

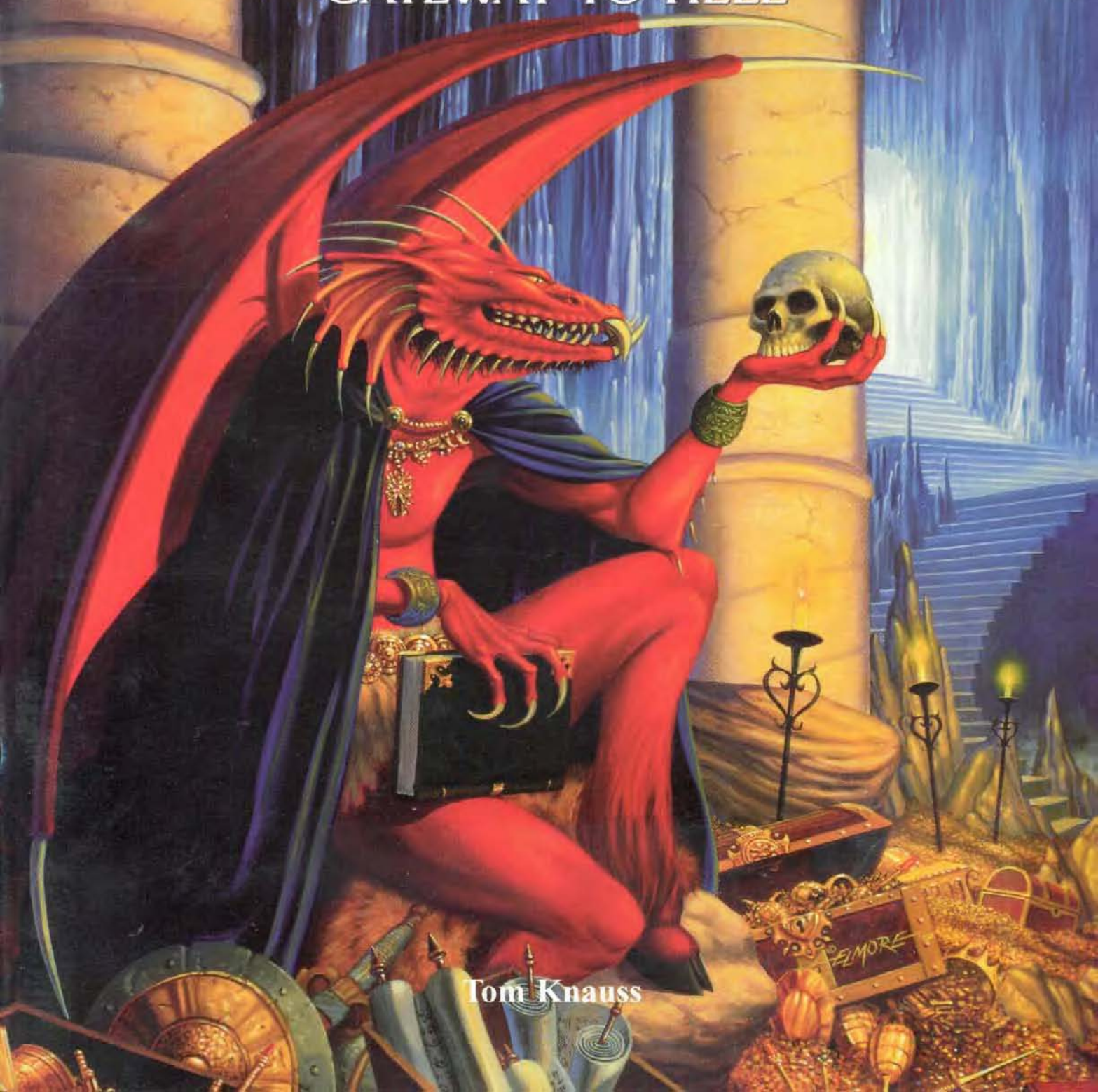
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The Planes

FEUERRING

GATEWAY TO HELL



Tom Knauss



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INTRODUCTION

Feuerring, the great Ring of Fire, encapsulates Hell providing a formidable obstacle to those seeking passage into its lower layers.

Anguished screams and horrific, ear-shattering cries emanate from the multitude of condemned souls consigned to Feuerring's eternal flames of woe. The tormented spirits of the damned bob helplessly upon Feuerring's surface, buffeted by the shifting and treacherous vortices created by their unceasing and desperate pleas for mercy. Massive islands of sulphurous, smouldering rock float upon the unquenchable ocean of fire and brimstone.

Most of Feuerring is an inhospitable ring of burning liquid and sulphurous gases. Its temperature reaches a mind-boggling 500 degrees Fahrenheit, immediately incinerating any flammable objects. Feuerring's many islands are rugged, but somewhat more habitable. They are composed of a mixture of igneous rock and cosmic metallic alloys such as nickel, cadmium and iron. Loose particles of these substances comprise the rest of the great ring, but unlike the atmosphere surrounding the ring itself, the islands usually produce enough breathable air to sustain life.

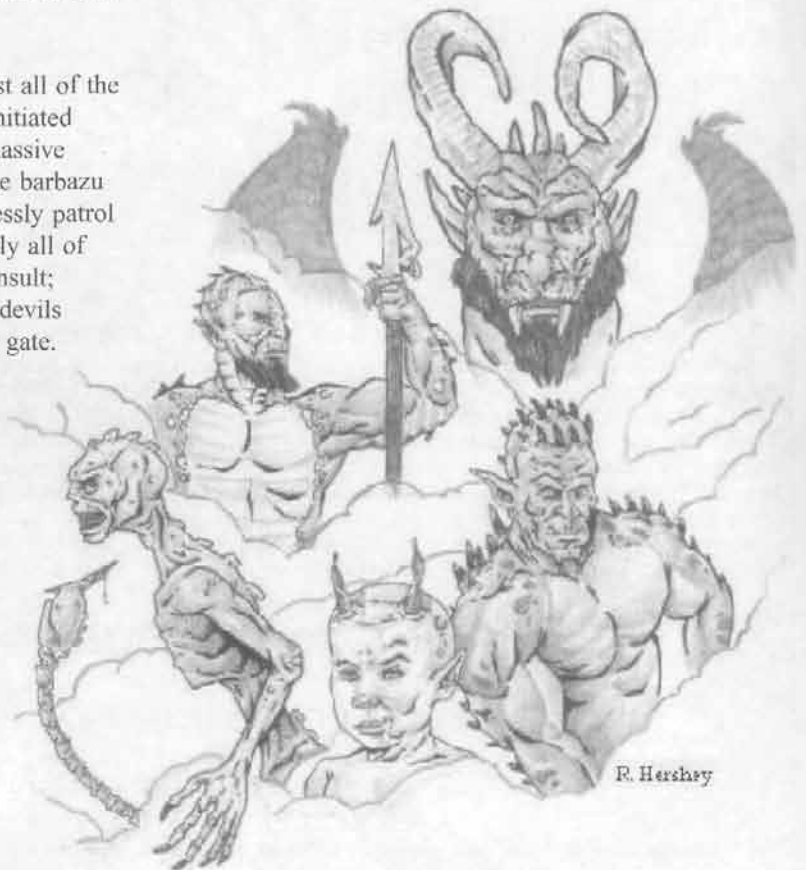
Legions of barbazu devils defend almost all of the islands, poised to repulse any attacks initiated against their plane. Dwelling within massive citadels carved from the native rock, the barbazu and their pit fiend commanders relentlessly patrol the islands in search of intruders. Nearly all of Hell's pit fiends consider this duty an insult; therefore only the least influential archdevils command the barbazu legions at Hell's gate. In addition to the native devils, an eclectic collection of deities, their deceased worshippers and powerful evil beings also populate Feuerring's islands. These competing interests engage in tireless intrigues against one another, hoping to increase their power and influence in Feuerring as well as in the Material Plane.

THE PLANES

Feuerring – Gateway to Hell is the first title of The Planes, a new series of sourcebooks from Mongoose Publishing detailing new and old Planes of Existence. Designed to be slotted seamlessly into any fantasy-based D20 games system, these sourcebooks provide thousands of new adventure hooks across planar boundaries, adding whole new dimensions to any campaign... literally. Each book of The Planes series gives Games Masters entire new settings into which to plunge their players, exploiting the heights of fantasy and legend to create stories of epic proportions. Feuerring is a plane that stands between Hell, home of devils and other evil deities, and the Astral Plane. It is a prison and a fortress to withstand any attempt of invasion, or escape.

FEUERRING – THE GATES OF HELL

Within this sourcebook, you will find an entire layer of Hell ready to drop straight into your campaign. Feuerring is fully detailed, with locales and features



R. Hershey

of each of this layer's realms. In addition, Games Masters will be able to make ready use of the new creatures that populate the plane, as well as the spells, magic items and artefacts that comprise the dark knowledge of Feuerring's denizens. The creatures of this layer eke out their existence in the hostile confines of their fortress-prison, eternally watching for outside interference or for opportunities to launch their own incursions into the rest of the Universe.

Feuerring is the kind of hellish realm featured in many a myth, where heroes travel to stop the

downfall of entire worlds, wrest the secret of an evil enemy's defeat or rescue the doomed souls of loved ones. An entire chapter is devoted to help the Games Master insert Feuerring quickly and easily into his existing campaigns, with ways of infiltration and escape from its fiery depths, and plot hooks and scenarios to challenge the hardiest of adventurers. One way or another, few players will ever forget the adventures they endure in a realm of evil and torment, bringing the only light to be found in its expanses.

"It should not have ended this way," I solemnly thought to myself. My battered and broken body lay helpless on the battlefield, as ebbs of warm, red blood flowed from my wounds and mingled with the soft earth around me. As consciousness drifted from me, I recalled not the events of my life, but the emotions that I had experienced. Waves of anger, envy and lust coursed through my dying mind, nearly providing me with the elusive strength to rise from my prone position and re-enter the fray around me. Yet, my heaving mass of shattered bones and shredded tissue prevented my ascent. My fleeting breath fled from my useless body, while my spirit escaped the prison of mortal flesh.

As if awaking from a dream, I found myself adrift in a vast, featureless space, speeding toward a distant light. Although the journey assuredly covered thousands of miles, any sense of time and distance eluded my perception. My pensive spirit, still seething with the vile emotions of my mortal life, rapidly approached the formerly far-off glowing sun. Contrary to my initial belief, the beacon of hope revealed its true nature as a raging circle of flame. Despite the immense distance between its fiery boundaries and myself, a host of ghastly screams and diabolical cackles pierced my terrified ears. I vainly attempted to retreat from the oncoming conflagration, but some irresistible force propelled my flailing spirit headlong into the burning sea of rock and flame.

Even though my intangible form lacked my former physiology, excruciating jolts of pain surged through me, forcing my voice to join the cacophony of anguished screams emanating from all around me. Awash among the ring's swirling tides, I futilely struggled to spare even a finger from the ravaging fire consuming me. As I fought the shifting currents, my emotions again overcame me, deluging my soul with vile thoughts of hate, envy and rage. As my feelings intensified, the roaring embers also increased proportionally. Attempting to understand this strange anomaly, I theorized that perhaps I stoked the flames of this raging inferno. Temporarily buoyed by this idea, I exerted a conscious effort to control the boiling anger bubbling within me. Instead, I discovered that that more I resisted, the greater my agony became.

At that moment, unfathomable fear enveloped me. I accepted the futility of escape, and the absence of any respite from the ceaseless torment. As I internally debated the dilemma, a conclusion leapt to the forefront. I realized that my punishment for a lifetime of sin and depravity was not the crackling fire around me, but the despair begotten by the ring. Hope abandoned my wretched soul, cast into this undying ocean of crackling flames, incarcerating me for all eternity without any chance of pardon.



FEUERRING — AN OVERVIEW

Clouds of suffocating, noxious gases and blistering heat emanate from the raging conflagration that acts as Hell's first and most formidable defence against intruders. Composed of smouldering cosmic metals and minerals, *Feuerring* resembles a vast lake of fire, a sharp contrast to the largely featureless space of the Astral Plane that borders it. *Feuerring's* light extends hundreds of miles into the Astral Plane, yet its heat does not exert its energy even remotely as far. *Feuerring* also incarcerates and torments the countless souls trapped within its merciless flames. Buffeted by the ring's ever changing currents, the tormented inhabitants of this prison engage in a futile struggle to remain afloat atop the swirling undertow of melting stone and metal.

Adrift upon this sea of molten matter are a number of rocky islands ranging from a few square miles in area to the massive island of *Isjarheim* that spans several thousand square miles. Although rugged and inhospitable, many of these islands boast a substantial population of sentient beings. A large

collection of powerful entities, including a handful of deities, dwell within the secluded confines of these titanic barges. Despite the presence of life upon the islands' surface, natural laws do not govern *Feuerring*. At first glance, the great ring of fire exists as a macabre and twisted anomaly spawned by an unnatural and unknown force at the dawn of time. Further investigation reveals that amidst these paradoxes, *Feuerring* possesses a strange logic unique unto itself. Throughout the great ring, law reigns supreme, and evil infects its malevolent inhabitants like a festering plague.

