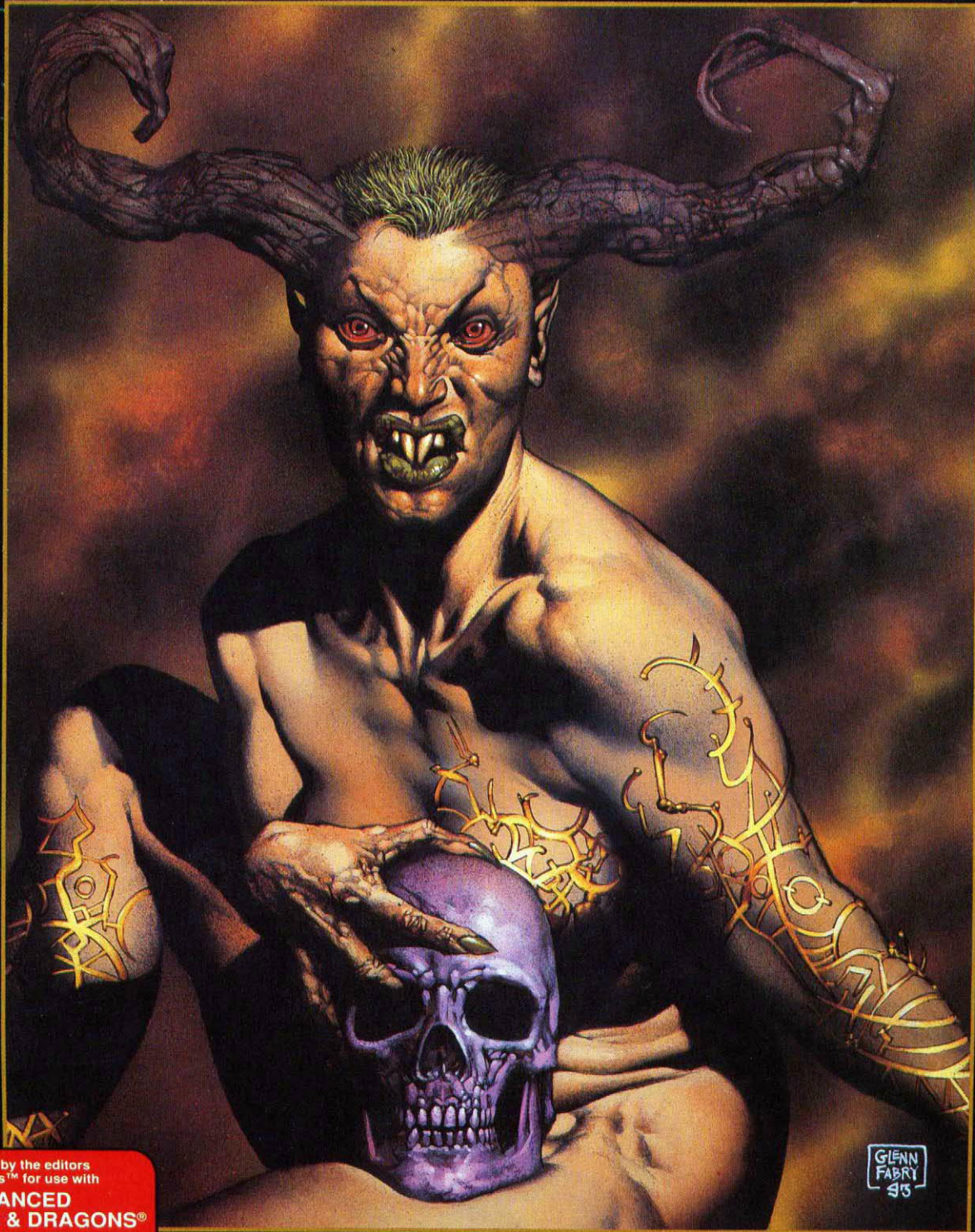


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DEMONS II

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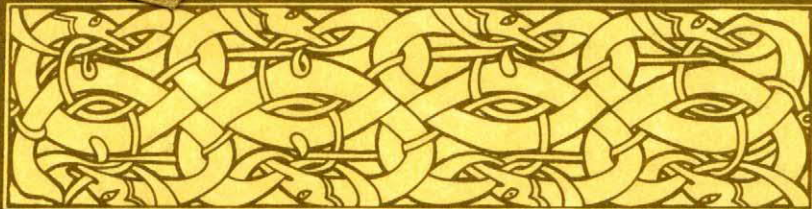


GLENN
FABRY
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Written by Kevin Hassall



THE HISTORY
OF THE
GREAT
ENDEAVOUR

Herein I set down the history of our Cabal, from the time of its foundation up until the present day. Our small-minded enemies, who might use this book against us if ever they obtained it, shall not profit from any of the history here recorded, for I shall neither scribe the name of any living member nor divulge the nature of our present deliberations.





In our beginning, the glorious founder, the most magnificent Tolamuire, brought together the foremost Thaumaturgists of his day, assembling them in the city of Arendur. He proposed his plan, for the foundation of a secret Brotherhood that would multiply their powers through cooperation, and after brief debate all agreed that the Cabal should be founded forthwith. Their oaths there sworn, a leader and Master was elected, and by near unanimous assent Tolamuire himself was installed in perpetuity to that rank.

Its members numbered fifty five, and one in each full ten were raised by Tolamuire to marshal the remainder. Thus from the first day, five Masters served the Grand Master, these being the Masters of the Rod, Staff, Sword, Light and Word.

Strongholds and secret places were created, writings gathered and artefacts of power sought. The Cabal grew five-fold, and members new and old worked together, inspired and united by their leader's energy and power, so that marvellous magics were wrought and great discoveries were made. Never before in the history of the world had such a brotherhood existed, and never before had the Gates of the Infernus strained so close to bursting.

For under the inspired direction of its leader, the Cabal gained its

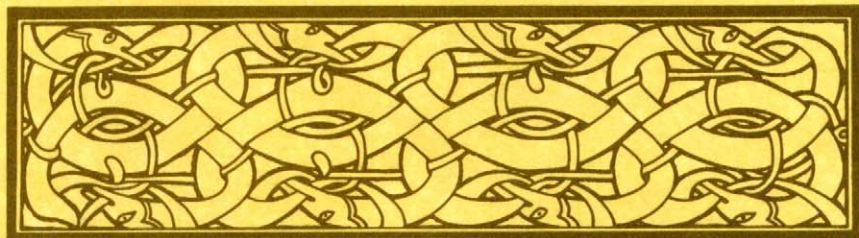




greatest honour in the city of Arendur, its foremost members there receiving lands and titles. And in that city a great Wheel was built, a mighty magic which would blow wide the very gates of the Infernus, and multiply the power of the Cabal one hundred fold. With the planes conjoined as one, the Cabal would have risen to command the world, and the power of demonkind would have burned across the lands, as the break of day after an ageless night.

And yet as the greatest of our worthies gathered to turn the Wheel, to shatter the gates of the Infernus, others plotted against them, in both the mortal world and the Infernus. A catastrophe befell the Cabal that day, as the ungrateful demons once more consigned themselves to the abyss. The work of fifty years was undone, and the city that could have been the seat of a glorious Empire burned red as blood. For a horde of demons burst forth upon the Cabal and the city, killing many and putting others to flight.

Five thousand of the creatures sacked the city for five days, and left not one stone upon another, nor one living thing not soaked in blood. The fiefs and dukedoms of the Cabal fell with the city of Arendur, and

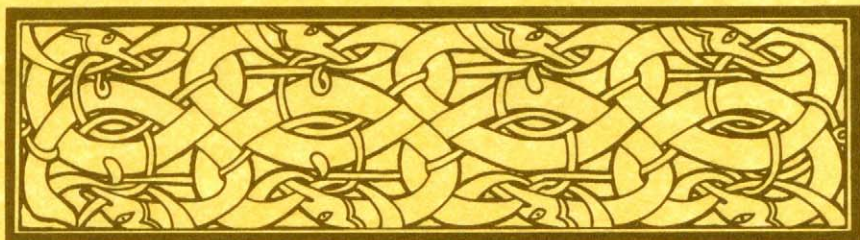




the flames, fanned by the demons, lit the sky as bright as the sun, so that it seemed there was no night, but only a long red day. The fires could be seen for five hundred miles, and as temples and priests burned, the gods themselves were filled with fear.

Therefore, upon divine command, Paladins and Slayers gathered forces, and marched with Princes' armies to confront the demons. But by the time these hosts arrived, the demons had withdrawn to their own plane, and the righteous fools sought some other victims upon whom to vent their holy indignation. And their wizards looked into the past, and they saw our Cabal.

