

*Tiefling (7th-level ranger), neutral evil*

Thena is a sharp-eyed scout with distinctive flowing horns that make up for her short stature and a blunt way with people. She

knows her way around, but if she thinks a group is going to get her killed, she has no problem ditching them to their fate. She will feel bad about it later... while she is alive and having a drink at the First Hope Tavern.

### Klaus Mueller

**Paths Known:** *Bzeletalet (Buzzing Hell of Insects), Efrizarr (Frozen Hell of Ice and Silence)*

*Human (6th-level sorcerer), lawful neutral*

Klaus describes himself as a man who has freed himself from the bonds of ordinary society. Others describe him as a lazy, no-ambition bum. After years of barely getting by as an adventurer, he somehow found himself in Smoketown where he discovered a talent for finding the paths through the mist. Not a natural planner, his preparation is mostly, "Don't worry. Everything will work out." The rest is all "Everybody run!" when trouble breaks out.

### Youma Adamiz ka'Moura'i'a Gara

**Paths Known:** *Qes-al-Marit (Shifting Hell of Darkness and Bone Dunes), Snorecksubo (Lingering Hell of Plagues)*

*Elfmarked (5th-level cleric), lawful good*

Abandoned as a child, Youma has grown up with an intense desire to protect and help the lost and forlorn, which has naturally led him to Smoketown. Devoutly religious and intensely concerned for others, his first reaction to those who try to hire him is to try talking them out of their journey. On the road, he has good intentions but is not the best at following through on his plans.

### Gregor the Bald

**Paths Known:** *Archedantuss (Riverine Hell of the Styx & Lethe), Emwabbik Em (Alien Hell of the Acid Abyss)*

*Human (6th-level wizard), lawful neutral*

Gregor is one of those people who always manages to see the worst in any situation, even when things are going well. Although extremely skilled and competent, he is plagued by self-doubts and does not see his own ability. He is a meticulous organizer but becomes extremely stressed when things do not go according to plan.

### Malkas

**Paths Known:** *Bzeletalet (Buzzing Hell of Insects), Fleggesun (Fetid Hell of Cannibal Rot)*

*Tiefling (8th-level fighter), neutral*

Loud to the point of obnoxiousness and oblivious to the feelings of those around him, Malkas is a hard tiefling to love. Fortunately, most of the time he is happy and good-natured, but he is quick to take insult when challenged. His talents as a guide are far less than he believes them to be, but he is a trustworthy sword when things get dicey.

### Brigid No-Man

**Paths Known:** *Nakhol (Vanishing Hell of Ignorance), Snorecksubo (Lingering Hell of Plagues)*

*Trollkin (8th-level fighter), neutral good*

Abrasively sarcastic and half-drunk most of the time, Brigid is a surprisingly reliable and effective guide. Although she puts up a tough front, she has a weak spot for families and especially children. This is matched by her burning hatred of slavers. If the story can be coaxed out of her, player characters might learn she takes only the most dangerous and high-paying guide runs

to earn enough money to buy her daughter out of bondage.

## Hamilscar Norand

**Paths Known:** *Emwabbik Em (Alien Hell of the Acid Abyss)*, *Qes-al-Marit (Shifting Hell of Darkness and Bone Dunes)*, *Sooleleed (Mirror Hell of Lies)*

*Shadow fey (6th-level rogue), chaotic evil*

Charming but treacherous, Hamilscar is a complete and experienced liar. Careful to appear as a guide of modest skill, he keeps apart from other guides—who well know his true nature. He presents himself as studious in his guide occupation, but once he leads a group into the mist, his goal to take them to a camp of his brethren. There his clients will be stripped of their possessions and dumped to fend for themselves, unarmed, in the hostile wilderness. Or killed if necessary. If Hamilscar is caught in his ruse, he can be forced to guide the party properly, though he will attempt to escape at the first opportunity.

## Taminino

**Paths Known:** *Chundresh (Hunter's Hell of Blood and Fear)*, *Fleggesun (Fetid Hell of Cannibal Rot)*

*Gnome (6th-level fighter), neutral evil*

Taminino is a skinny little fellow, perpetually badly shaven and dressed in patchy clothes and armor. This is not from poverty but extreme frugality. He almost never speaks. If these odd habits were not enough, he has the unsettling habit of staring at people when he thinks they aren't looking, abruptly looking away when noticed. He clearly does not seem to like anyone, simmering with some unstated resentment that he mutters under his breath when he thinks he is out of hearing range. Still he is a good guide for those who can tolerate his personality.

## "Buck" Vyger

**Paths Known:** *Chundresh (Hunter's Hell of Blood and Fear)*, *Nakhol (Vanishing Hell of Ignorance)*, *Urgennos (Luminous Hell of Fire and Sulfur)*

*Gearforged (7th-level paladin), lawful good*

Buck is a model of quiet virtue, honorable but not naive. He is not overly friendly though. Indeed, most consider him grumpy. He often mutters displeasure about the "unnatural arrangements" of Smoketown. He is selective about who he works for, not accepting contracts with those whose motives he thinks are suspect. Even if not hired, he will try to help earnest travelers by warning them away from unreliable guides and offering advice to better prepare for the journey ahead.

## Helna Grass-Scale ("The Lost Lizard")

**Paths Known:** *Efrizarr (Frozen Hell of Ice and Silence)*, *Sooleleed (Mirror Hell of Lies)*  
*Dragonborn (commoner), lawful neutral*

Helena is the most unlikely of guides, a simple woman, albeit dragonborn, with a talent for guiding through the most dangerous lands. How she came here and why she stays is a mystery although her mossy-tinged scales betray her green dragon ancestry. The work does not seem to bring her any joy as Helna always seems fearful of the job and intimidated by the adventurers she leads. Some think her successes are pure luck, but she's wily and uses her weaknesses to her advantage. She goes to great lengths to avoid discovery and especially fighting. She knows the ways not patrolled, the places to hide in the muck, where the dimwitted sentries are, how to cower like a peasant not worth the trouble of killing, and when to flatter the powerful. On the road, she has no pride and will do whatever it takes to escape notice.



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