Order exists within *Feuerring's* boundaries simply because an omnipotent being or group of beings wills it to exist. The source of *Feuerring's* flames does not originate within the physical world, but emanates from the wretched spirits consigned to its horrific depths. Hell's mighty flames are the palpable manifestation of its inhabitants' vile emotions. *Feuerring* transforms its occupants' rage, fear, anger, jealousy, lust, hatred and wrath from an intangible sensation into a tangible energy. Cursing one's condition within *Feuerring's* flames of woe only intensifies the flames around.

The multitude of *Feuerring's* islands essentially obey the same principle but with a few nuances of their own. Unlike the incorporeal spirits engulfed by *Feuerring's* flames, the entities controlling each island craft an immortal, yet material, body for all new inhabitants of their particular island. All native beings died at some indeterminate time on the Material Plane. However, some beings distinguished themselves during their lifetimes warranting pardon from *Feuerring's* perpetual pain. The vast majority of beings achieve this goal through a lifetime of tireless dedication and sacrifice to their patron deity, while others obtain immortality by embracing evil, drawing the lustful attention of one of the island's omnipotent beings. Upon their death on the Material Plane, the decedent's soul merges with the energy that permeates the plane, with its new corporeal body taking the shape of a small, violent funnel cloud.



Resembling a block of clay spinning on a potter's wheel, the being's features come to life and, after a few tumultuous minutes, the final product emerges from the process reborn to its new existence in Feuerring. If slain in its current form, the material body immediately turns into a steaming pile of rock and ash. The spirit emerges awash in Feuerring's fiery depths, condemned for the remainder of eternity.

The islands' strange properties do bestow an unusual benefit upon Feuerring's visitors. While the islands' rulers harness the tremendous energy to sculpt mortal bodies, visitors powerful enough can manipulate reality too. Practitioners of this dangerous art channel the emanations in ways unique to each island. Although potentially deadly, those capable of attuning themselves to their unnatural surroundings boast formidable powers. These abilities and the perils of obtaining them are discussed in much greater detail in the Laws of Feuerring chapter.

Despite Feuerring's seemingly chaotic physical laws, its political hierarchy truly embraces the tenets of law and evil. Hell's devils rigidly enforce the realm's feudal government, demanding at least titular allegiance from its most potent deities and protecting Hell proper from invasion by another power. Organized into symmetrical units, the devils mete punishment to the damned not based upon a depraved whim, but rather by an exacting formula calculated by Hell's infernal masters. Within this unyielding political environment, Hell's pit fiends contest their superiority via clandestine alliances and the acquisition of mortal souls. The inevitable losers of this diplomatic struggle find themselves relegated to the unenviable task of manning Feuerring's numerous outposts and citadels. Most pit fiends confined to Feuerring's defenses view their exile as a temporary setback, confident that a shift in Hell's political climate may return them to a more prestigious station. A small minority, however do not share the same optimism. Despondent about their current status, these pit fiends abandon their lofty ambitions and engage themselves in a number of trivial pursuits in a fruitless effort to distract them from their failure.

THE GREAT RING

The seething emotions of the tormented souls consigned to the eternal flames of woe supply its immense power. Tossed by the ring's wicked

vortices and unpredictable tides, the damned bitterly struggle to remain afloat and spare even the tiniest portion of their being from the intense heat. Feuerring transforms the raw emotions generated by their futile efforts into tangible reality.

Despite its terrifying appearance, the molten river is actually quite shallow, extending downwards for barely 30 feet. Beyond the ring's bottom lie the rest of Hell's layers, but breaching this barrier is not as easy as it sounds.

The souls whose torment powers the ring's fire represent an obstacle to visitors coming near them without protection. The constant wailing and moaning create a maddening cacophony. Characters not native to Hell must make a Will save (DC 20) or suffer a -2 morale penalty to every skill check and attack and damage rolls for the next 2d12 hours, when they are allowed a second saving throw, but this time with a +1 cumulative bonus. Eventually, visitors get used to the laments, though the memory may come and haunt their nightmares when they are back home.

The fire from the burning emotions is not completely physical heat, dealing 2d6+20 points of damage per round of immersion. Part of the damage comes from unholy energies, and thus half of the total damage ignores any resistances and immunities to fire. Devils are totally unaffected by this, as is to be expected. The hellfire enjoys a +30 unholy bonus to Caster checks to defeat Spell Resistance. Anyone standing within 10 feet of an island's shore, or hovering 10 feet above the river suffers 2d4 points of damage as if standing close to a *wall of fire*. The fire, however, is not a spell-like effect, so it cannot be dispelled except by the fiends and deities that rule over the outposts and islands of this layer. The floating islands displace the bottom of the layer, creating depths of up to 120 feet in their immediate vicinities.

The ring's violent currents also propel large chunks of jagged debris through its molten waves of fire. Intruders trying to dive to the bottom must make a successful Reflex save (DC 24) every 10 feet they travel to avoid suffering 10d6 points of damage from the floating chunks. The layer's barrier at the bottom can be breached with a successful Will save (DC 23). A single character can guide through a number of individuals equal to 1d4 + Wisdom modifier before the breach closes and another must be created.



Once past all these obstacles, the intruders gain access to Hell's lower layers.

THE ISLANDS

As mentioned previously, countless rocky islands float amidst the ocean of bubbling flame. Ranging from only a few hundred square yards to the immensity of Ísjarheim measuring 2,000 square miles, the islands are the temporal home for a host of malevolent entities. These oases exist not as a result of natural phenomena, but as a testament to the power wielded by some of their hateful inhabitants. Although the islands' surfaces appear identical to their counterparts on the Material Plane, the similarities end there.

Most of the larger chunks of floating rocks have some construction on them, with the majority being devils' outposts and garrisons. Small detachments commanded by barbazu are minor encampments, the fortresses sailing through the fiery seas on the lookout of any possible invader. Only the major forts led by cornugons and pit fiends contain portals into the lower layers of Hell, each leading to the layer the devil in charge owes allegiance to. The island realm of the dark godlings may, or may not have portals leading deeper into Hell, depending on the deity's relationship with the reigning archdevils. The ruler or commanding devil of each island can open and close the portal with a thought, securing it against invasion and infiltration.

New islands are created by the deeds of particularly evil individuals in the Material Plane, proving that, whilst separated by the vast astral expanses, Feuerring is in some way connected to the world of mortals. Such beings must commit acts of unspeakable evil to elicit a response from the great ring of fire, whilst adhering to the tenets of Law.

A tyrant inflicting cruel and merciless laws upon his subjects, causing the death and suffering of thousands, is a perfect candidate for inclusion into the ranks of Feuerring's 'landowners'. When such a person dies on the Material Plane, his spirit avoids the roaring flames and instead migrates to the small clump of rock which his acts created. The island's size depends entirely upon the amount of devastation wreaked during his lifetime on the Material Plane, because the island's material consists solely of the echo of everything he destroyed. A general responsible for the massacre of prisoners finds himself standing on a landmass identical in size to the remains of his victims. If the

same individual also destroyed the prisoners' castle and livestock, Feuerring adds this material to the island as well.

Most of these petty evils erode over time to join finally the tortured souls of the flaming spirits, but those whose memory is not only kept, but even revered, may ascend to the ranks of the false deities of Feuerring if not made into a devil before. These deities can enlarge their islands by fostering worship in the Material World, their first devotees acting as channels to their will.

Once presented with the raw materials, the island's master manipulates the matter forming any type of environment as well as the corporeal bodies of his deceased worshippers. The vast majorities duplicate their abodes and surroundings on the Material Plane, while fashioning the newly arriving spirits in a similar manner. The ring's more potent inhabitants spend thousands of years creating elaborate cities and terrain as well as formulating diverse cultures and governments. Only beings whose deeds become myth over time come close to the power of true gods, and it is rumoured that, if the mortals' belief is strong and widespread enough, they can attain true divinity and escape Feuerring to carve their own domain in another Outer Plane.

THE LAWS OF FEUERRING

As the unparalleled embodiment of the lawful evil ethos, Feuerring functions according to a distinct collection of rules. While exceptions exist, the vast majority of the layer's denizens unswervingly obey the plane's edicts. Feuerring serves as a model of unmatched efficiency. The baneful thoughts and lusts of its prisoners spawn the material forms of the layer, fuelling its immense energies. Even the pettiest and most banal desires ignite the ring's raging inferno. The ultimate example of recycling, Feuerring wastes nothing.

MANIPULATIVE POWERS

Hell rewards the strong of mind who try to impose order in the shifting currents of the river of fire. The environment is born from raw emotion, making it unique among Outer Planes in that it can be shaped by strong wills that do not necessarily belong to gods. The commanding devils can have a taste about what being the ruler of a layer is like, as they

shape their environment to bolster their outpost's defences, while visitors can risk their souls to craft an escape route. Natives call these gifted creatures *manipulators*. Manipulators attune themselves to the island through concentration and a conscious act of will. This is, of course, part of the layer's torments, giving the permanent residents the illusion of power, and the visitors a false hope, before it is all taken away by the true rulers of the plane.

The Process

Unlike the islands' rulers, visitors often possess no knowledge of the island's malleable properties and even if they do, it takes time before a potential manipulator can try to shape reality from the intangible. In most cases the manipulator requires one hour of absolute concentration. In order to initiate the link between himself and the island's ephemeral forces, he must succeed in a Concentration check (DC 15). While success establishes the conduit between himself and the island, failure prohibits him from trying again for an hour regardless of his foreknowledge of the island.

Beings well-versed in planar study is a benefit in several ways. A successful Knowledge (the planes) check (DC 15) prior to the attuning attempt provides the manipulator with enough information to reduce by half the time it takes for him to attune himself with his new surroundings. A more difficult check can be attempted, succeeding at a DC of 25 bestows further insight providing the benefits of the lesser

difficulty as well as an additional +4 insight bonus to the Concentration checks.

The next stage proves crucial to the entire process. Success allows nearly limitless possibilities, while failure entails tremendous hazards. Through a conscious act of will, the manipulator bonds with the island, obtaining a number of special abilities. Achieving this requires a successful Will save with a difficulty set by each island, and depending on the power or quality the manipulator wishes to gain. Difficulty Classes for each power are described in each realm's chapter.

The manipulator gains access to one power per check, and must wait an additional hour before attempting to harness a second and other subsequent powers. Unless specified, a manipulator may attain each power once per day. Once a power is obtained, the manipulator does not need to wait an hour to attune to and activate it on a different day, but may roll his Will save at any time to activate it, now that he is familiar with it.

Feuerring is aligned to Law and Evil, and resists manipulation and attuning by beings who deviate from this alignment. For every step that a manipulator's alignment deviates in the moral and ethical axes, the manipulator suffers a -3 morale penalty to the Will save. This means that a Neutral Evil character rolls at -3 (because he is Neutral), a Lawful Good rolls at -6 (because Good is two steps removed from Evil) and a Chaotic Good at a whopping -12 (two steps removed in both axes).

Failure presents a number of distinct perils. The initial failure prohibits the character from progressing beyond the abilities he has already acquired. Using Ísjarheim as an example, if the manipulator already has achieved the frost giant attributes, but has failed on his attempt to determine fate, his progress permanently stops at the frost giant attributes. Rolling a 1 on the Will save to control an island's power carries its own punishment: The island's grim forces mentally assault the failed manipulator, inflicting 10d6 points of damage with no further saving throw allowed.

Furthermore, the psychic barrage stuns the affected being for 2d10 minutes. Lawful Evil creatures are immune to the stunning effect, but still suffer damage. Any attempt to harness an island's power immediately alerts its ruler, whether the attempt is successful or not.



DENIZENS OF FEUERRING

Regardless of their current form or station, many of Feuerring's inhabitants once existed on the Material Plane. Many remain incarcerated within its fiery ring, while others venture from its confines and return to spread havoc and destruction on the Material Plane. Easily numbering in the tens of thousands, devils inhabiting all of Feuerring's islands also patrol its vast fiery ocean. Born eons ago from the ring's wretched souls, devils ceaselessly torment the damned souls imprisoned within its fires or on its islands.

Although powerful and plentiful, devils rule few of Feuerring's islands, this task instead falling into the hands of Feuerring's deities. These semi-divine beings sculpt their fiefdoms from the death and destruction wreaked by their worshippers on the Material Plane. In return for their veneration, many deities provide an immortal body for the spirits of these devotees, sparing them from the agony of the flaming ring. These newly-formed beings occupy a unique niche in Feuerring's hierarchy, retaining most of the memories of their past life while reaping the benefits of an ageless, corporeal form.