And so before the embers of Arendur were cold, the zealous fools fell upon us, the small-minded and the scared with words of cold justice and a pallet for our blood. The blades of torturers and soldiers cut as scythes. Perhaps one hundred fell before these, more terrible than any demon, and cruelest of all, great Tolamuire was betrayed to their mercies: If some amongst the Cabal had not seen this tragedy as a method of settling old scores, then perhaps the damage would not have been so severe.





When this slaughter was done, the Cabal had no more than fifty active members. Many more, of course, had escaped the lunatic massacres, but had fled, renounced their magics, or could not be contacted. A new Grand Master and new stronghold were required, but for some years nothing was done, as the Master of the Light sought to contact our scattered remnants.

It was due to the excellence of Tolamuire's successors, Dremiaer and Yoss'phedd, that the Cabal endured. Through their valiant efforts new members were inducted, strongholds built, and scattered tomes regained, so that within sixty years the Cabal could count its members to exceed two hundred.

Dremiaer was a Thaumaturgist of exceptional talent, renowned for the ferocity with which she had fought the Cabal's enemies, and for the genius of her strategies, and her power could not be denied when a new Grand Master was chosen. Under her astute and forceful command, a new stronghold was found for the Cabal, and by the labour of many peasants a great castle was erected, being named Caer Kof'Arendur: The Castle of Arendur Remembered. Moreover, until her inexcusable assassi-





nation, Dremiaer saw that those who had most hideously damaged the Cabal were punished with due severity.

Dremiaer's successor, Yoss'phedd, was elected despite allegations that he had played some role in his predecessor's murder. He opened the Cabal to wizards of all schools, and although our ranks were swelled thereby, the purity of our purpose was lost, and the vigour of our original quest weakened.

After the peaceful death of Yoss'phedd, many irresponsible and greedy members fought and squabbled, many slaying their fellows and others breaking away to form their own Brotherhoods. None obeyed the Grand Masters, but followed only their own selfish desires, so that the Cabal suffered greatly.

This time of Schisms caused more damage to the Cabal than all the Inquisitors and Slayers and Paladins of previous generations, nearly exterminating our great brotherhood. In twenty five years, scores were slain by their fellow members, others betrayed to our enemies, and yet more fled into hiding.

This was a time of angst and betrayal, when Grand Masters





were elected not by the Masters, but by force of arms, companies of mercenaries, bands of half-demons and demons clashing in open battle or committing innumerable crimes to advance their masters' interests.

In these decades, a score of wizards were elected to be Grand Master, some holding grimly onto that rank for several years before being murdered, while others lasted only days. Some thus elevated were not even Masters of the Cabal, who themselves feared to take up that rank, and some were not even Thaumaturgists, but were wizards of some lesser school.

At this time, disgusted by the corruption which was spreading through the Cabal, some groups of wizards thought to break away and form their own societies as alternatives. Amongst these the least reputable of these was the Order of The Silver Way, established by greedy wizards who thought to steal the treasures of the Cabal and manipulate it from without. These rebels were destroyed by the Masters in a long and hard-fought war. More laudably, there were a great number of Thaumaturgists who still remembered the noble cause for which the Cabal was established. And seeing their lives' works being destroyed before their eyes by foolish wizards, they seized the Cabal's greatest treasures and hid them away. These loyal few, calling themselves the Seekers of the





Dawn, defended their treasures firmly, and when, at last, peace and order ruled the Cabal once again, they returned to it with all the things that they had saved.

And now, at last, the futile schisms lie behind us. We have a leader who has proved himself capable of rebuilding the brotherhood, and when this is done we might once again commit ourselves to the opening of the gates to the Infernus: For this is our Great Endeavour.

And let this be a Curse upon the uninitiated who might conspire to gain this tome: If you who read this now, have through deceit or murder or commerce obtained this text, and have not sworn the Oath of induction to our Cabal, be warned that we serve masters greater than ever could you imagine. Should one word of what you have here learned ever pass your lips, or should any part of it be set to paper by you, be sure that the lords of the Infernus shall know of it! And what they have known they shall report to us, and we shall hunt you down and strike you helpless, and we shall take your tongue from your head and send it with your soul to the lords of the Infernus.



THE RAZOR
OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS

In Which the Secrets of Vile Corrupters and Seducers are
Made Plain, and the Diverse Methods of Their Servants'
Discoveries are Set Forth.

By Bartholemew Mathers

REPRODUCTION PREAMBLE

The original "Razor of Righteousness" has long been held an ideal handbook for young Inquisitors, or for any other who must rid our world of the Infernal menace. And so I have commissioned several copies of the work to be made: One of these you now hold.

Many have sought to dismiss the Razor as the work of a false Inquisitor, pointing to Mathers' eventual corruption and allegiance with the Infernus. Others have claimed that this work illustrates the beginning of his descent into chaos and evil, saying that his methods are full of cruelty and falsehood.

Certainly some of Mathers' methods are questionable. Perhaps he is too concerned with manipulating witnesses, with gaining confessions, and with ensuring his own authority. Perhaps he should have been more interested in seeking the truth, encouraging accurate testimony, and safeguarding justice. He certainly displays a great prejudice against women, and it may be that at least two of those whom he condemns were quite innocent.

You, the reader, will have to decide for yourself how reliable this work truly is and whether, in fact, those whose deaths are described here really were guilty of the crimes they died for. But then, such questions should be asked of any text. And a good Inquisitor is perhaps one who asks questions, and not one who seeks answers: Mathers himself sought answers, and perhaps this was his downfall. But I myself find that there is much in this book which a young Inquisitor should know, and some passages which even the most experienced should find illuminating. And so I have not omitted any sentence or passage from this manuscript, but have ordered it to be copied exactly as it was written.

*Alexianus Theodocis,
Inquisitor*

Introduction

In my many years as Inquisitor and hunter of demons, I have oft stared into the portals of death and oblivion, and even through regardless. I have been tempted, but have not succumbed; offered ease, but have sought truth; desiring peace, still I must find disharmony. To be heaven's scourge is to shun the world, deny the self, and live always in pain. Yet this is to the greater glory of the divinities, and to save the bodies and the souls of all our fellow mortals.

The path of the Inquisitor is the road straight and sure, but it is a narrow and a dangerous way, with obstacles and traps aplenty. If any man or woman would learn of this book, hoping thereby to find the means to face the creatures of Infernus, then all that comes hereafter is empty if these first principles are not understood. For though all Inquisitors must understand the wiles of the evil ones, first they must look to their own hearts and examine themselves. For though I understand the omens and portents which accompany a demon's visitation, if I lack the courage to confront the fiend this is of no avail.

And though I might know the signs and marks where-by disguised demons may be known, if I am not ever watchful and always on my guard, such knowledge will not aid me. And though I knew all of the tricks and traps which the creatures set to snare our souls (which no mortal could ever know, they being too numerous), then still this would be of no profit, unless my heart were firm, my will as iron, my soul milk-pure.

A man or woman of firm faith, sound mind, and pure thought; with dedication, perseverance and no care for foolish words, though he know nothing that here follows, is a greater fighter against the Infernus than the wisest weakling.

The Fiends and Their Servants

A demon wishes to take one thing from each mortal, and one thing alone. They do not covet wealth or earthly power, though they may pretend to do so, and have no care for love or friendship. Their only desire is to steal from us our immortal souls, which they then destroy, and so they are more dangerous than any war, or famine or human criminal.

In order to obtain a soul, a demon may make a pact with a mortal, but these deals are rare, and in all my years I have discovered very few. Trickery may also be used to win the soul, and sacrifices may deliver souls to them, but more often demons seek to destroy us piecemeal, by tempting us into sin. For each time that a mortal commits a sin, a fragment of his soul is lost to the Infernus. In order to do this, a demon may walk the earth disguised, appearing to a victim as a friend or superior, a child, priest, or any other disguise which suits their purposes. Such a demon is called a "Seducer". In these disguises they may seem innocent or helpful, but in truth, seek only the utter destruction of their target.

Mortal dupes and thralls are also used by demons, to aid in their plots, make sacrifices to them, or to perform or spread their sins. Sometimes these servants act alone to help their foul masters. More often, cults are established, usually to practice and spread the sin, or offer sacrifice to one of the Dark Lords. The bulk of this book will relate the story of the uncovering of such a cult, in the hope that true Demon-hunters may learn from this case.



The Discovery of Demons

To reveal a disguised demon is not difficult. Slayers, and other holy men can sense their presence, and Inquisitors can sense their evil, and the creatures are so vile that much of the natural world recoils from their blasphemous existence.

The creatures of the Infernus are the epitome of evil and corruption. All pure substances, and all that is holy and good is anathema to them. Thus, the presence of a demon may blacken silver, rust iron, curdle milk, stagnate water, crack marble, cause children to fall into convulsions and pregnant women to miscarry, animals to become barren and crops to wither, meat to rot, glass to crack, and foul weather to descend upon the land. Of course, no one demon causes all of these evils, and pettier creatures cause more subtle effects, but an alert Inquisitor should detect signs of a demon with ease.

Wigged Man Beginning to Grow!! catch it early!!



The Faces of the Fiends

A demon may adopt any form it pleases, animal, human, or monstrous, and may accurately mimic the appearance and manner of any sinner or any mortal that it has met. However, two failings render their disguises imperfect.

Firstly, they always retain some small, obvious, demonic feature. Legend tells of disguised demons with cloven hooves, but experience has taught me that more subtle imperfections should be sought: a serpentine tongue, a beast's eye, an extra finger on one hand.

Secondly, demons do not understand compassion, generosity, or any other mortal virtue. They may try to mimic these virtues but are quite confused by such acts, and their plans rarely take account of mortals' purer emotions. Moreover, when they are attempting to assume a disguise, I believe that they can never accurately feign love, pity, tenderness, or any other warm response, and if they are watched closely, their inhuman personalities may thus be discerned.



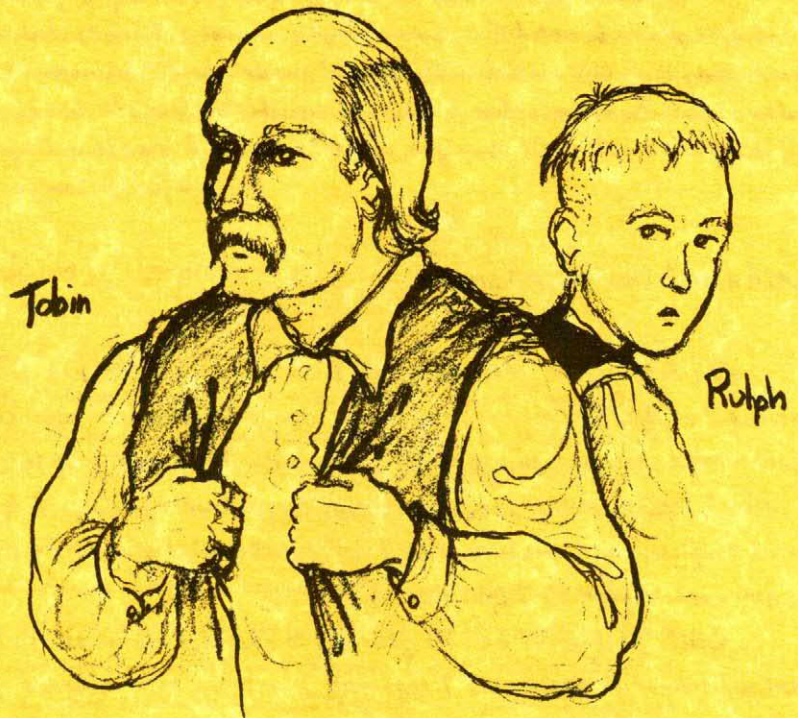
"Half" Demons

A special mention must be made of so-called "half" demons, those vile wretches born of a mortal woman and her Infernal mate. Some have claimed that these are piteous, innocent creatures or are but malformed mortals. But these are lies put about by agents of the Infernus, designed to discourage the righteous from hunting out these abominations. In truth, these so-called half demons are nothing but true fiends disguised within a cloak of mortal flesh.

By being born to a mortal woman, a demon immediately gains allies (that is, its mortal "family"), and may also stay in our world indefinitely. All Inquisitors should strive to destroy these demons just as they root out all other types.

The Case of Ehrenburg

Through the years I have dealt with many conspiracies and corruptions, confronting the most mildly tainted and the most foul, but my case in Ehrenburg provides an excellent example of an investigation, showing a typical but complex plot, from which, I believe, the reader might learn much. The details of the case I shall offer as instruction, hoping thereby to illustrate the diverse means whereby the Infernus gnaws away at our communities.



Rulph the Grainseller

I was called to Ehrenburg by a resident of the town, a young man named Rulph, a farmer by profession and adopted son of the town's only merchant. The lad approached me as I prayed in a church, in a near-by city. He was bringing a load of grain to the market there, on behalf of his father and master and, hearing that I was in the place, he had sought me out.

Rulph claimed that his father, a man named Tobin, had displayed worrying tendencies of late, and he was anxious that I should investigate further. The merchant's strange behaviour included a muttering to himself, an unexpected run of good fortune in his business dealings, and a lack of respect for his wife.

Certainly these evidences might imply a demon's influence, but I remained unsure about the farmer. It is not natural for a son, even if adopted, to turn against his father with such little provocation, and I considered that Rulph might be luring me to Ehrenburg for some other reason. After all, the lad had interrupted me at prayer, which a demons' servant might be wont to do. Nonetheless, each Inquisitor has a responsibility to investigate whatever hint of evil he might find, and I travelled presently to Ehrenburg with the lad.

Before leaving the city, I paused only to seek out some traders with whom Rulph said that his father traded with, so that I might gain their impressions of my suspect, and found that he was held in high esteem, and known as an honest, upright man.

Notes of Import

No sane mortal serves a demon for no gain. A demon might promise comfort, aid, long life, good health, or any other benefit, or in this case perhaps, success in business and wealth. Any persons living to a great age, displaying exceptional luck, or succeeding where they have no cause to do so may be in league with demons. Nonetheless, such good fortunes may also be sent from heaven as blessings upon the pious, and demons may help those of good repute in order to discredit them or provoke jealousy and envy against them.

Moreover, no mortal may keep the company of demons without being stained by their evil. Those who deal with such creatures often come to flout all proper courtesy and kindness. Children who are affected disobey their parents, wives are unfaithful to their husbands, and husbands beat their wives, the young have no respect for their elders, taxes are unpaid, and duties are neglected. The merchant Tobin's disrespect for his wife might have been an example of this corruption.

Finally, it should be noted that demons must send instructions to their mortal servants, and receive reports from them. A demon may come to a mortal in the shape of another mortal, or as an animal, invisibly, as a spectre, or as an image in a window or pool. Sometimes these demons are invisible to those who do not serve them, so that a man who seems to talk to himself, or speaks secretly with strangers, animals, and such, may be in league with the Infernus, particularly if his ramblings are in a foreign tongue.

Nathaniel the Headsman

On arriving in Ehrenburg, my first concern was to seek out the ruler of the town, and to locate what churches I could. The town's headsman, named Nathaniel, received me coldly, and I told him that I wished to speak with a certain member of his community. He asked who this person was, and what crime had been committed, and I replied that I could not reveal the person's identity, and hoped that no evil had been done. Nathaniel seemed confused and anxious, and I decided to investigate him further, when I had settled. No innocent person has any need to fear an Inquisitor.

Still, Nathaniel had no grounds to obstruct my investigation, and I gained his pledge that he would grant me whatever assistance I required. Inquiring after a house of prayer, I was disturbed to find that none existed here, but that the townsfolk journeyed to a larger town to attend ceremonies or consult with priests.

Notes of Import

It is helpful if the local authorities approve an investigation, and even better if they offer assistance, though this should not be accepted too readily. Most vitally, the local folk must know that the Inquisitor has the backing of their traditional rulers, and so an Inquisitor should visit the lords of an area before commencing their investigation. The ruler's reaction to the Inquisitor should also be noted. A fearful or unhelpful attitude might imply a guilty secret.

If a town or village has not even a shrine, then it is dangerously far from the light of the divine, and easy prey for the forces of the Infernus. If a community has refused to receive preachers or have shrines erected, then they may already have been corrupted.

If a house of prayer exists, with a priest in attendance, then this holy person should be approached next, to secure his cooperation of course, but also to insure that he has not also been corrupted by demons. In some cases, creatures of the Infernus have even posed as priests in order to lead mortals astray.

A house of the divine is also an ideal residence or retreat for a visiting Inquisitor, as many demons cannot enter their precincts, or are at least rendered powerless there. Still, some creatures may still enter, and the Inquisitor cannot fully relax even on holy ground.

Tobin the Merchant

Next, I visited my suspect, Tobin. I decided that I should like to be near to the man, in order to watch him more closely, but that I needed to dissuade him from harming me, if indeed he were in league with demons. Thus, I claimed that I had travelled to Ehrenburg with his son, and wished to beg lodgings of him, until a friend of mine arrived to meet me in the town. Only when he had agreed did I reveal that I was an Inquisitor, and noted that he did not seem disturbed by the revelation.