Feuerring's most pitiful existence undoubtedly belongs to the miserable souls condemned to eternity within its flames. Devoid of hope and wracked by searing pain, they receive neither solace nor comfort, and torment accompanies them for all eternity.

Regardless of its formidable dangers, many visitors brave the perilous journey to Feuerring in search of glory, treasure, or even redemption. Others find themselves transported here unwillingly. Some remain on the island for prolonged periods of time, while others meet their demise on its forsaken soil. Unfortunately, the spirits of many mortal beings slain in Feuerring continue to haunt its desolate landscapes. As exploration increases, the ranks of the living dead wandering its lands also swell.

DEVILS

Lesser devils in this layer of Hell are born from the souls burning in the ring, the duration of this spawning varying wildly, depending upon the

magnitude of the spirit's evil actions during its lifetime. Remorseless souls who strictly adhered to a twisted code of conduct transform into lemures in as few as ten years, while others with looser ethics undergo the metamorphosis for up to several centuries. Feuerring reserves this honour for a few worthy individuals; the majority of spirits remain trapped within the ring for eternity.

A devil's birth begins rather uneventfully. The fledgling drops from the ring much like a meteor, crashing to the surface of Hell itself. Once in contact with its soil, it mutates from an amorphous clump of debris into a mass of flesh bearing little resemblance to its humanoid form. Bearing no memory of their previous existence, the newly formed lemures occupy the lowest rung of the infernal castes. Entirely subordinate to other fiends, a lemure's existence is only a small notch above its prior fate. In time, lemures ascend the ranks of Hell's hierarchy, replenishing positions vacated by destroyed comrades. In a legendary case, a lemure rose to the station of pit fiend in just under a millennium.

DEITIES

Unlike other souls in Feuerring, these beings skipped the torment of the ring and arrived fully fleshed from the Material Plane. Through their unfettered wickedness and evil, they achieved a state similar to godhood. However, their quasi-divine status often comes with a steep price, as the forces that bestowed them with their power also binds them to their domain within Feuerring's circle of flame.

Gods and goddesses of Feuerring are beings of semi-deity status, blessed with godlike powers, but rarely directing the course of events on the Material Plane. They exert their influence through the actions of worshippers, which in turn affects the size of their domain in Feuerring, where they remain the absolute rulers of their individual islands, even lordling over the fiendish legions garrisoned within their boundaries. Deities control the fate of their own worshippers, opting upon their deaths either to consign them or spare them from the perpetual anguish of the layer's flames. Those pardoned receive a new immortal physical body, dwelling among the god and his fellow worshippers for the rest of eternity.

WORSHIPPERS

Cultists of outstanding devotion can gain the favour of their deity and forego Feuerring's torments. Deities expect staunch loyalty, unbending faith and ruthless dedication from their followers in order to grant the dubious gift of immortality in Hell. Their souls are reborn with the physical appearance they most desired in life, and retain all of their attributes and abilities. Some gods are more creative and encase the worshipper's spirit in an altogether different form, ranging from a higher animal to a lowly form of plant life. These exceptions aside, the worshipper's new body possesses few differences from his mortal vessel while on the Material Plane. They completely ignore the effects of ageing, disease, poison and insanity but, like their patron, they remain bound to the island's soil. Leaving the ground for more than one minute destroys the corporeal body and hurls the unfortunate back into the burning ring for all eternity. Weapons, spells and other attack forms affect worshippers normally, and slaying the body has the same effect as if it had left its island: eternal damnation.

OTHER INFERNAL POWERS

Regardless of any religious affiliation, the evil of some mortal beings warrants special treatment normally reserved for deities' worshippers. Though below the godlings in power, these fiendish souls assume control of their own island upon arrival, determining the criteria for sparing spirits from the miserable fate of the ring. The island of Azzareck and its master, Vuugrinoth, represent the best examples of this anomaly.

FLAMING SPIRITS

Feuerring's basest natives, the flaming spirits, exist within the molten lakes. Cursed to the fire, these hapless souls exist only to suffer, filling the air with their lamentations. They keep the form they had in life, but it slowly twists into a mask of pain and despair. No one can explain how or why, but if a mortal braves the journey to this Hell in search of a soul sent here, that flaming spirit feels the tug of his possible saviour's presence, and floats

slowly in that direction. It is always quite a shock for the mortal when he finds his friend or loved one ablaze. These souls only have three avenues of escape: rescue by a sympathetic outsider, rebirth as a lemure devil, or transformation by an infernal deity into one of his favoured worshippers.

EXTRAPLANAR CREATURES

Although the number of extraplanar creatures in Feuerring remains very low, their numbers continue to rise. *Humanoids* comprise the vast majority of Feuerring's voluntary and involuntary guests. Intrepid adventurers seeking treasure or glory, and beings seeking pardon for one of their beloved deceased account for nearly all of Feuerring's visitors. Enslaved humanoids transported to Feuerring by a deity's servant on the Material Plane serve as the primary source for the remaining humanoid population.



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ÍSJARHEIM

Shrouded in darkness and plagued by bone-chilling cold, Ísjarheim's climatic conditions challenge even the hardest visitors.

Spreading across an area measuring 2,000 square miles, Ísjarheim distinguishes itself as Feuerring's largest island. In this land of snow and tundra, the cruel goddess Helle reigns over the tormented souls condemned to her frozen kingdom. Banished to this bleak and miserable realm, Helle crafted her island after the myths of her people, and emulated the role of one of her deities, seen through the twisted lens of her own evil. She pursues every possible avenue of escape but, despite her efforts, remains prisoner to Ísjarheim's frigid wastes. Slowly, she attracted the souls of wicked frost giants to populate her dark reflection of an Underworld, who spread her worship into other regions to make her island grow.

Helle resides within her spacious, but largely uninhabited palace located near the island's centre beneath the gangly roots of the great ash tree, Yggdrasil. Over a dozen frost giant villages surround her palace. Its occupants actively conspire with their solemn mistress against those responsible for her incarceration. Most villages contain a wooden longhouse crafted from Yggdrasil's saplings. Although each village has an autonomous Council of Elders, they also obey the edicts of a jarl. Selected by Helle, the jarl serves as her chief advisor, confidante and liaison to her subjects. The current jarl, Engrobotta has served in his present capacity for the last 250 years. He does not tolerate cowardice, and rules the villages with an iron fist, demanding allegiance to Helle's cause.

Few signs of civilization exist outside the frost giant settlements. The majority of Ísjarheim's condemned souls aimlessly wander its stark, frozen land, stalked by packs of winter wolves. The spirits of craven warriors and deserters suffer an even crueller fate, harassed by legions of barbazu devils and the mysterious doomhags, who attack them on sight. Helle loathes fear, and shows no mercy when punishing the cowardly.



Helle

Lawful Evil

Domains: Death, Evil, Trickery and Water.

Favoured Weapon: Bastard sword.

Helle's past is a mystery that none among her worshippers has cared to ponder about. She appointed herself as a goddess of Death upon her imprisonment and, although very few humanoids actually worship the dark goddess, although many who are near death offer her prayers, hoping for a pardon in the afterlife. Helle appears as a statuesque, pale-skinned human female with flowing locks of white hair and steely blue eyes. Her remarkable beauty fails to conceal the mischievous and sinister grin constantly lurking beneath her impassive facial expression. With the exception of her frost giant allies, Helle hardly concerns herself with the remainder of her realm's inhabitants, although she experiences some sadistic pleasure from the torments the doomhags inflict on the island's timid warriors. Helle's endless scheming towards finding an escape diverts her attention from the island's administrative duties, leaving Engrobotta as the de facto ruler.

DENIZENS

Frost Giants

Although few frost giants worship Helle, her cult continues to grow, especially among fledgling giant wizards and giant communities ravaged by war.

Unlike other giant deities who promote territorial squabbles and mindless bloodshed, Helle envisions a different future for her followers. Weary of ages of tribal warfare, Helle actively promotes the creation of a frost giant nation utilizing not only military force, but also diplomacy and magic. She strongly encourages alliances with powerful, militaristic human kingdoms as well as the frost giants' more traditional allies, winter wolves and white dragons. Her shamans nurture the study of the magical arts and a rigid ideology that nudges her worshippers into a more lawful outlook. Despite her apparent interest in the giant's prosperity, this hides this godling's true intentions: raising an army to challenge the ones who exiled her and, once victory is achieved, to be free from Ísjarheim.

Frost giant elders scoff at her doctrine and actively censure anyone openly preaching her tenets, while the priests regard her as a heretical deity. Engrobotta became Helle's first martyr when he defied his chieftain and venerated the upstart goddess. Engrobotta's ultimate sacrifice opened the way for Helle's worshippers to join her in Ísjarheim after they die on the Material Plane. Despite the cult's enemies, her ranks continue to swell.

Human Spirits

In stark contrast to the frost giants, few humans or other humanoids wish to spend eternity in the frigid wasteland of Ísjarheim. Upon their arrival, the rare human worshippers quickly discover that their goddess does not favour them and they are doomed to wander Ísjarheim's tundra in complete anonymity. Although their fate seems cruel, their lot is far preferable to that of humans cast down to this place against their will. Just as brave warriors aspire to heavenly rewards in the halls of Ysgard, cowards receive their punishment in Ísjarheim. The island's legions of barbazu devils constantly hound them, savagely beating them into a comatose state.

All humans condemned to Ísjarheim retain the memories and abilities they possessed in life and Helle bestows upon them several seemingly beneficial abilities. Referred to as *frowwen* by the frost giants, these spirits regenerate all damage and are immune to cold. Furthermore *frowwens* are

always in a state of panic, and any magical spell or effect that provides a morale bonus or negates their condition instantly slays them. The *frowwens'* abilities allow them to recover from the constant abuse while denying them a means of redemption from their cowardice.

Doomhags

As Helle took the mantle of a Death goddess, three spirits arrived to take the aspects of the three Fates Urd, Verdande and Skuld. It is unknown if these withering crones are the real Norms, their dark reflection, or three devilish usurpers of great power. They dwell within Yggdrasil's roots, directly adjacent to Helle's palace, but the godling exerts no influence over the three sisters. They act autonomously; meting suffering to the hopeless *frowwens* based upon their interpretation of obscure and macabre omens. When unoccupied by the *frowwens*, the sisters tirelessly weave a mystical tapestry. No one has ever seen the tapestry, and its purpose remains a mystery even to Helle.

Devils

Sgarthok, the pit fiend, and his five gelugon devil assistants command a force of 1,000 barbazu. The devils maintain one small permanent outpost just beyond the boundaries of the frost giant villages. Sgarthok and his associates vigilantly scan the frozen landscape, searching for intruders or preferably *frowwen*. The devil commander maintains a laissez-faire attitude toward Helle and her frost giant minions, keeping his distance from her intrigues. On the other hand, Sgarthok despises the doomhags, but respects their power. The pit fiend strongly believes that a more prestigious position outside Feurring awaits him in the near future. As a result, Sgarthok exudes more zeal than any other pit fiend confined to the Gates of Hell.

Others

Packs of savage winter wolves stalk the island's hunting grounds in search of prey. Their diet consists entirely of Ísjarheim's forlorn human worshippers and *frowwens*. A small colony of remorhazes also dwells near the island's coastal regions, although how they came to be there, nobody knows. Lastly, an ancient white dragon named Hruthelgard resides within an icy cavern beneath the hills near the frost giant village. A recent disciple of Helle, Hruthelgard anticipates the imminent arrival of more white dragons as Ísjarheim's religion spreads through the ranks of the



frost giants. In the interim, Hruthelgard conducts her magical research in the resounding silence of her solitary lair.

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

Environment: Chilling winds buffet Ísjarheim's featureless landscape and hurl snow and ice from their frequent blizzards. Ísjarheim's thin atmosphere simulates the effects of high altitude as described in *Core Rulebook II*, although it does support both plant and animal life. The island remains shrouded in pitch darkness. With the exception of the shoreline near the fire river, Ísjarheim's interior averages 25 fahrenheit. Ísjarheim's numbing cold can inflict subdual damage against unprotected creatures as explained in *Core Rulebook II*.

Magic

Ísjarheim's baneful influence affects magic as follows.

- † Death, Evil, Trickery and Water domain spells are cast at +1 caster level.
- † Fire, Good, Healing and Luck domain spells are cast at -1 caster level.
- † All cold spells and spell-like effects inflict 1 additional point of damage per die.
- † All fire spells and spell-like effects inflict +1 damage.
- † All creatures except for the *frowwens* receive a +2 morale bonus to all saving throws against fear effects.

Combat

Helle loathes fear and everything that has something to do with it, but approves of crafty tricks to defeat an opponent. Her ideology affects combat as follows.

- † Feint manoeuvres receive a +2 insight bonus to their Bluff checks.
- † Barbarians receive a +1 insight bonus to all attack and damage rolls when they rage.

- † Ísjarheim's winds impose a -2 penalty to all ranged attacks.