Dusk was now approaching, and I thought to stay with Tobin for some dinner and to sleep for the night. I spoke with him on several subjects, some irrelevant, others salient, and was struck that he seemed an honest, hard-working fellow. About his recent business successes, he seemed naively happy, and he frequently praised his own accurate judgement (I wondered if a demon of pride might be involved), and he seemed eager to continue to increase his profits (so too might a seducer of greed be at work). Otherwise I found no fault with his morals.

At dinner, I ate with Tobin and Grenda his wife, Rulph being busy seeing to the horses. My host and hostess rarely spoke to one another, though they were polite to me, and I sensed that they had each lost respect for the other. The food was good, the wine sweet, the vegetables crisp and the meat tender. After this I retired to bed, locking the door securely, as every Inquisitor should do by habit. To my relief, I slept soundly.

Notes of Import

The agents of the Infernus are often betrayed by the fare which they offer guests. Wine is often vinegary as demons are known to corrupt good wines, while vegetables may be rotten, bread stale and meat tough, for the same reason. Likewise, demons' servants might offer paltry, cheap portions (in order to save their coins, if tempted by demons of greed), or outstanding fare in vast servings (hoping thereby to spread gluttony). Dishes of stolen, drugged or poisoned food may equally be offered, as may human flesh, or blood disguised in wine.

Sometimes it is impossible to sleep in the homes of those in league with demons. More often, foul dreams or fitful sleep afflicts a guest. Myself, I have never discovered any plot by this means as I can sense the taint of a demon upon a place, and would not sleep in such areas, but if the residents of or visitors to a certain place report unsettled nights, this may indicate that an Inquisitor's attentions are required. It is said, also, that the nightmares which curse folk in a tainted house may give clues to the nature of the demon and the identities of its servants. However, many demons can manipulate the dreams of those who sleep where they have power. Thus, it would be foolish to rely upon "prophetic" dreams.

Every Inquisitor should take great care where they sleep. Public Inns are notorious dens of sin, full of drunkards, lechers, gluttons, boasters, brigands and other villains who might be allied to the Infernus.

Very often it is the village inn-keeper who leads a demonic cult, or serves as a spy for a demon, or encourages the sins which thrive in taverns. However, a sober inn, where a responsible barman discourages sin, and where secure private rooms may be hired, is an ideal lodging, since there, the Inquisitor may observe or question the local patrons and travellers without raising their suspicions. But less laudable inns should be avoided, and so there arises the difficulty of finding lodgings. Priests, as already mentioned, are usually ideal hosts, but generous merchants, nobles, guildsmen and others are often persuaded to offer rooms to an Inquisitor.

Inquisitors who fear that their suspects might do them harm, should ensure that they have powerful allies. Thus, the suspects fear that by killing the Inquisitor, they will bring greater danger upon themselves. The clear support of a local lord is often sufficient for this purpose, and members of Orders of Inquisitors are often safest of all.

The Townsfolk

The following morning, I informed Tobin that I had one or two rumours to follow up in the town, while I waited for my friend to arrive. He reacted with concern and some interest, and seemed oblivious to the possibility that I suspected him of anything. He was either innocent or a consummate actor.

Out of respect, I asked that I be permitted to pay him for the food and wine that I would consume during my stay. And out of hospitality he refused to let me pay a single copper. It seemed certain that he was no slave to greed, and yet perhaps he was guilty of much pride.

That morning I toured the town, going from door to door in all but the poorest areas, and speaking with all manner of folk in their own homes, none of which seemed tainted in any way. To each citizen that I spoke with, I explained that I was conducting an investigation (as rumour-mongers had already told half of the town) and that I sought information from them concerning the area and the townsfolk. To no one did I imply that they were suspected of anything. I asked no leading questions, listening to whatever they would tell me, and forgot nothing that was said.

Notes of Import

An Inquisitor should develop the art of testing suspects, by making offers and innuendoes to which the suspect's reaction may be gauged. If a man may be enslaved by greed, it is easy to offer him money on some pretext; equally, a glutton may be offered food, and a corrupt man offered a bribe for some service; those guilty of envy, lust, pride, must be discovered through more subtle questioning.

Of course, a person who sins is not necessarily in league with the Infernus. To be weak is not to be evil. However, demons may more easily tempt, recruit or enslave such a person to do its will, and such sinful souls are always prime suspects.

The gossip of local people may also give clues to one who listens closely. Of course, much rumour is mere slander, but folk often know their neighbours secrets, and strange events may be learned of from them.

Further Suspects

In any town of five hundred folk, there are always many with loose morals, and I took careful note of the names and histories of those sinners who lived in Ehrenburg.

Inevitably the innkeeper, named Issak, was a man of low repute, encouraging drunkenness and gambling, over-charging customers and watering down the beer; and a man named Matthieu was said to be too often in the tavern. Another, named Allan, was universally said to be a lecher and a glutton, while a young widow, named Hanna, entertained more male friends than is proper. However, it is often the greatest or most adept sinners who go unnoticed by the common folk, and so I would not confine myself to these few suspects.

Two other names caught my ear: One Johan was said to be a vagrant and a beggar, and a thief by some accounts, who wandered into town from time to time, and had been seen that morning; while a woman of great age, named Ruth, lived out in the woods with her daughter.

Notes of Import

Vagrants are always worthy of investigation. If a demon wishes to impersonate a mortal, in order to move around the world unnoticed, its safest disguise is that of a beggar. Such vagabonds are considered unimportant, come and go at will, and move in the seediest circles of the community. Moreover, if a demon must return sometimes to the Infernus, the absence of a beggar, gypsy or other traveller will go unnoticed. Also, because of their greed to gain souls, these creatures cannot bare to stay in one place, but are driven from place to place in search of victims. So, demons most often appear as wanderers of some description.

The woman Ruth was suspicious not only for her age, but also because she lived apart from the community. The servants of demons must consort with or perform vile rites for their masters, and so often live some distance from upright folk, and demons who possess or impersonate mortals equally prefer to keep apart from the community, lest they be discovered.

Other Signs of Import

My immediate intent was to confront this beggar, Johan, and I presently spied him across the market square, wheedling copper coins from the townsfolk. However, the vagabond seemed intent upon avoiding me.

Resolving to catch up with him later, and not wishing to panic him as yet, I removed myself to tour the artisans of the town. A jeweller I found, and spoke to him about his gems and metals, then a baker, of whom I asked about the success of his baking. Then I found a hunter and a dairy-maid. I asked the former of the beasts of the forest, and the latter I spoke with concerning the churning of butter, and the purity of milk. Finding nothing to suggest a demonic presence, I returned to the square, hoping to approach the beggar.

Notes of Import

A thorough Inquisitor should always watch out for subtle signs of demons' works, the hidden omens which most folk overlook. The presence or taint of a demon may curdle milk or prevent butter from churning, tarnish silver, and cause other petty damage as I have already observed. It is therefore worthwhile to speak with folk who work with these substances: the jewellers, dairy-maids, and such, to discover from them whether such signs have been noted.

The presence of a demon may also be apparent in the natural world. Strange beasts of legend, flocks of carrion birds, large rats, and other creatures may be noted in and around a tainted place, while noble or pure animals such as stags and doves shun the area. Likewise plants, being frail, are particularly easily damaged by the touch or presence of a demon. And so it is always of value to speak with farmers and foresters, to inquire as to the health of crops and woodland plants, and the animals observed in field and forest.

The Preacher

As I returned to the market square, I noted a large crowd beginning to gather, for standing upon an up-ended barrel a wandering preacher prepared to speak. The man was lean and ruddy, with a long beard and a shirt of horse-hair, and gathered around him were many people of the town, including Johan the beggar.

Moving towards the crowd, however, I became uneasy, the hairs on my arms standing erect and a cold shudder passing down my spine. Somewhere in this crowd I knew that there was a person touched by the Infernus, for true Inquisitors gain a sense for such things. I watched each person in the crowd intently, seeing whether or not the sermon distressed any of them, and at the same time I listened to the preacher's words, concerned that he might be some false prophet or demon disguised.

Amongst the crowd several seemed distracted, particularly those who loitered near the back, away from the preacher, talking amongst themselves as the man preached. Johan was amongst these idle chatterers. The sermon itself seemed a virtuous exhortation, quite confounding my suspicions, warning against shows of false piety and the innovations of false priests, and criticising the extreme ascetics and overly pious who make their faith a public spectacle.

As the preacher descended from his makeshift pulpit, I moved to speak with him but saw that many thronged about him already, and so I approached Tobin, who had heard the sermon and now prepared to depart. First I inquired about this preacher, and was told that he visited the town every few weeks, often speaking on a similar theme. The week before, I learned, he had spoken against both greed for gold and the vanity of praising poverty as a virtue, and this doctrine of moderation seemed right and pious.