Manipulative Powers

A successful Will save allows a mortal to harness the island's volatile magical powers. See the Manipulative Powers in the first chapter.

- † **Endure Element (Ex):** The manipulator attunes his body to the island's frigid conditions and thin atmosphere. For the duration of his stay in Ísjarheim the manipulator no longer sustains subdual damage from hypothermia or lack of oxygen. **Will save DC:** 15.
- † **Frost Giant Strength (Ex):** The manipulator acquires some of the frost giants' attributes, receiving a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength as well as the attributes of the cold subtype as described in *Core Rulebook II*. This effect lasts for a total of one hour. **Will save DC:** 20.
- † **Determine Fate (Su):** The user obtains a modified version of the doomhags' Determine Fate ability, except that it only affects the manipulator's own rolls. Usable once per day, the ability lasts for one minute per level. Its activation counts as a free action, and he may utilize his daily allotment in smaller increments of one minute each. **Will save DC:** 25.

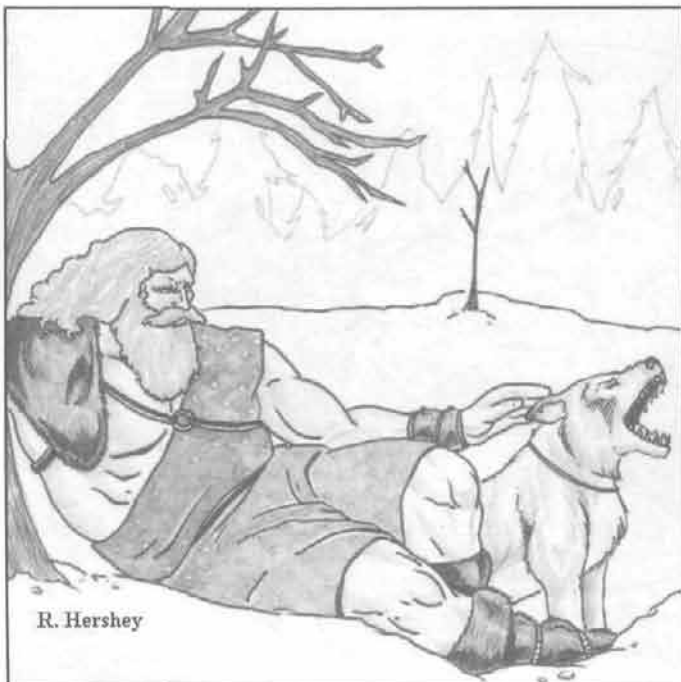
LOCALES

Despite the hostility of the weather, Ísjarheim's landscape possesses an unusual serene beauty, an unexpected sight in such a foul place. Massive glaciers of crystalline ice enclose quiet hills and valleys. An eerie silence pervades much of the island, only disturbed by the occasional baying of a pack of winter wolves. Despite its immense dimensions, most inhabitants dwell within the immediate vicinity of the great tree Yggdrasil. Numerous smaller ash trees and a series of frost giant villages surround the area. The frost giants refer to their settlements as Gутtenheim, and the wilderness beyond as Vildenheim.

Yggdrasil

Soaring higher than the mortal eye can see, Yggdrasil appears to grow into the Astral Plane or even beyond, and its base measures more than 800 feet in diameter. Yggdrasil's roots resemble giant tendrils that form numerous alcove and niches. Thick sheets of translucent ice span most of Yggdrasil's lower surface, creating contiguous walls along much of Yggdrasil's perimeter. The doomhags reside inside a small hovel along the tree's boundaries, occasionally peering through the sheets of ice in search of the island's elusive mistress. Within the great tree's reflective chambers, Helle ceaselessly plots her revenge and plans of conquest. As with everything in Ísjarheim, it is not known if this is the real World Tree or just a twisted fabrication of Helle's will. No one who has tried to climb it to reach another plane has returned to confirm or deny this rumour.

Notable Figures: **Ogrobadda (frost giant male Clr11)** supervises a team of 50 human servants, 20 winter wolves and 10 frost giants. His staff performs a variety of functions within Helle's palace, including general maintenance, food preparation and security. While his underlings complete their daily chores, Ogrobadda magically communicates with Helle's priests on the Material Plane through the use of omens and mystical signs. Although Engrobotta's title and position overshadow the cleric's, his role entitles him to substantially more information about Helle's true plans for the



frost giant nation, information to which the jarl is not not privy.

Guttenheim

Thick plumes of black smoke emanate from the crude stone chimneys of the longhouses surrounding Helle's palace. Stretching 400 feet in length and standing 40 feet high, these massive structures accommodate up to ten frost giants in relative comfort. All of the gigantic houses stand within a few hundred feet of a series of partially concealed cave entrances that open into the surrounding hills. The network of passageways and chambers beneath the surface house the villages' women as well as its Council of Elders. Engrobotta, the frost giant jarl, holds ultimate authority over all fourteen villages encircling Yggdrasil. Although outwardly obedient, many of the Councils interpret Engrobotta's edicts as they see fit.

Notable Figures: The frost giant jarl, **Engrobotta (frost giant male Bbn15)**, lords over his frost giant subjects. He has formidable combat abilities and a fanatical devotion to Helle, but his intelligence and tact leave a great deal to be desired. Obstinate and unyielding, Engrobotta often ignores the advice of the villages' Councils and enacts his ill-conceived decrees regardless of the consequences. The jarl dwells within the ornate confines of his private home only a few hundred yards from the goddess' palace. Assisted by a handful of incompetent sycophants, Engrobotta acquires valuable artworks and elaborate jewellery in order to convert his quarters into a royal palace. Unbeknown to the rest of the giants, Engrobotta covets the crown and sceptre of a human king on the Material Plane, but his efforts to obtain them have proven unsuccessful.

Hurrmacken (frost giant male Wiz11) poses the only serious challenge to Engrobotta's position as jarl. Although many of his associates consider him an excellent option for the royal throne, Hurrmacken displays no interest in it. Instead, he devotes his time to spell research and the crafting of magical items. He allays Engrobotta's suspicions by supplying him with royal accoutrements acquired from the Material Plane, obtained by bartering his unique spells and magical items. His most noteworthy spell, *hand of vengeance*, enjoys tremendous popularity, especially among war wizards.

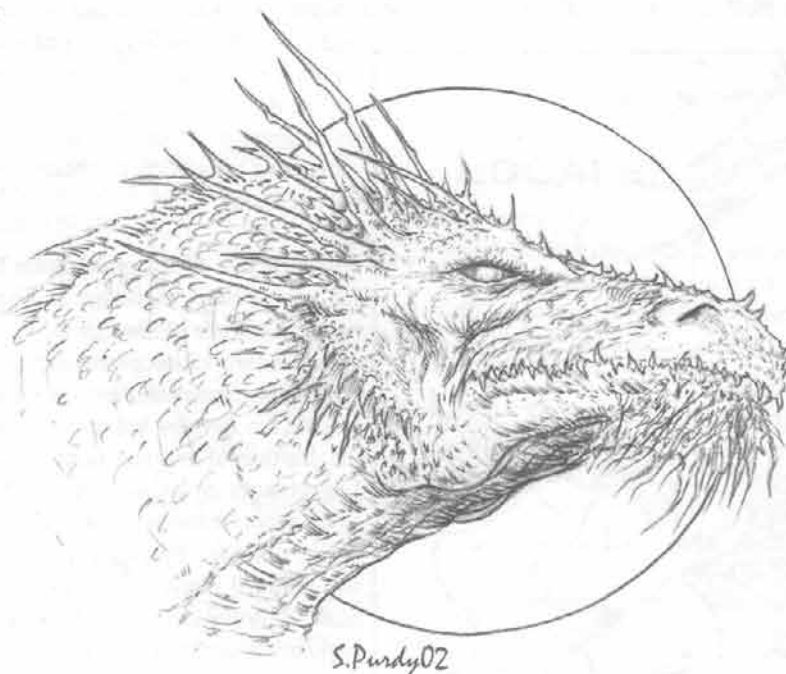
Vildenheim

Chilling currents of frigid air hurl snow and ice across the trackless wilderness of Vildenheim. Few creatures brave the harsh elements, except when they have no choice. Unwelcome in the encampments of the frost giants, Helle's human worshippers and the wretched *frowwen* scour the desolate landscape in search of respite from the numbing cold. Winter wolves, remorhazes and even the white dragon, Hruthelgard, prey on these forsaken creatures. In addition, Sgarthok's contingent of barbazu devils enjoy torturing the timid *frowwen*. Few establish permanent lairs within Vildenheim, most leading a nomadic life in a constant search for food, safety, or an opportunity to inflict punishment.

Notable Figures: Ísjarheim's most notorious *frowwen*, Olag Kortinblas, skulks the hills and valleys vainly searching for someplace to hide. A spoiled and lazy prince during his lifetime, Olag proved his ineptitude after inheriting his father's kingdom. Olag boldly proclaimed that he would succeed where his father, a beloved and respected warrior, had failed, parading onto the battlefield on his father's legendary steed, wearing a suit of golden plate mail armour ill-suited to his frail frame. When the enemy's cavalry charged towards his position, Olag's bravery rapidly deserted him. Trembling violently, he spurred his mount and retreated through the ranks of his own soldiers, riding directly into their pikes.

The doomhags and devils single out Olag whenever possible, ignoring other *frowwen*. Olag exists in a constant state of panic, hopelessly fleeing from his relentless pursuers.

The ancient white dragon, **Hruthelgard**, dwells in an icy cavern beneath the hills near Guttenheim. Resting upon a mound of silver coins and frozen treasures, the dragon warily scans the treacherous passageways leading to her chamber. She occasionally exchanges spells and magical research with Hurrmacken, encouraging the wizard's chance for jarldom because of her intense hatred for Engrobotta. Hruthelgard's dislike for the current jarl stems from an incident when she had just arrived in Ísjarheim several decades earlier. Engrobotta entered her lair and immediately launched a diatribe of barbs and insults at her as he proudly proclaimed his superiority. Angered by the remarks, she slapped the obnoxious visitor with her tail, knocking him down to the frozen ground. Seething with rage, Engrobotta raced back to Yggdrasil and informed Helle of the incident. The godling interceded and struck an unsteady truce between the two rivals. Although the frost giant barely remembers the exchange, Hruthelgard recalls it vividly, longing for Engrobotta's comeuppance.



AZZARECK

Jagged peaks and abysmal gorges dominate Azzareck's treacherous terrain. Ascending 1,000 feet above Azzareck's rocky surface, its mountains and sheer cliffs provide homes for the island's population of red dragons. 122 red dragons, ranging from juveniles to wyrms, occupy its 1,250 square miles. With the exception of her four consorts, all of Azzareck's red dragons claim direct lineage to the island's undisputed master, the great wyrm Vuugrinoth. The venerable dragon dwells past a labyrinth of steep precipices and constricting passageways, attended by her four surviving consorts. *She demands loyalty and tribute from her numerous offspring spread throughout the island, and the nascent dragon cults in the Material Plane.*

The island's sweltering surface teems with a wide assortment of fiendish lizards, serpents and dire rats.

Skulking among the intricate rock formations and dark tunnels, these vile beasts prey on any creatures that stray into their path, including their own species. Although animal life is present, no plants exist on Azzareck's parched, dusty earth because of the island's complete lack of water. Despite Azzareck's daunting challenges, the island persists as a popular hunting ground for foolhardy adventurers seeking its dragons' bountiful treasures.

DENIZENS

Red Dragons

Apart from Vuugrinoth and her four consorts, 122 red dragons reside within the foreboding confines of Azzareck's numerous mountains, ravines and caverns, all of them spawned by the great wyrm during her lifetime on the Material Plane. Some of them are trapped here as souls condemned to Hell, but others are still alive, finding Feuerring an accommodating place for their lairs. Vuugrinoth

Vuugrinoth

Chaotic Evil

Domains: Destruction, Evil, Fire and Magic.

Favoured Weapon: Breath weapon.

During her 2,000 years on the Material Plane, Vuugrinoth spawned 608 offspring and ruled an empire of 50,000 humanoid. She repressed all opposition to her regime, sentencing potential rivals to a variety of cruel deaths. A masterful manipulator, she cleverly pitted her enemies against one another with the assistance of her spies and informants. Yet, despite her machinations, her growing paranoia and disdain for her own species contributed to her demise. Eight of Vuugrinoth's consorts, tired of her abuses, seized the opportunity to stage a coup when a revolt and a military campaign erupted in both extremes of her domain. Acting in well-rehearsed concert, the eight conspirators launched a devastating surprise attack against the embattled dragon matron. Enraged by the treason, Vuugrinoth savagely lashed at her former consorts, felling four of them before finally succumbing to the co-ordinated attacks. Without their subjugating leader, the dragons quickly dispersed, abandoning the land to the humanoid rebels. However, Vuugrinoth's unparalleled evil earned her a new kingdom in Feuerring's smouldering fires.

Guarded by the four consorts she killed, Vuugrinoth holds audiences in an opulent chamber deep beneath Azzareck's desolate surface. She rests upon a gargantuan pile of coins and bones measuring 100 feet in diameter and standing six feet high. She calls her complex of winding corridors, tunnels and chambers, Vug-Azatoth-Gringot, or 'Vuugrinoth's Second Empire' in draconic. Because of the betrayal she suffered, she rarely ventures from the security of her underground lair and welcomes visitors even more infrequently, but her offspring have spread a cult about their mother, and she basks in the adoration of lesser beings. Her worshippers include evil spellcasters from many races, but reptilian humanoids are the most frequent. Kobolds hold the greatest reverence and ironically comprise the strongest faction of her cult, followed by half-dragons, yuan-ti and, humans.

Despite her caution, her lust for treasure supersedes her paranoia. Through the use of magical portals and teleportation spells, she lures avaricious wizards and sages to her lair in order to destroy them and plunder their possessions, or command her followers to send her constant tribute. Vuugrinoth meticulously catalogues every item in her hoard, including worthless trinkets and copper coins. She now holds little enthusiasm for temporal authority and measures her success through the acquisition of treasures and goods.



loathes the presence of her offspring, treating them with utter disgust, or at best, apathy. Innately ambitious and competitive like their mother, they fight one another for territory and treasure, remorselessly slaying each other in the process. Only a few dragons younger than adults survive, falling victim to their older and stronger rivals. In the last decade alone, thirty-six dragons perished in the ceaseless infighting for wealth and power.

Adventurers

Although dragons still pose the greatest threat to one another, adventurers claimed responsibility for the deaths of eleven dragons during the course of the last decade. Seduced by the allure of the red dragons' legendary hoards, dozens of humanoids found entry into Azzareck, searching for wealth and glory. Vuugrinoth tolerated these occasional intrusions as an effective means of keeping her offspring in check, but she also maintained a vigilant eye on their activities. Several years ago a group of dragon hunters called Bertalock's Band attempted to convert an abandoned lair into a permanent base. The group's leader, Bertalock, foolishly misinterpreted Vuugrinoth's inaction as a sign of weakness rather than disinterest. He persuaded his comrades to fortify their newly discovered stronghold in an effort to attract more followers.

More annoyed than concerned by the humanoids' impudence, the dragon mother magically communicated her displeasure to Bertalock himself. The human arrogantly dismissed her ominous warning as an idle threat and redoubled his efforts to complete the stronghold he named the Dragon's Nest. Incensed by Bertalock's flippant attitude, the dragon teleported herself into the construction in progress and completely obliterated the invaders.

While an elite handful of these adventurers achieve dazzling success, the bulk meet their deaths in Azzareck's many caverns or on its barren soil. For many of these unfortunate souls, death on the island binds them to its tainted earth, condemning them to haunt it as members of the living dead.

Half-Dragons

Azzareck's dragons are possessed of an uncharacteristic need to breed, and travel the Material Plane siring around ten half-dragons each year. The exclusive result of the union between a polymorphed male red dragon and a humanoid female, the child is often abandoned at birth by the horrified mother. Most half-dragons starve or fall victim to predators before they reach maturity, but those that survive are taken in by their dragon father into Azzareck to serve as Vuugrinoth's priests and the dragons' servants. Half-dragons display a natural affinity for magic, and those who do not



become priests possess at least a few levels in an arcane spellcasting class.

Devils

The cruel and hunchbacked pit fiend, Mauloveck, commands his legion of 500 barbazu stationed atop Mount Arrezal, near the island's western shore. A strict commander, Mauloveck rigorously drills his subordinates for several days without respite, punishing exhausted foot soldiers with vicious floggings and other corporal punishments. Under Vuuginoth's directive, Mauloveck's troops refrain from engaging Azzareck's intruders. Although perplexed by the dragon's unusual policy, the pit fiend reluctantly obeys her command. Mauloveck regards his current assignment and Vuuginoth's strange doctrine as tests of his resolve, so he enforces her edicts hoping to regain his former elite status in the infernal hierarchy.

Others

Fiendish lizards, serpents and dire rats roam Azzareck's dry surface searching for prey. Carnivorous and cannibalistic, the island's animals devour nearly anything organic, from fresh meat to carrion. Most adventurers speculate that they served as the dragons' pets during their existence on the Material Plane. Their relatively static population supports this theory. In contrast, the population of undead continues to rise steadily. Undoubtedly the restless spirits of slain adventurers, most retain a corporeal form, but a rare few haunt their grave or the location of their death as a ghost or spectre.

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

Environment: An eerie glow bathes the island in perpetual daylight, allowing its reptilian inhabitants to thrive in its warm climate. Azzareck's arid surface is extremely hot, enough to threaten any creature that does not thrive on this kind of climate. *Core Rulebook II* describes the effects of extreme heat.

Magic

Vuuginoth's evil influence affects magic as follows.

- † All fire-based spells are cast at +1 caster level.
- † All cold-based spells are cast at -1 caster level.

† Any armour spell, such as *barkskin* and *mage armour* coats the spellcaster with a mass of red dragon scales. Despite this unusual aesthetic property, the spells' effects remain the same.

† All teleportation spells, such as *dimension door* and *teleport* require a successful Concentration check (DC 15) or add 10 to the d% roll to determine the point of arrival. Even spells that require no such roll must do so if the Concentration check fails, but they roll as if the location was very familiar.

† The duration of all spells and effects bestowing concealment is halved.

Combat

Because of Vuuginoth's traitorous murder on the Material Plane, she despises attacks dependent on stealth or trickery. Her corrupting influence affects combat as follows.

- † All sneak attacks suffer a -2 morale penalty to attack and damage rolls.
- † All Hide and Move Silently checks suffer a -5 circumstance penalty.
- † Natural weapons add a +1 insight bonus to attack rolls.
- † Attacks made against concealed opponents enjoy the Improved Critical feat. This effect remains in place until the opponent's concealment ends.

Manipulative Powers

Any creature, except a dragon, may harness Azzareck's manipulative power. However, half-dragons receive a +2 insight bonus. A successful Will save unveils the following special abilities.

- † **Darkvision (Ex):** The manipulator gains darkvision with a 60 feet range if he did not have it already. This ability remains in effect for the duration of his stay in Azzareck.
Will save DC: 10.



- † **Dragonskin (Ex):** The manipulator's skin is covered with red dragon scales, granting him a +2 natural armour bonus and fire resistance 5. This ability also lasts for the duration of his stay in Azzareck. **Will save DC:** 15.

- † **Dragonwings (Ex):** The manipulator acquires a pair of large reptilian wings. They provide a fly speed of 150 ft (poor). The wings last for 10 minutes per level. **Will save DC:** 20.

- † **Breath Weapon (Su):** The manipulator can unleash a fire breath weapon attack once per day for every three character levels or total Hit Dice. The breath weapon spreads in a 30 feet cone, dealing 1d10 points of damage for every two character levels or Hit Dice, and the DC for Reflex saves to halve this equals the manipulator's Charisma modifier plus half his character level or Hit Dice, plus 10. So, a 9th level sorcerer with a Charisma score of 16 can breathe fire three times per day, dealing 4d10 points of damage, with his targets rolling their Reflex saves against DC 17. **Will save DC:** 25.

LOCALES

A breathtaking contrast of tall mountains and deep chasms, Azzareck's terrain challenges the body, while its savage predators test resolve. Powerful adventurers flock to the island's many lairs searching for the red dragons' hoards. While a scant few manage to steal some of these riches, the shattered skulls, gnawed skeletons and charred equipment are testimony to the folly of this quest. Nevertheless, the island's wealth attracts more visitors from the Material Plane than any other island in Feuerring, facilitated by Vuuginoth's frequent use of portals and travel magic, and the fame spread by her cult.

The matron's disregard for authority prevents the formal establishment of political boundaries and, because of the dragons' mostly solitary existence, the island lacks any recognizable settlements. Dragons rarely forge alliances with their neighbours and, after Bertalock's debacle, few humanoids seriously consider the construction of a permanent town. Azzareck persists as a volatile collection of small, petty fiefdoms and hunting grounds, owing allegiance to the island's master, at least in name.

Vug-Azatoth-Gringot

Vuuginoth's cave complex descends 250 feet below the surface, only accessible via four treacherous passageways patrolled by her consorts. Vuuginoth decorates her lair with a macabre display of humanoid corpses, prizing half-dragon bodies the most. Although intended to intimidate intruders, she found that she enjoyed her new 'hobby', and now strives to create even more depraved artistic expressions. Protected by four gargantuan golden doors, Vuuginoth dwells within the complex's lowest level, resting atop her incalculable wealth. Vuuginoth devises a host of nefarious schemes to lure wizards and sages from the Material Plane to her lair.

Notable Figures: Mowhell, Pithispann, Quarroth and Teyiman are the four dragon consorts that Vuuginoth killed before she was brought down by the surviving ones and, as her soul spiralled down to the kingdom in Hell her evil had given birth to, she pulled the souls of these four out of their rightful place beside the true goddess of chromatic dragons. Now that Vuuginoth is a quasi-deity herself, the four treacherous suitors are much less likely to try the coup again. Since their arrival, they agreed to an uneasy truce among them.

Quarroth, the oldest and most able, exerts the greater influence on Vuuginoth, but he still maintains a vigilant eye on his three cohorts. His rivals strongly resent his relationship with Vuuginoth, yet their mutual distrust prevents them from acting against him. Acutely aware of the other consorts' schemes, Quarroth maintains a strong bond with his fifteen offspring scattered throughout Azzareck aiding them against incursions from adventurers. Vuuginoth's tolerance toward potential dragon slayers places Quarroth in a potentially precarious situation. If the great female discovers Quarroth's interference, he risks his own destruction at her claws. On the other hand, abandoning his offspring leaves him vulnerable to an assault from the other three consorts. For now, Quarroth clandestinely assists his children, preferring obliteration by Vuuginoth instead of by his rivals.

For their part, Mowhell, Pithispann and Teyiman share a tenuous alliance. Although they dislike Quarroth, they also fear his tremendous power. As their elder, Quarroth's abilities exceed theirs, and they know that direct confrontation would bring the demise of one or possibly two members of their

triad. In addition, Mowhell and Teyiman disagree on a number of unresolved issues dating back to their existence on the Material Plane. These two played additional roles in the coup against their queen as well as assisting in the attack. Mowhell leaked out intelligence to Vuugrinoth's enemies to the west, while Teyiman covertly funded the humanoid uprisings in the east. In the aftermath of Vuugrinoth's destruction, the two dragons learned of each other's role in the collapse of her kingdom. Begrudgingly they vowed to keep their secrets, painfully aware of their disclosure's consequences. Pithispann, who became devoutly loyal to Vuugrinoth after awakening in Feuerring, suspected they had conspired against her for quite a while longer and planned to betray the other males once she was dead, yet he lacks evidence or specific knowledge.

Dragon's Nest

At the summit of Mount Zarrabell, near the island's western shore, Dragon's Nest provides a spectacular view of Azzareck's landscape. Although long abandoned, tools, stone and other objects still litter the site. Many of the stronghold's seventeen, rough-hewn chambers bear the unmistakable signs of humanoid construction. Humanoid adventurers scavenge the site for weapons and armour, taking the items from the mangled bodies of the stronghold's defenders. However, no one ventures beyond the peripheral chambers. Tales of vengeful spirits abound among the adventuring parties. Even the most disrespectful explorers allow the dead to rest undisturbed, secured by massive stone doors.

Notable Figures: The restless ghost of **Bertalock (human ghost male Bbn12)** haunts the stronghold's inner chambers, guarding his remains, including his most prized possession, the magical long sword Emessern (see the Forbidden Lore chapter). Bertalock appears as a tall ethereal figure wearing leather armour and wielding a bejewelled long sword. A horned steel helmet rests upon his head as locks of dark brown hair escape from beneath its edges. Scabs, blisters and oozing wounds mar his skin, a sign of the way he died by Vuugrinoth's fire breath, and the stench of smouldering flesh accompanies him for several hundred feet. Nine members of Bertalock's Band also wander the stronghold's empty chambers and passageways as wights or ghosts, futilely seeking to avenge their deaths. Fortunately, the stronghold's sturdy doors confine the hateful creatures to its inner sanctums.

The Pit of Ungrotho

Beneath the shadow of Mount Ungrotho, Azzareck's most successful half-dragon sorcerer, Zolkish the Horned, conducts his magical experiments. Unlike the vast majority of his kin, he leads a sedentary existence within a network of secret passageways. In order to defend his lair against intruders of any size and species, Zolkish created ten magical constructs to guard his home. Situated throughout the complex, the constructs mercilessly attack anything that moves, including vermin. The half-dragon's living quarters sit underneath a bubbling pit of tar and ash, surrounded by a maze of antechambers, laboratories and an extensive library. He entertains no visitors with the exception of his devilish mother and the pit fiend Mauloveck.