Next I told the merchant that I had a suspect whom I wished to capture, and asked how I might raise a militia. Unabashed, Tobin said that all the townsmen had weapons of their own, and I had only to ask them and they would help. Moreover, he offered to collect some men at once, never asking whom my quarry was, and displaying all the while a concern so genuine that his innocence seemed almost certain.



Notes of Import

It is known that, like demons, the servants of the Infernus shun contact with the holy and virtuous. This is because the presence of the holy and the pure makes them uncomfortable, and because upright persons might sense their evil.

Likewise, holy words and pious sentiments repel or disconcert them. Thus, an Inquisitor should immediately suspect all those who hang back from a preacher or chatter through his sermons, who rarely attend churches or who avoid priests and Inquisitors.

A prudent Inquisitor should not consider a person blameless simply because he seems opposed to a particular sin, nor even if he works to prevent others from committing a certain sin. A man or woman who is quite free from one sin may be slave to another, and even demons have been known to discourage minor sins in order to encourage greater wrongs. Finally, it should be noted that no-one, at any stage, should ever be above suspicion. A willingness to cooperate with an Inquisitor, a clear conscience, a reputation for virtue: all of these things make a suspect less likely to be demonically corrupted, but nothing can guarantee innocence. Likewise, a history of sinlessness does not render a person immune from being corrupted in the future.

The First Arrests

Organising a group of solid fellows, I approached Johan the beggar once again, and as I expected, he endeavoured to evade me. My militia, hastily but with commendable initiative, charged at the vagrant, and he fled with the speed of demons. A furious chase ensued through the streets, until at last the beggar was cornered in an alley and brought to the ground without serious injuries.

Nathaniel, the headsman, inquired as to what was happening, and was clearly distraught and confused by the whole affair. He offered me the use of a sturdy room within which prisoners were occasionally kept, and I had Johan taken there and tied to a bed-frame.

The town was alive with speculation, no doubt, but I decided to speak with the beggar before making any kind of formal announcement. So, having retrieved my tools from Tobin's house, I returned to the vagabond, and posted guards ten yards from the building in order to deter eavesdroppers. I began to stoke a brazier of coals, placing irons in them to heat, and slowly began to sharpen my knives, spikes and scalpels, hiding none of these preparations from my suspect.

As I was perfecting the edge upon the last blade, Johan burst into tears, which is always a positive sign, and swore on all that is holy that he would tell me whatever I wished to hear, but continued to insist that he knew nothing.



Notes of Import

Ideally, all arrests should be made by the local authorities, so that they cannot disassociate themselves from an investigation and are publicly seen to be supporting the Inquisitor. Only as a last resort should an Inquisitor act without public support.

It is equally preferable to extract confessions and information from prisoners without causing undue harm or damage to them. This is primarily a moral imperative, for it is abhorrent to cause pain to a suspect who is quite innocent, but it is also a practical priority. If an Inquisitor is seen to be torturing the innocent, then the support of the locals may be lost, and when the guilty are put on trial or executed they might inspire sympathy if they appear wretched and wounded. Moreover, Inquisitors may take heart when a suspect is moved to tears, for this may prove that he is capable of remorse, and I believe that even the most vile servants of the Infernus never cry.

The First Information

Having moved Johan to tears I put the knives aside, and adopting a friendly manner, explained to him that my deepest care was for his well-being, and that the very thought of causing him pain moved me to grief. If only he would be honest with me, I said, I could save him from the heat of the iron and the edge of the knife.

Still, the blathering vagrant claimed that he had done no wrong, and I urged him to tell me what ever he could, as a sign of his purity. Why, I asked to begin with, had he avoided me when I had sought to speak with him in the market? Johan had been frightened, he said, because he knew that Inquisitors habitually torture all lowly wanderers that they come across. Wondering what evil man might have put this absurd notion into his head, I took up the knife once more, and pressed it against his stomach, moving him to tears again. The innocent have nothing to fear from an Inquisitor, I reminded him, and so his anxiety must indicate that he had some secret to hide. As the first beads of blood swelled around the knife, the beggar screeched that he would tell what ever he could.

Now the truth came out! Wandering around the town and its surroundings, he was aware of many crimes and tragedies, which would be too tedious to list, but which I remembered myself. Moreover, he had sometimes witnessed a fire-lit revel in near-by woods, though he had never dared venture close enough to identify the participants. I questioned Johan further about this "revel", and he readily told me that it took place not far from the house of the harridan Ruth, and that it seemed to be a monthly gathering.

Notes of Import

If possible, suspects should be made to see their Inquisitors as friends, confidantes or saviours. No matter how hard an interrogation, what pains or injuries are inflicted, the suspect will thus not resent nor hate the Inquisitor, and may be moved more easily to confess. Suspects often claim that they are frightened by an Inquisitor, or believe that the Inquisitor wishes them harm. Of course, an Inquisitor wishes no one harm, but only does what is necessary to protect the innocent from the guilty. Occasionally, a few false Inquisitors may earn our profession a poor reputation. But in general, if a suspect is frightened by an Inquisitor's presence, either he has some guilty secret which must be uncovered, or else has been misled. And if some ally of demonkind has been maligning Inquisitors, then this person should urgently be sought.

Concerning the dark gatherings of demons' cults, much can be said, though a few notes must suffice here. They typically take place away from mortal habitation, where none may see their vile rites, and far from holy places such as shrines. Woods and caves are common settings, and blazing fires are typical. The details of their practices are often hideous, and dependant upon the demon in whose honour the ritual is conducted, but animal and even human sacrifices often occur. The timing of such "revels" is not random. They take place on special days of evil, often during the Harvest Moon, and always during the dark. They then occur at regular intervals, sometimes once per year and never more often than once per month. Some foul gatherings are even timed so that the demons themselves may attend in disguised forms, to participate in the atrocities or to give instructions to their servants.

The Second Arrest

I left Johan firmly bound in the room, making sure that he was under guard and within view of the instruments of interrogation. I then went straight to Nathaniel, the headsman, and told him that I required a further militia to be raised, some of whom would have to guard the prisoners during the night, lest the lords of the Infernus send their minions to release the sinners under cover of darkness. Nathaniel became increasingly agitated at this, and I deduced from his hostility that he perhaps knew of some mischief which he wished to keep secret. Still, all good leaders are likely to be distressed when their people are found to be beset by demons, and I had no solid cause to doubt his innocence.

I explained that I wished to question only Ruth at present, and Nathaniel became calm and quickly called a militia. Twenty men were summoned, and I asked the headsman to select six who might act as leaders for the other. Dividing the remaining men into six parts, I quickly organised a search of the woods and had Ruth arrested, while I sought out the wandering preacher.

The militia were fully successful, seizing the old woman, searching her house, and finding several unusual knives amongst her kitchen implements. The remains of an apparently sacrificial fire were also discovered in the woods, some animal bones still visible upon it. Two of the leaders picked by Nathaniel suggested that the fire may have been left by goblins, and I made as if to respect their advice. For my part, I proved unable to find the preacher, whom I later learned had left the town immediately after giving his oration.

Notes of Import

The leaders of a community are unlikely prey for demons, since their privilege grants them most of the things that people desire, and they are therefore more difficult to tempt. Still, a few foolish souls are never satisfied, and may be corrupted whatever their rank, and those in authority make excellent allies for demons, as the demons can then manipulate their power and authority.

So, an Inquisitor should not reveal their discoveries to these authorities any earlier than is absolutely necessary

Strange knives, and other implements, are often proof of demonic worship. In their unholy ceremonies, these cultists have a variety of tools which they dedicate to the Infernus and use to dispatch or dismember sacrifices. The exact implements vary, depending upon the demon being worshipped and the cult leader's whim, but may include oversized mortars, brass braziers, dark-handled cleavers, knives engraved in unrecognizable script or with uneven blades, cruel saws, copper disks, arcane parchments, and stained wooden staves.



Testing Ruth

The woman called Ruth was perhaps ninety years old, with skin that sagged around her wrists and fell in furls around her joints. She struck a strange note in me. Although I could sense no taint of the Infernus about her she was unsettling. Her jaw was heavy, more like a man's, her back bent with age and her eyes defiant. I requisitioned another room to interrogate her within, not wishing Johan to know what she might say, in case she mentioned him. Here I prepared my implements as usual, but the old crone just lay tied to a plank, unmoved by the prospect of a painful interrogation.

Always having had a respect for women and the elderly, I decided not to take the knife to her, despite her self-condemning silence. Instead, I summoned four members of the militia, and had them tie her to a chair, which they then stood upon a table. She was then shut into a room with doors and shutters tightly closed, and constantly watched by two of the townsfolk. If a demon came to advise or feed from her, they would see it and we would have proof.