Notable Figures: **Zolkish (devil half-dragon male Sor17)** is the product of an infernal union between an erinyes devil and a red dragon. While most parents abandon their half-dragon offspring, Zolkish's mother fostered his natural talent in the arcane arts. Zolkish conducts his strange magical research in total secrecy, accompanied only by his mindless constructs, the Ungrotons. Sculpted from an amalgam of tar and the island's natural rock, his bizarre golems tirelessly patrol the numerous caverns of his lair. Wary of adventurers and his dragon relatives, two Ungrotons escort Zolkish at all times.

Despite his heritage, or maybe because of it, he loathes the island's red dragons, mostly because of their intolerance towards his half-dragon kin. Fully aware of the danger in his inclinations, he swears allegiance to Mauloveck and his devilish hosts. He crafts the majority of his magical items at the pit fiend's request, primarily forging magical glaives for the barbazu soldiers. He also maintains a warm relationship with his mother, Ayagorm the erinyes, although rumours of an incestuous bond between them abound in devilish circles.

Zolkish owns few possessions, an unusual fact considering his prolific crafting of magical weapons and items. The reason for this is that he views the accumulation of treasure as the dragons' greatest weakness. In his mind, the dragons' love of wealth renders them vulnerable to bribery, flattery and jealousy, so he consciously avoids all of the dragons' traits, instead devoting his creative powers to their eventual destruction.



HIBBURON

Despite its relatively small size, roughly forty miles in diameter, Hibburon is unique in Feuerring. It was not formed to accommodate a quasi-deity, and Feuerring's swirling currents do not affect it, Hibburon's position against the ring's edge remains unchanged. Four great volcanoes along the island's borders rise 1,000 feet above its surface, spewing opaque steam high into the air. As the vaporous clouds cool, they descend to the island's surface to seep into the lake of stagnant salt water that covers most of Hibburon except for its volcanoes and the low lying beaches encircling the lake. Generally referred to as the Lake of Oblivion, or Lethe, its name undoubtedly serves as an allusion to its unusual source. The great ring of fire recycles the endless tears of the damned souls floundering in its fiery depths and deposits them into Lethe. The bitter waters then plunge 500 feet from a towering waterfall into Hell's lower depths as a tributary to the river Styx.

Two gargantuan basalt citadels flanking Lethe's gigantic waterfall vigilantly guard the ring's only natural breach into Hell's lower layers. Manned by a total of 2,000 barbazu, cornugon and hamatula devils, the citadels' two pit fiend commanders, Hevzellot and Pyruchon, engage in a constant struggle for supremacy. The leaders each control one of the strongholds and its 1,000 troops. Many of Feuerring's pit fiends covet their prestigious position, inspiring them to dupe adventurers and natives into one of their diabolic schemes to unseat the citadels' leaders. Many pit fiends dub the fortresses as 'the Tattling Towers' because of the numerous plots and intrigues hatched within their stone walls.

DENIZENS

Devils

Devils easily outnumber Hibburon's only other native creature, the lake hag. Barbazu devils comprise the bulk of the fighting forces, with cornugons and hamatulas forming about one quarter of the fiends' numbers. In addition to Hevzellot and Pyruchon, the pit fiend Buccewehr lords over Lethe, responsible for its security. Attended by a unit of 500 barbazu and hamatula devils, Buccewehr dwells in the caves beneath one of the island's four volcanoes.

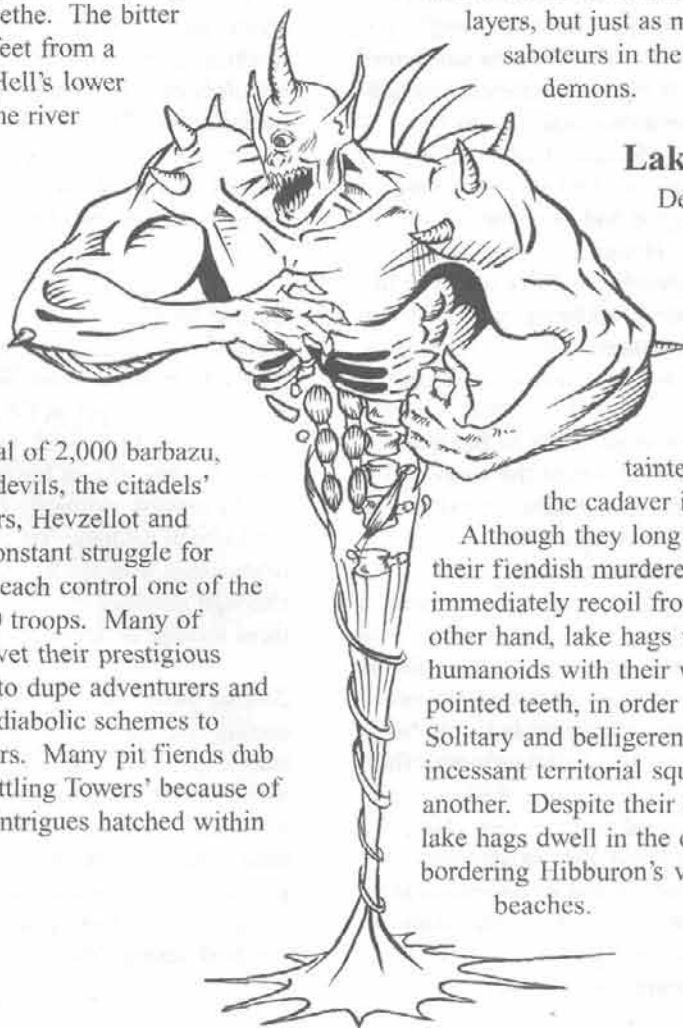
Devils routinely and openly solicit bribes from beings seeking passage to Hell's lower layers but, despite their insatiable avarice, Hevzellot and Pyruchon do screen visitors carefully, barring entry to overly chaotic or suspicious creatures.

Many brave the journey to Hell in order to locate loved ones damned to its lower layers, but just as many are spies or saboteurs in the service of enemy demons.

Lake Hags

Devils cast the mutilated corpses of all slain humanoids into Lethe's murky depths. Regardless of its original gender, prolonged exposure to the tainted waters transforms the cadaver into a lake hag.

Although they long for revenge against their fiendish murderers, lake hags immediately recoil from devils. On the other hand, lake hags viciously assault humanoids with their wicked claws and pointed teeth, in order to devour their flesh. Solitary and belligerent, lake hags wage incessant territorial squabbles against one another. Despite their aquatic nature, most lake hags dwell in the caves and tunnels bordering Hibburon's volcanoes and beaches.



PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

Environment: Although all forms of life can find a way to subsist in Hibburon, Lethe's alkaline waters inhibit normal creatures from dwelling in its depths. A pale glow emanating from Hell's lower layers bathes the island in an eerie perpetual twilight. Hibburon boasts a fairly comfortable mean temperature compared to the rest of the layer.

Magic

Despite its proximity to Hell's infernal depths, no specific entity exerts its influence over Hibburon. As a result, Hibburon generates several diverse effects.

- † All spells creating a fear, hopelessness or despair effect add +2 to the spell's save DC. This includes arcane spells such as *fear* and *symbol (hopelessness)*.
- † Evil spellcasters cast all their spells at +1 caster level.
- † Good spellcasters cast all their spells at -1 caster level.
- † All spells or spell-like effects that hide or prevent the detection of a creature's alignment, location or thoughts inflict 1d10 points of damage on the creature every ten minutes while in effect. The spell's beneficiary receives no saving throw.

Combat

An amalgamation of several different influences affects combat as follows.

- † Clerics of good and neutral deities suffer a -2 profane penalty to their armour class.
- † Good and neutral creatures suffer a -1 profane penalty to their armour class (does not stack with the previous penalty).
- † Hibburon completely negates the effects of a Paladin's *lay on hands* and *smite evil* abilities.

Manipulative Powers

Any creature can harness Hibburon's manipulative powers. A successful Will save bestows the following benefits upon the manipulator.

- † **Discern Truth (Ex):** The manipulator gains a +4 insight bonus to all Sense Motive checks. This bonus remains for the duration of his stay in Hibburon. **Will save DC: 10.**
- † **Improved Alertness (Ex):** The manipulator gains a +4 insight bonus to all Listen and Spot checks. This ability remains in effect for the duration of his stay in Hibburon. **Will save DC: 15.**
- † **Water Passage (Su):** The manipulator obtains the abilities of the *water walk* spell as well as the Blind-Fight feat. These abilities last ten minutes per level. **Will save DC: 20.**
- † **Command Fog (Sp):** A manipulator may coalesce Hibburon's clouds of steam into a cloud of fog identical to the *solid fog* spell. In addition, he can see and pass through the fog without hindrance. The ability remains in effect for one minute per level. **Will save DC: 25.**

LOCALES

Encircled only by a narrow strip of gray beach, Lethe's briny surface covers ninety-five percent of the island. Partially submerged beneath its murky waters, Hibburon's four great volcanoes rise 1,000 feet above the lake, incessantly coughing billowing plumes of steam into the stagnant air. Devils under Buccewehr's command patrol the lake's vast dimensions and, unlike their counterparts at the gates, ignore the overtures of Hibburon's visitors. Instead, they savagely attack intruders, hurling their mangled corpses into Lethe to spawn more lake hags. Buccewehr's jurisdiction ends five miles from the waterfall.



In sharp contrast, Hevzellot and Pyruchon spuriously welcome guests from the Material Plane, provided that they bear gifts for the island's masters. Rarely venturing from their stronghold's vicinity, the devils detain anyone approaching the breach into Hell. At first, the fiends exhibit a professional cordiality, tirelessly assuring the outsiders' safety, while subtly appraising their visible possessions. If they conclude that the captured intruder bears no valuables, they dispense with the charade and murder him.

Otherwise, the devils escort visitors to the tower's audience chamber, where Hevzellot or Pyruchon determines their fate. At this point, the pit fiend tosses decorum aside as he unleashes a voluminous barrage of questions and accusations at the captives. While the virulent interrogation proceeds, his subordinates meticulously record the subject's responses. Once completed, the devils debate their opinions and render a decision based on obscure and byzantine laws of Hell. Before reaching a final verdict, the avaricious master of the citadel brazenly suggests an exorbitant bribe in return for safe passage through the breach into Hell. Anyone rebuffing the infernal lord's solicitation meets a swift and violent demise, while anyone meeting his demands receives a devilish escort to the waterfall's precipice.

The Tattling Towers

Looming 500 feet above the waterfall's surface, Hibburon's two massive citadels ominously peer at one another across the narrow channel of water separating them. Despite their proximity, little interaction occurs between the rival buildings' occupants. Pyruchon and Hevzellot warily scrutinize the actions and motives of each other's legions of devilish servants, soldiers and informants. A number of Feuerring's other pit fiends concoct a myriad of nefarious schemes to supplant Hevzellot and Pyruchon from their position as ruler of each tower, but the two devils tenaciously cling to their status; optimistic that Hell's masters recognize their accomplishments and will reward them accordingly.

Notable Figures: Hevzellot and Pyruchon, the citadels' pit fiend commanders, believe that their current location serves as a portent symbolizing their restoration to their former



positions in Hell's lower layers. Although consumed by the primordial urge to return to their previous domain, the two leaders abate their ambitions with the treasures accumulated during their tenure within the towers. In fact, the conniving pair's wealth rivals that of Hell's most powerful lords.

Pompous and arrogant, Hevzellot's aristocratic mannerisms demonstrate his extensive knowledge of humanoid culture. A magnificent diadem of diamonds and sapphires rests upon his furrowed brow, while a flowing magenta robe secured by a platinum clasp hangs from his burly shoulders. The pit fiend wears the plundered treasures as an opulent display of his prowess.

On the other hand, Pyruchon loathes his counterpart's gaudy accoutrements, considering them ridiculous. Pyruchon prizes martial treasures, especially magical weapons. His subordinates decorate his citadel's walls with scores of unusual and exotic weapons. He possesses an exceptional fondness for magical halberds, boasting nine of the fearsome weapons in his private collection. A custom-forged adamantite breastplate protects his massive chest.

Embittered by decades of mutual dislike, the two pit fiends endlessly conspire against one another. The most common scheme employed by the

duelling fiends requires the coerced assistance of a third party. The devils call the ploy *hummemuertis*, translated as 'the death of men.' Using his powers of illusion, the pit fiend assumes the guise of the potential target's species and, from this point, the plan follows a myriad of different paths all leading to the same goal. The pit fiend dupes the trespasser into attacking his rival, sometimes planting a powerful magical item or artifact on the unwitting agent to aid him in his deed. Although the scheme rarely proves successful, it remains a favourite with Feuerring's pit fiends. At least once every few months, Hevzellot and Pyruchon perpetrate the nefarious ploy against each other.

The Great Waterfall

A narrow channel of brackish water measuring 125 feet across flows between the two towers standing on opposing shores. As its waters roll over the steep precipice, the thunderous peal drowns even the horrific cries and cackles of the island's devilish inhabitants. A frothy mist hangs over the area, obfuscating the churning maelstrom 500 feet below the fall's edge. A chilling blast of eerie white light emanating from the depths below penetrates the clouds, generating enough illumination to bathe the entire island in a dim glow. Approximately thirty-five feet separate Hibburon from Feuerring's edge.

Nothing dwells along the water's path from its peak to the swirling whirlpool at its bottom. Lethe's stagnant waters join the river Styx that winds through Hell's lower layers. The misty clouds reduce visibility by half for the waterfall's entire length.

Lethe

Lethe's alkaline surf gently rolls against the thin strip of ashen beach surrounding the lake. Four massive, rocky volcanoes situated equidistantly around its perimeter constantly replenish the lake, drawing their water from the flowing tears of the souls condemned to Feuerring. No creatures but the undead exist beneath Lethe's murky surface. Its depth ranges from only a few feet along its shores to twenty feet near the centre. From his cavernous dwelling beneath the southernmost volcano, the pit fiend Buccewehr dispatches his

devilish legions in a frenzied quest to destroy all intruders.

Notable Figures: **Buccewehr** rules his watery fiefdom from the bowels of Tugrattu, the island's southern volcano. Recently elevated to his current station from one of Feuerring's least notable islands, Buccewehr tries to employ the same intractable tactics that he practiced during his previous assignment: take no prisoners and ask no questions. However, Buccewehr's cornugon counsellors urge the fledgling ruler to consider a different approach. Cognizant of his rivals' insatiable lust for treasure, his advisors encourage him to subdue capable intruders for possible use in the *hummemuertis*. Although initially reluctant to heed their advice, Buccewehr's first foray against Pyruchon resulted in the destruction of two cornugon lieutenants. Spurred by this success, Buccewehr patiently bides his time, waiting for the opportunity to spring an assault against Hevzellot.

Buccewehr possesses none of the traits borne by his rival pit fiends. He considers the accumulation of material wealth as a distraction from the greater goal of attaining power. In his mind, avarice tempts its master into unsound judgments. For this reason, Buccewehr flatly refuses all bribes, living frugally and saving his few magical items for use against his enemies.

The only victim of Buccewehr's ruse now resides within Lethe's shallow waters as an abominable lake hag. **Artheus (lake hag male Ftr14)** naively believed the elaborate ploy concocted by Buccewehr and his minions. Spurred by the fiend's false promises, the dim-witted knight charged at the salivating Pyruchon and his bewildered staff, mowing down two of his advisors and wounding Pyruchon and two others before succumbing to the enraged devils. After his demise, the vengeful devils cast the unwitting assassin's body into Lethe, where he emerged a week later as a lake hag. Despite his intense longing to slay his deceiver, an inexplicable force prevents him from approaching Buccewehr or his abode, hence preventing his opportunity for revenge.



RUNNING FEUERRING ADVENTURES

This chapter will help you insert Feuerring in your ongoing campaign, focusing on ways for characters to get into – and out of – this layer of Hell, as well as the possible hooks and scenarios you can use to lure them into its eternal flames.

SPELLS

Astral projection, *gate*, *miracle*, *plane shift* and *wish* provide the only means of travelling to Feuerring via spells. Despite its wild inaccuracy, *plane shift* remains the most popular choice, largely because few spellcasters possess the power required to cast the other four spells.



Although the most common spell used to travel to the great ring directly, *plane shift* is also the most perilous. Safe land occupies only a small percentage of the ring's surface, so any gross miscalculations can bring about dire consequences. For example, if a wizard casting *plane shift* selected the center of Ísjarheim, the ring's largest island, as his destination, a deviation of only twenty to thirty miles places him and his companions directly over the flaming ring. Whenever the spellcaster's result exceeds the boundaries of his destination, he must roll a d20 to determine his entry point. Any result of 16 or less indicates that the spellcaster and his associates arrived within the ring of flame sustaining all of the ill effects attributed to it, with 17 or higher placing the travellers on an island, although its properties remain in the GM's hands. Of course, if the spellcaster fails to survive the journey, he will probably most likely strands his companions in Feuerring without any means of returning home.

On the other hand, *gate*, *miracle* and *wish* circumvent these dangers and deposit the caster and his companions wherever he desires. These spells provide only a one way trip, putting the spellcaster's survival as a top priority for any journey back. Although far better alternatives than *plane shift*, their power level precludes their usage by the vast majority of individuals travelling to the forsaken plane.

Unlike its counterparts, *astral projection* does not provide an instantaneous arrival at the destination. Instead the party journeys through the Astral Plane, risking unexpected encounters before arrival. Consult the entry in *Core Rulebook I* for further details on how this spell works.

GATES INTO AND OUT OF FEUERRING

Feuerring boasts a fairly large number of planar conduits on the Material Plane. Most temples on the Material Plane dedicated to deities residing on Feuerring possess portals to their island. Vuuginoth has opened many of these gates to the Material Plane to lure visitors in, and many frost giant shrines dedicated to Helle exist to bolster her troops. Other portals remain obscure or undiscovered, crafted by long forgotten wizards and priests. These neglected gates still transport travellers to their crafters' intended destinations, and you can insert one where you need it for your campaign.

The river Styx is another avenue of travel into Feuerring, as it crosses several planar boundaries, including some of the Material Plane's most sinister and dark riverbeds. Any who sail the Styx arrives at Lethe in Hibburon, certain to be detained by devil sentries.

SCENARIOS

The Cowardly Prince

Location: Ísjarheim.

Character Levels: four characters from 2nd to 4th levels.

Plot: Prince Karl Seigmund fled the field in his first battle, carrying with him the army's beloved (and magical) standard. The general charges the characters to pursue the prince and recover the standard, then escort him back home in shame. Pursuit takes them to an abandoned frost giant village, and they discover that the cowardly prince crossed a gate to dreaded Ísjarheim and now they must find him and bring him back, before his deeds win him a permanent residence as a *frowenn*.

Final Rest

Location: Hibburon.

Level: four characters from 3rd to 5th levels

Plot: A seer warns the characters that one of their allies has suffered a terrible fate: he is now prisoner of the infernal realm of Feuerring, transformed into a lake hag. If he is to be raised or resurrected, his soul must first be freed from his condition, so the

characters must travel to Hibburon to find their ally and slay its undead form, thus liberating his spirit.

The Purge

Location: Azzareck.

Levels: four characters from 6th to 8th level.

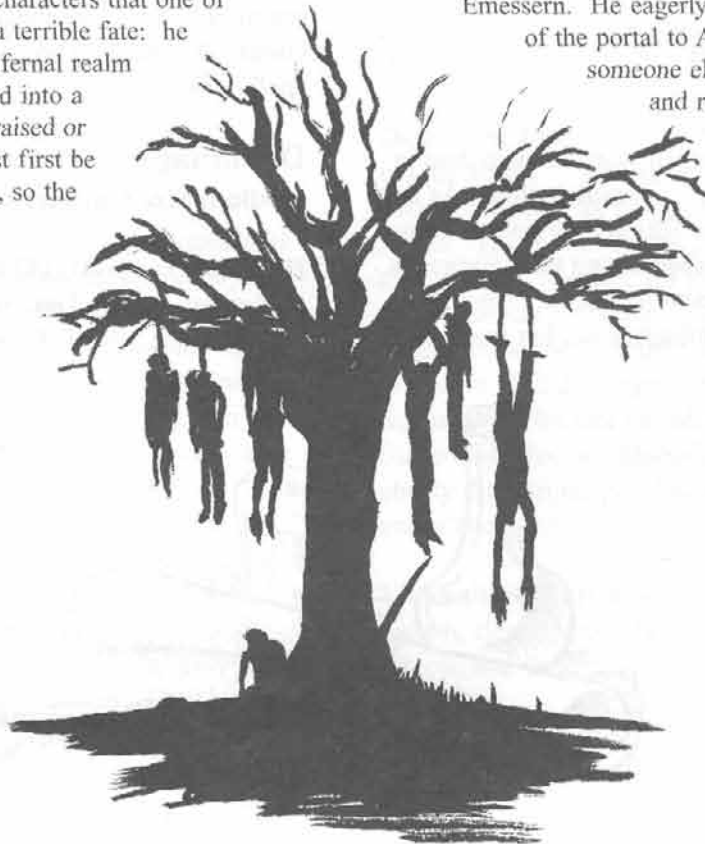
Plot: Vuuginoth has finally discovered Zolkish's treason and has decided to get rid of him once and for all. Knowing that acting directly would prompt a response from the half-dragon's fiendish allies, she opts to deal with the problem indirectly. She lures the characters to her island, promising them a means of return if they take care of Zolkish for her. Of course, she intends to slay them once they finish their task, and offer their undead bodies as a gift to the pit fiends.

The Dragon's Blade

Location: Azzareck.

Levels: four characters from 12th to 14th level.

Plot: The renowned dragon slayer, Othruck, has just returned from an ill-fated expedition to locate the mighty sword that belonged to Bertalock the Barbarian. Sapped of his energy by the undead servants of Bertalock, the grizzled dragon hunter relates the story of Bertalock and his band as well as the formidable powers of his powerful sword, Emessern. He eagerly provides the location of the portal to Azzareck, hoping that someone else takes up his quest and retrieve the sword for him.



CREATURES OF FEUERRING

Frowenn

Medium-Size Outsider (Cold, Evil)

Hit Dice: 2d6 (7 hp)

Initiative: 0

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 10

Attacks: 1 weapon +2 melee

Damage: By weapon

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Cold subtype, regeneration 3

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 6

Skills: Hide +5, Spot +5, Move Silently +4

Feats: Run

Climate/Terrain: Any cold land, Ísjarheim

Organization: Solitary

Treasure: None

Alignment: Any evil

Challenge Rating: 1/2

Frowenn are the spirits of warriors who died in shame because of their cowardly nature. As fear was their downfall, so fear is their sole existence as a punishment for abandoning their comrades. They roam the planes of Ísjarheim, running from devils and doomhags alike, but sometimes

a lucky few stumble upon a gate to the Material Plane and escape to haunt the sites near where they died. *Frowenn* speak Common and Infernal. Destroying a *frowenn* disperses its essence to meld with Ísjarheim or, if slain in a different plane, to finally rest in peace.

Combat

Frowenn will shy away from combat most of the time. They grip the weapons that they wielded in life, but their armour is in tatters and totally useless. *Frowenn* will only fight if backed into a corner, and even then will use the first opening to try to escape.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire deals normal damage to *frowenn*.

Cold Subtype (Ex): Cold immunity, double damage from fire except on a successful save.

Panic: A panicked creature suffers a -2 morale penalty on saving throws and must flee. A panicked creature has a 50% chance to drop what he's holding, chooses his path randomly (as long as he is getting away from immediate danger), and flees any other dangers that confront him. If cornered, a panicked creature cowers. A creature may use a special ability or spell to escape.

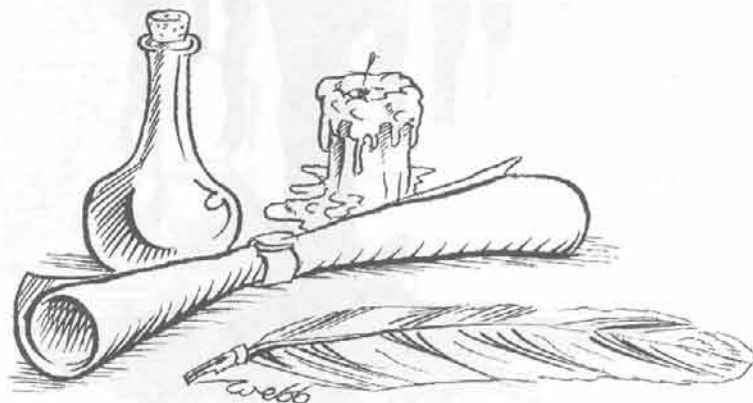
Doomhag

Medium-Size Outsider (Lawful, Evil)

Hit Dice: 16d8+80 (152 hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)



AC: 31 (+1 Dex, +20 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +22 melee, bite +19 melee

Damage: Claw 1d8+5, bite 2d6+5

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities, icy blast

Special Qualities: Damage Resistance 25/+2, SR 30, determine fate, immunities, cold subtype, acid and sonic resistance 20

Saves: Fort +15, Ref +11, Will +17

Abilities: Str 20, Con 21, Dex 13, Int 19, Wis 24, Cha 15

Skills: Alchemy +12, Bluff +12, Concentration +20, Craft (Weaving) +24, Diplomacy +8, Escape Artist +5, Gather Information +6, Hide +11, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (The Planes) +21, Knowledge (Religion) +14, Listen +14, Move Silently +5, Scry +14, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +12, Spot +26, Use Magic Device +9.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Fly-By Attack, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (claw).