Notes of Import

Many demons may stay in the mortal world only as long as they may feed from their mortal servants. Every day, they must seek sustenance from some part of the mortal, or else eat a portion of the mortal's flesh, and so by isolating the suspect for a full day it can be discerned whether or not a demon is feeding from them. The demon may come to its host in the form of a mortal or of an animal to feed, and any person or thing surreptitiously approaching may be the creature in disguise. If anything approaches the suspect, it should be captured and, if it seems to be unnatural, the suspect is almost certainly guilty. Of course, if nothing approaches the suspect, that does not prove his innocent.

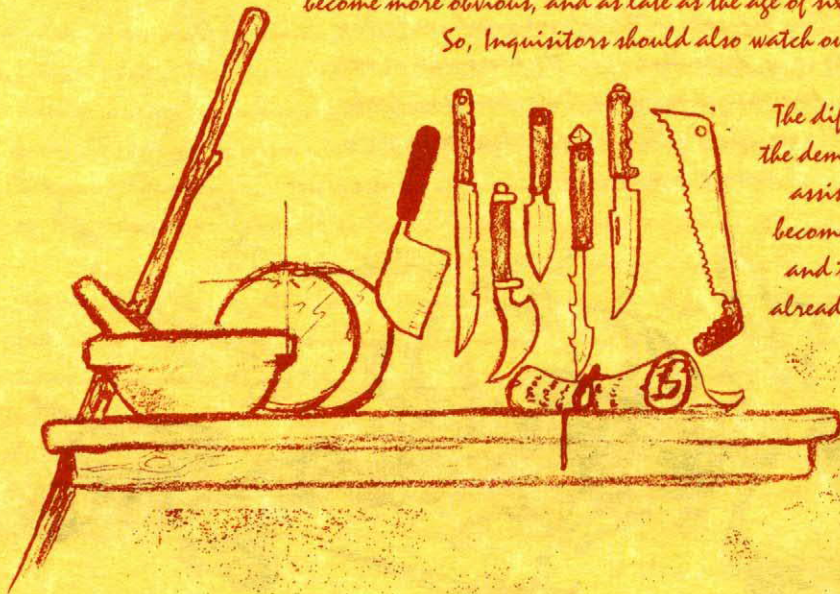
Another test, is to inspect the suspect physically, searching for unusual marks, ulcers or scars, and although it is not proper for an Inquisitor to inspect a person of the opposite sex, a trustworthy healer or priest might perform the function. This second test may be less reliable in some cases, as some demons seem able to feed without leaving any mark. However, in other instances it is a more reliable method, since there are other demons who hide within the bodies of mortal servants, emerging occasionally from such scars to tempt or torment other mortals.

Notes of Import

An Inquisitor should always be suspicious of women who long outlive their husbands, or who are widowed a number of times. This situation, where two generations of women had outlived their husbands, was particularly suspicious. Further, Inquisitors should note that the servants of the Infernus are wont to sacrifice children to their masters, and often offer up their own offspring, so that demons' servants have often had several children who inexplicably died young.

It also happens that when demons are born from mortal women (so-called "half" demons) their parents hide them away, or send them off to be fostered in secret, or give them to their demon masters to rear. As such a child grows, its Infernal nature may become more obvious, and as late as the age of sixteen it may develop abnormalities and mutations.

So, Inquisitors should also watch out for children who suddenly vanish or are sent away later in life.



The difficulty of securing the militia's support underlines the demon-hunter's constant problem of obtaining reliable assistance. To rely upon the aid of local soldiers is to become dependant upon the support of their commanders, and to recruit strangers, carries the risk that they may already be allied to the Infernus. However, to gather a permanent retinue of assistants is also risky, as demons and their servants may soon realise that these folk constantly accompany the demon-hunter, and may spare no effort to corrupt them.

Ruth and Her Daughter

The test proved inconclusive. A rat entered the building through a hole in the wall, but my rat militia charged at it immediately, so that they scared it away before they could tell whether it sought out the harridan. In any case, I had meanwhile made a further discovery. The aged Ruth had a daughter named Magan, who was herself advanced in years and already a widow. Moreover, she had given birth to two children while her husband lived, neither of which had lived more than one year. This person sought me out that evening, already in a vile mood, and confronted me in the market square with many people standing by.

It seems unnecessary to list the absurd and foul slanders which she levelled upon me for "torturing" her mother, but a few should serve as illustrations. Magan claimed that I was a sadist and evil man, and that I was "obviously" a servant of a demon of cruelty. She even said that she would rather prefer a demon to myself. She stood condemned by her own words. I had her arrested immediately, and resolved to interrogate her in the morning.

But before I retired for the night, I was asked to visit Nathaniel, who wished to know how my investigations proceeded. I told him little, except that I had made three arrests, and that others might follow. In reply he said only that the militia-men, not being full-time employees of the town, all had livings to make and could not serve me indefinitely. Clearly I could not rely upon his continued support, and might not have the service of the militia for long.

The Third Interrogation

Certain that some demonic plot was afoot, and now having captured a strong suspect, I resolved to proceed with greater haste, lest the headsman should withdraw his support and render me unable to continue my work.

I began questioning Magan early the following morning, and for several hours she did nothing but protest her innocence. I urged her to tell me of the night-time revels, and the secret of her long life, but she repeated that she knew not of what I spoke of. I promised that if she confessed I would spare both her and her mother, and said that Ruth had confessed already. Yet even these arguments failed to impress her. Her strength of will impressed me deeply, and served further to prove that she was influenced by some Infernal force. For six hours she continued to claim that she was guiltless, and I worried that her screams might lose me the sympathy of the villagers.

After the sixth hour, however, her resolve cracked, or perhaps the demon which had been strengthening her admitted defeat. She begged me to spare her and her mother if she confessed, and I said that, if at all possible, I would see them both pardoned. Satisfied with this, she asked what I wished to know. I said I wished to know whether she and her mother ever held fire-lit revels in the woods, and although she at first seemed confused by the question, she soon answered that they had done so. I then asked whether they had sacrificed animals there, and she responded yes. When I asked if they had worshipped demons and sacrificed children she at first refused to answer, covering up her greatest evils, but soon confirmed these suspicions of mine as well.

When I asked who her accomplices had been, Magan claimed that she could not remember their names, but a few twists of the thumb-screws refreshed her memory. As she gave each name, I wrote it down. When she had given me four names, I asked her to confirm that her mother had been involved, but she refused. I asked if there were any others and she said not.



Notes of Import

The servants of the evil ones are often remarkably resistant to all forms of persuasion, being strengthened by demonic aid or frightened of their evil masters. Even appeals to family sentiment may fall on deaf ears, and lengthy interrogations may be necessary.

It is also true that the demons' servants are most loathe to incriminate their mortal masters. The leaders of a cult often inspire a great deal of fear in their underlings, and so while junior members may readily incriminate one another, they are always slow to condemn their superiors. As the Infernus has such a grip upon its servants, and because the demons are so devious an Inquisitor must employ equally devious methods to extract confessions from their servants.

Offering a pardon in return for information is an excellent tactic, but of course the pardon cannot be given, and the suspect should always be punished according to his crimes. Although I see no reason why mortals should be honest with those who would destroy their souls, some demon-hunters still insist that we should not lie to suspects. Those who refuse to offer false hopes may still promise not to execute a suspect, since the guilty may then be handed over to another demon-hunter who may pass any judgement they wish.

Demons' servants are often found together in small groups. Large gatherings occur occasionally, and some mortals serve the Infernus individually, but most commonly a cult has five members. (The number five, as we all know, has a particular significance to the demons, as there are five demi-planes in the Infernus, five demon dukes, five ranks of lesser demons, and five Orders of sin with five Orbits within each.)

A Signed Confession

Magan promised that she would repeat this confession in court, on the condition that she and her mother would be pardoned. Again I promised to acquit them, and had her sign a written confession, of which I have made a copy:

"I Magan, daughter of Karl and Ruth of Ehrenburg, wish to turn from the Infernus, which I have served until now, and throw myself upon the mercy of the Inquisitor who has saved my soul. As proof of my repentance, I wish to offer these confessions, that they may be of help to the Inquisitor.

"I Magan, daughter of Karl and Ruth of Ehrenburg, confess that I participated in certain unspeakable rituals, held once each month, in honour of the demon lords of Infernus. Here, many foul oaths were made, sins practised, plans laid and blood spilt in honour of evil.

"I Magan, daughter of Karl and Ruth of Ehrenburg, confess, moreover, that at these gatherings I, with my accomplices, sacrificed several animals, as it pleased our Infernal masters. And moreover I confess that once each year we would make an innocent child or virtuous woman a sacrifice to these demons.

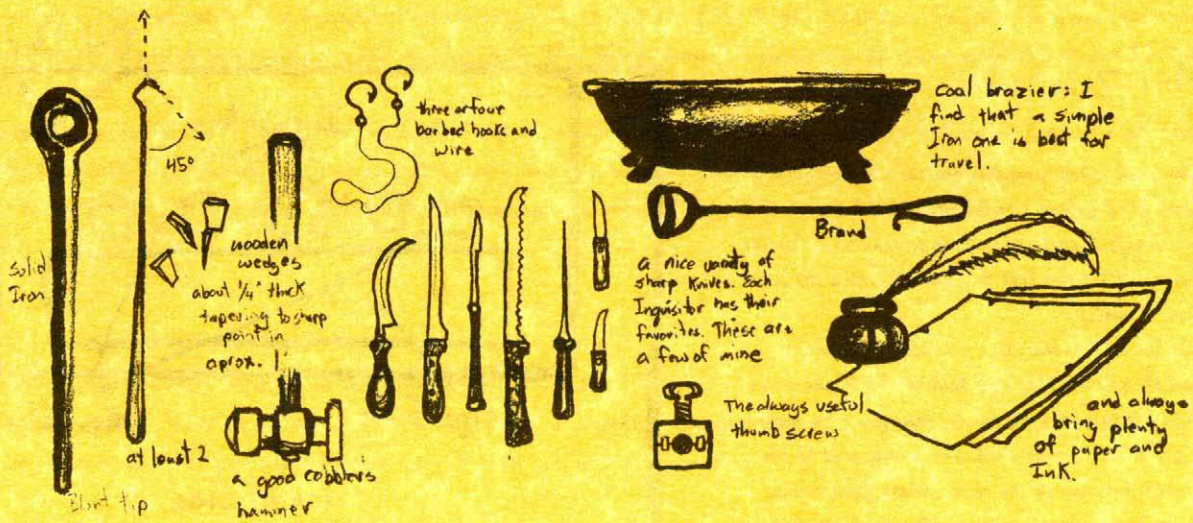
"I Magan, daughter of Karl and Ruth of Ehrenburg, also confess that I was not alone in these evils, but that I was led into evil by others, and myself misled other folk of this town. The names of these persons I have entrusted to this Inquisitor, and I pray to heaven that he may bring them to repent or punish them for their evils."

I felt, at this stage, that the names of those she had condemned should be omitted from the confession. If she cooperated during the trial, I would ask her then, and gain the element of surprise over her fellows. If they attended the trial, after all, I did not want them to have any warning that they were suspected. And if the trial went badly, these other servants of the Infernus might still be arrested, quietly, during the night.

Notes of Import

A signed confession is always a useful proof. Having set down his evidence on paper, a suspect is less likely to retract it in court. Further, if a confession is written, this may be used even if the suspect is too weak to give evidence personally or has died under questioning.

Ideally, a confession should be worded so that there can be no doubt of the suspect's guilt. Moreover, the suspect should therein formally acknowledge the Inquisitor's authority to pass sentence.



Preparing for a Trial

I immediately went to certain influential members of the community, and asked from each certain favours. From one I gained the use of a large room, from another the loan of several benches and a long table, from others lengths of rope to secure prisoners, and certain services from others (who agreed to act as scribes or guards). Having arranged the trial, I went to Nathaniel and told him that the townsfolk should be gathered that evening. He seemed shocked that I planned a trial, but he could not prevent me, as I had already enlisted the aid of many respected persons and arranged the hearing.

I then went to the beggar, whom I still held in another room. I showed him the signed confession, and said that I believed him to be innocent but required that he prove his good intentions. All that I required for now, I said, was that he appear before the hearing and repeat what he had already said to me, about the fire-lit rituals, their timings and locations. Johan agreed readily enough to give evidence, and I had him untied, so that he could walk around his cell in some comfort, and so that the marks left by the ropes might have faded by the evening. I also had a good meal taken to him, and ensured that he remained well treated. However, before leaving the vagrant, I reminded him that if he refused to repeat his evidence in court, that could only mean that he served the Infernus or was hiding further secrets, and in such a case he would be questioned harshly.

Magan, too, I cleaned up a little, mopping up the blood, treating the cuts, and having clean clothes brought to her, so that she did not appear too battered by the time that the trial began.

Notes of Import

An Inquisitor should never rely upon the cooperation of a single authority. By gaining the assistance of many local notables, it becomes more difficult for any one person to ruin an inquiry by withdrawing their support. Ideally priests, merchants, artisans, soldiers and nobles should all be called upon, but in this case there were no priests or proper soldiers available.

It is important that all witnesses and suspects at a trial appear well treated. Even if they have been badly bruised and blooded, they should be cleaned and dressed afresh, and if they cannot stand because of their interrogation the trial might be postponed until they are stronger. A wretched appearance may cause the locals to sympathise with the guilty. Further, signs of hard questioning may lead ignorant people to believe that the Inquisitor is using unnecessary brutality.

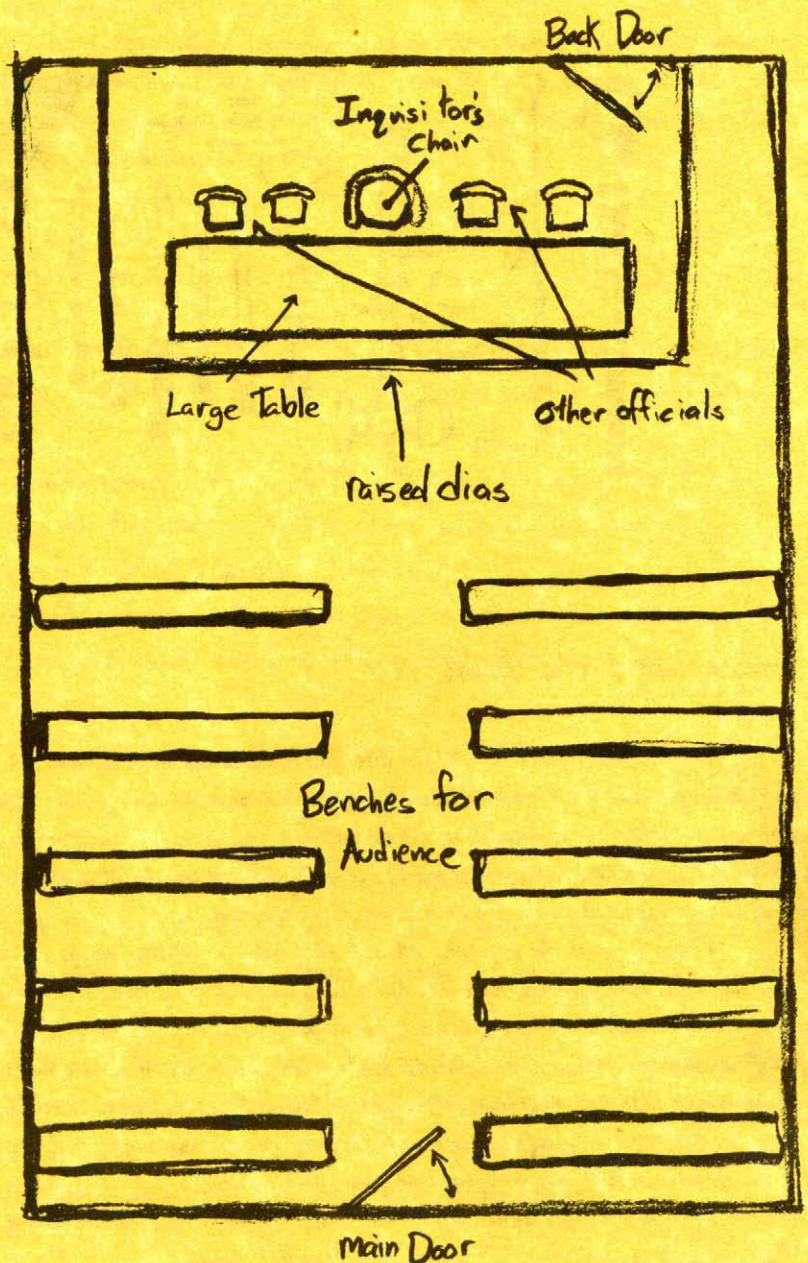
Finally, an Inquisitor should try to be certain that witnesses and suspects will not say anything unexpected or libelous. If the witnesses believe that they will profit from giving good evidence, and suffer if they do not cooperate, they are unlikely to disturb the proceedings. An Inquisitor should be sure in advance what each witness is likely to say.

The First Trial

At dusk many people gathered in and around the room where the trial was to be held. The more respectable townsfolk were permitted to take seats inside, while the poorer folk were left to gather around the doors and windows to watch.