Climate/Terrain: Any cold land and underground, Ísjarheim

Organization: Covey (3)

Challenge Rating: 18

Treasure: Standard coins, double goods, standard items

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: None.

Doomhags serve as unwavering instruments of vengeance, reaping suffering and agony upon their terrified victims. Although their motives remain unknown, their actions indicate they act adhering to some higher authority. Doomhags demonstrate no compassion, enacting their brutal sentences with calculated efficiency and sadistic delight.

Doomhags stand six feet tall and possess large shadowy wings. They appear as atrophying, gaunt crones with sharp, jagged claws, coal black eyes and thin tufts of decaying grey hair clinging to their wrinkled scalps. They bundle their emaciated bodies in rotting, black cloaks and adorn themselves with grisly necklaces of interlocking bones. Doomhags speak Common, Giant and Infernal.

Combat

Doomhags prefer swooping down upon their opponents using their icy blast ability or physical attacks. They never retreat, regardless of the circumstances. Any doomhag slain in combat regenerates its material body 1d4 days later, immediately undertaking a quest to track down and slay its killer.

Spell-like Abilities: At will—*animate dead, blasphemy, cone of cold, create undead, darkness, desecrate, dispel magic, fear, greater scrying, magic circle against good, otiluke's freezing sphere, suggestion, true seeing, unholy aura, unhallow and wall of ice; 1/day finger of death, time stop, wail of the banshee*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 20th level sorcerer (save DC 12 + spell level).

Icy Blast (Su): Three times per day, doomhags can unleash a 40 ft. cone of ice, snow and hail. Anyone within the blast's area of affect must roll a successful Reflex save (DC 20) or sustain 9d6 points of cold damage; half damage if the saving throw succeeds. In addition, regardless of the saving throw's outcome, the affected creature must also roll a successful Will save (DC 20) or be *slowed* for 2d8 rounds.

Determine Fate (Su): Doomhags possess the unique ability to alter the outcome of future events, affecting all creatures within a 100 ft. radius. This power forces anyone within the area to make two dice for every attack roll, skill check and saving throw. The result more beneficial to the doomhag is the valid one. A Will save (DC 20) negates the ability's effect on that creature for one round, and is the only roll that is not affected. Doomhags can use this ability three times per day, and it lasts for an entire encounter.

Immunities (Ex): Doomhags are immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and they ignore mind-influencing spells and effects.



Ungroton**Large Construct****Hit Dice:** 16d10 (88 hp)**Initiative:** -1 (Dex)**Speed:** 30 ft.**AC:** 28 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +20 natural)**Attacks:** 2 slams +21 melee**Damage:** Slam 2d10+10**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.**Special Attacks:** Adhesive orb**Special Qualities:** Construct, magic immunity, damage reduction 30/+2, weapon adhesion**Saves:** Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5**Abilities:** Str 31, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1**Climate/Terrain:** Any land and underground**Organization:** Solitary or gang (2-4)**Challenge Rating:** 12**Treasure:** None**Alignment:** Always neutral**Advancement:** 17-25 HD (Large)

Crafted from an unusual combination of tar and rock, the ungroton appears as a roughly humanoid creature standing eight feet tall and weighing 500 pounds. Globes of sticky black tar connect its rocky appendages to its nearly cylindrical torso. Although largely humanoid in appearance, two curved stone horns protrude from its forehead, just above its two black eyes of smouldering tar. Unlike most golems, ungrotons possess a fluid gait and are able to run, a by-product of its adhesive tar joints.

Combat

Although rarely seen, the fearsome presence of an ungroton strikes fear in even the bravest combatants. Nonetheless many opponents marvel at the creature's remarkable grace, a stark contrast to the rigid mobility of most golems.

Adhesive Orb (Su): In lieu of its normal melee attacks, the ungroton can hurl a two foot diameter orb of hot, sticky tar at a single target up to 20 ft. away. It strikes as a ranged touch attack causing 2d6+10 points of damage.

Furthermore, the tar adheres to the target's armour, severely hampering the creature's movement and combat abilities. It reduces the target's movement by 10 feet, and it also imposes a circumstance penalty to armoured opponent's AC equal to half the armour's bonus, ignoring any enhancement. For instance, a target wearing a suit of +1 chainmail suffers a -2 circumstance penalty because the chain mail normally bestows a +5 armour bonus. The orbs do not affect spells such as *mage armour* nor do they affect natural armour bonuses. They last for one minute before dissipating.

Magic Immunity (Ex): Ungrotons are immune to all spells, spell-like abilities and supernatural effects with the following exceptions. *Shatter* inflicts 3d6 points of damage to an ungroton with no saving throw allowed. *Transmute rock to mud* slows it (as the *slow* spell) for 2d4 rounds with no saving throw, while *transmute mud to rock* restores 5d6 hit points to it.

Weapon Adhesion (Ex): Whenever a slashing or bludgeoning weapon hits an ungroton, the creature's tar adheres to the weapon's blade or head. Because of tar accumulating on the weapon, its effectiveness diminishes as the combat progresses. Until the wielder cleans his weapon as a full round action that provokes an attack of opportunity, it suffers a cumulative -2 penalty to damage for every successful hit.

Construction

An ungroton's construction requires 1,000 pounds of rock and 250 pounds of tar. It costs 75,000 gp to create, including 2,500 gp for its body. Creating the body requires a successful Craft (sculpting or masonry) check (DC 19). The creator must be 16th level and able to cast arcane spells. Completing the ritual drains 1,800 XP from the creator and requires *geas/quest*, *limited wish*, *polymorph any object* and *web*.

Lake Hag

Medium-Size Undead

Hit Dice: 4d12 (26 hp)

Initiative: 0

Speed: 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

AC: 14 (+4 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +7 melee, bite +5 melee

Damage: Claw 1d6+5, bite 1d8+5

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Sea spray

Special Qualities: SR 14, undead

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +6

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 10, Con —, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 10

Skills: Bluff +4, Hide +7, Listen +4, Move Silently +7, Search +4, Spot +7, Swim +7

Feats: Alertness, Multiattack

Climate/Terrain: Any aquatic

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: By character class

Natives only to the vile Lethe lake, lake hags dwell along its shores dividing their time between water and land. Deep wrinkles crease their skin into lumps of swollen, mottled green flesh. The lake hag's cold, grey

eyes emphasise its intense hatred for all life forms, while wiry strands of twisted, black hair conceal its bony napes. Its limbs assume a gangly appearance, while its bloated abdomens protrude unnaturally from its atrophied bodies.

Any humanoid slain by the devils and cast into Lethe emerges a week later as a lake hag. Although seething with rage at its devilish murderer, a lake hag will recoil from devils on sight. Destroying a lake hag allows its spirit to leave Feuerring and go to its appropriate resting place. Lake hags speak Common and Infernal.

Combat

Lake hags attack with their barbed claws and bite with unparalleled ferocity, and never retreat.

Water Spray (Su): Three times per day, lake hags can spit a 10 ft. cone of water spray. Anyone within the cone must roll a successful Will save (DC 12) or suffer the effects of an *insanity* spell. Its effects last for 1d4+4 rounds.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.



FORBIDDEN LORE

Hand of Vengeance

Necromancy

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: Instantaneous/1 round/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude partial

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You may only cast this spell if you receive damage during this or the previous round of combat. If you succeed at a melee touch attack, your hand inflicts the identical amount of damage that you received from one attack against the creature that inflicted that damage



upon you. This only includes actual hit points lost. For example, if a creature sustained twenty points of damage from a lightning bolt, its touch inflicts twenty points of damage on the person that cast the spell or used the device creating the spell. The target is also shaken for 1 round/level unless he makes a successful Fortitude save.

The spell's material component is a drop of blood from the wizard's wounds.

Emessern

Now resting among the ruins of Dragon's Nest in Azzareck, Bertalock the Barbarian's beloved long sword served him exceeding well during his dragon hunting expeditions. Forged from an alloy of adamantine and iron, the pommel and hilt of this +3 *dragon bane long sword* has embedded in it a dozen white and four black pearls. The blade is dark and opaque, and sports the names of its vanquished foes etched into its metallic surface. The weapon itself has a hardness of 15 and 30 hit points. In addition to its dragon slaying properties, Emessern can manifest a black smoky hand three times per day. The sword's wielder directs the eerie appendage at a single target less than 130 feet away and, if it makes a successful ranged touch attack, inflicts 4d6 points of damage.



A critical hit with the ghostly hand means that Emessern drinks the target's life force instead of just dealing damage, which can be used by the wielder in two ways. The user can heal the number of points the sword inflicted as per the *vampiric touch* spell, or use the stored hit points to resonate with the damaged target, granting the wielder a +1 insight bonus to the next attack roll

for every five hit points stored. Emessern holds the life force for up to one hour before it dissipates. For example, if the hand causes 14 points of damage, the wielder can heal 14 hit points immediately, or store them to enjoy a +2 bonus to his next attack.

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armour, *spectral hand*, *vampiric touch*; *Market Price:* 112,600 gp.

'This is not what you promised!' the warrior cried, trying to off-stave the biting cold that assaulted him. He was shouting at the smug-looking devil in front of him.

'Actually, this is.' The wizard who came with him nodded, his words blowing steam in the freezing weather.

'Yesss, the deal is complete, I brought you to where your friend was,' the fiend hissed.

'Where?' The first man unsheathed a sword. 'Where is Elkath?'

'You will find him... if you can run as fast as he did!' the devil cackled and jumped, flying away from the pair of adventurers.

'Roth...' The wizard put a hand on his companion's shoulder. 'We have little time... you must accept that Elkath died in flight, and his soul came to the Hell of cowards.'

'Let go.' The warrior shook his shoulder free. 'There is no single minute that I don't remember... Come on, wizard. Roth is our friend, and it is a friend's duty to support one another in a moment of weakness.'

The wizard nodded, and they both started their search in the frozen waste of Ísjarheim.



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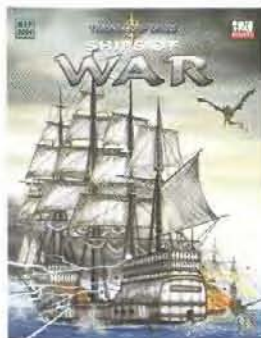
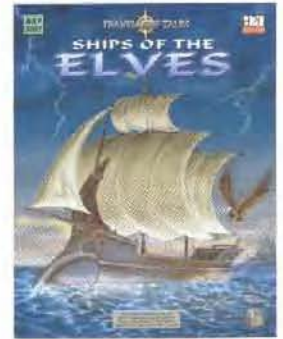
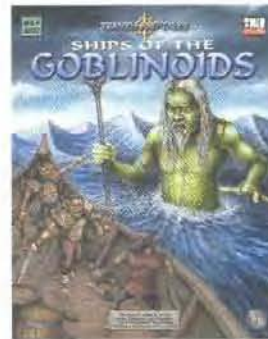
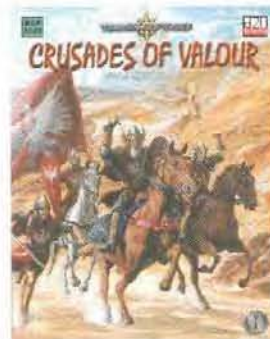
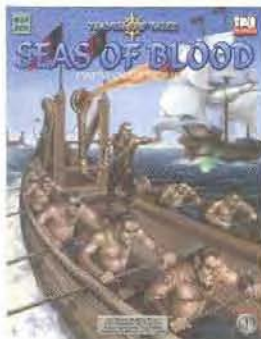
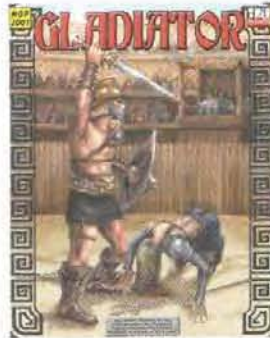
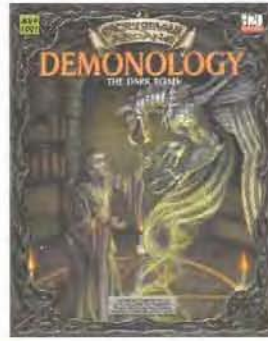
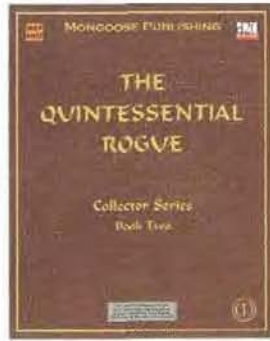
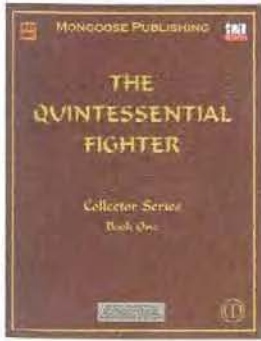
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