At one end of the room a table spanned its width, raised on a low dais, and behind this I sat, with Nathaniel the headsman and a man reputed to be virtuous, who copied down what was said. From one side of the dais, a guarded door led to the room where Johan and Magan were held under guard, and in the main body of the room, some eighty men and women sat on benches.

I stood and quietened the peoples murmurings with a few words. I explained who I was, and that I had found evidence that servants of the Infernus had infiltrated their community. They responded with whispered chatter and worried glances, which pleased me. I then explained that I would call two witnesses to give evidence. At this point the proceedings were interrupted by a man in the audience, who stood and asked to speak. He asked whether the accused should not be permitted a lawyer to defend them. It transpired, of course, that he was the town's lawyer, and I answered that the court did not sit to accuse anyone, but only to discern the truth of the matter. Since I did not wish anyone harm, they had no need of a specialized defence. I also pointed out that such grave circumstances should not be used by lawyers to earn their fees, but said that if he were really a man of sharp mind and good character, I would consider having him to advise me in future trials. The lawyer was satisfied, if not pleased, by this and sat down. And so, I called the first witness, Johan.



Notes of Import

Dusk is an excellent time for a trial, if there is no evidence that demons roam the area. The closing darkness gives a sense of claustrophobia to a court room, and makes the locals more nervous and timid. Darkness often reminds folk of evil and corruption, and focuses their minds on the issues at hand. However, agents of the Infernus are known to be most active in the darkened hours, and for this reason, demon-hunters might prefer to try important cases during the daylight, when the court room may less easily be infiltrated or attacked by demons or their servants.

In conducting any trial, a demon-hunter should make his authority clear. The judges should sit upon a raised platform or, at least, in imposing chairs and behind a table. The demon-hunter should sit in the central place, so that any local judges or priests involved are shown to be subordinate, and should conduct the proceedings in person. Guards should be present, but not unnecessarily intimidating towards the locals. Certainly, they must keep the prisoners secure, and should be on hand to protect the judges if necessary. But there should never be so many soldiers that the people feel threatened or oppressed by them, nor so few that the demon-hunter seems vulnerable.

If possible, an Inquisitor should place trusted spies amongst those watching the trial. These secret observers may thereby keep a watch upon the actions and expressions of the audience, so that those sympathetic to or in league with the accused might be detected.

Also if possible, lawyers should not be permitted to represent the accused. An inquiry into Infernal plots should not be endangered by the pretty speeches and clever questions of a lawyer, and no trial so serious should become a way for such men to line their pockets. Lawyers may, however, be employed to advise Inquisitors, as they are often very artful men.

The Evidence

Johan was summoned, and I asked him to present his evidence to the court. After this, Magan was brought in. Rather than paraphrase these exchanges, I have included a slightly abbreviated copy of the words recorded by the scribe at the trial, so that readers might understand how a trial should be handled:

Inquisitor Bartholemew Mathers: "Your name is Johan, and you are a beggar known in these parts. Yes?"

Johanohan the Vagrant: "I am, sir."

Mathers (to the assembled people): "You all know this man?"

The folk assent.

Mathers: "You have told me that you recently witnessed a number of ceremonies or celebrations near to this town. Where did you see these?"

Johan: "To the north, sir, near to the widow Ruth's cottage, as I told you, didn't I, sir?"

Mathers: "You certainly did. But the people must know. The court must be told. Did you, Johan, recognise any of the people taking part?"

Johan: "I never got so near as to see, sir. I avoided the place and wanted no part in it, I swear."

Mathers: "The court does not doubt that. But think carefully, Johan. As you love heaven and hate all evil, did you recognise any voice or silhouette?"

Johan: "I saw no one, as I said sir, and the voices were in a jumble, all together."

Mathers: "Men and women? Or only male voices? Or only women?"

Johan: "Both, I should think, sir."

Mathers: "Men and women?"

Johan: "Yes sir."

Mathers: "And you recognised no one?"

Johan: "I never went near, and didn't stay around to listen. It scared me, sir."

The people were, by now, suitably nervous, and there was little more that Johan could say. And so, keeping him close by, I had Magan brought in, with her hands tied but with few visible wounds.

Mathers: "You are Magan, daughter of the widow Ruth?"

Magan: "Yes."

Mathers (to those assembled): "She is known to you all?"

The crowd assents.

Mathers: "You are yourself a widow, and you live with your mother some distance from the town. Yes?"

Magan: "Yes."

Mathers: "This court has heard, Magan, that near to your home firelit revels took place. You were aware of these goings-on?"

Magan: "Yes... I was."

Mathers: "Johan, you have heard a little of this woman's voice. Might hers have been one of the voices which you heard in the woods?"

Johan: "It might, sir, but I can't be sure."

Mathers: "Of course you can't. But I have here a confession, signed by you, Magan, wherein you admit that you took part in these gatherings. You made this confession, did you not? And this is your signature upon it?"

Magan: "I confessed. That is my signature."

Mathers: "And you did, indeed, take part in these revels?"

Magan: "I may have done so."

Mathers: "Magan! Either, you made a false confession in order to confound my investigation, or else you made a full repentance and true confession. Did you attend one or more of these gatherings?"

Magan: "Sir... I did."

Mathers: "I ask you again: Did you participate in these rituals?"

Magan: "Yes."

Although she had nearly withdrawn her confession, she had been persuaded to affirm her guilt. But I could not rely upon her to continue to do so, and so I had Nathaniel read out the confession to the court. The confession caused great murmurings and shuffling in the court and amongst the crowd outside, and I noted that Nathaniel seemed more worried than any. It may merely have been anxiety for his community that caused his voice to waver as he read, but I no longer felt that I could trust him. And so, I called for a voluntary militia to assist me, to act as guards, and accepted the first fifteen eager volunteers.

I announced the four names of Magan's co-conspirators that she had given me. I asked her to confirm that she had given their names, and she nodded. So, forthwith, I sent my new militia to arrest these suspects, and a great mob followed them, dragging the four from their homes with some violence, and leaving them battered and bruised in the cells which I had established.

When this was done, I called the rabble about me, and asked that they come to me with any information that they might have concerning the men who were arrested or any others whom they might suspect. The response was considerable, and I sat until dawn listening to them betray their family and neighbours to me, a scribe writing down all that they said. With the whole town supporting my investigation, and with so much information, I felt confident that I would soon have more evidence.

Notes of Import

The first trial in any series is, in many ways, the most important. The Inquisitor must assert his authority, prove to the people that a great danger threatens them, and gain their trust.

Dealing with the Confessions

A great flood of evidence was delivered that night, filling hundreds of sheets of paper. Wives told me that their husbands had been out late on certain nights without explanation, fathers complained that their children were becoming disobedient, and all told of neighbours' erratic behaviours.

No doubt the evidence pointed to a great body of sin, including greed, adultery, betrayal, and many others - but little was likely to be helpful in my investigation. So, the most urgent task was to establish which evidence was relevant and which was not. Simple deduction soon proved much of this evidence worthless. I had some idea when the revels had been held, after speaking with Johan, and by comparing these dates with the periods with which each confession dealt, much could be cleared disregarded. Other evidence proved to be self-contradictory, and still more was simply ridiculous.

By the following lunch time I had a list of around thirty suspects, people who had allegedly been absent from their homes at around the time of the ceremonies, and those who behaved very strangely immediately afterwards. I was pleased to note that amongst these thirty was Tobin the merchant, whose wife had confessed that he was absent at the times I believed the rituals to have been held. Unfortunately, two of the four people incriminated by Magan were not mentioned in the peoples' confessions, and another was only incriminated by self-contradictory evidence. For the present, however, I was greatly in need of sleep, and resolved to do nothing until I was rested.

Notes of Import

No demon-hunter should underestimate the value of slow, methodical detective work. Although dull and time-consuming, these plodding methods allow a great deal of information to be gathered and analysed, clearing certain suspects, incriminating others, and building up a general impression of life in the community being investigated.

In this case, there seemed to be a great deal of sin committed in the area. This may have meant that a demonic Seducer was at work, encouraging these sins, or else that the lack of a local priest meant that the locals, without moral guidance, regressed into a barbarian state of immorality. Often, the two causes are found together, as Seducers choose to plague communities where there are no priests to guide the people away from sinfulness.

The Next Interrogation

In order to establish who I should next interrogate, I had each of the four new prisoners placed about their cell, one in each corner. I then took a number of doves, and released them in the room where the prisoners were bound. For some minutes I watched the birds as they fluttered about the room, and deduced that they all avoided a single prisoner more than the others.

This prisoner was a man named Ernst. Not only had Magan mentioned him, but he had been condemned by the words of his neighbours (who had seen him leaving the town on some nights when the rituals may have been

performed), and by other evidence. A pack of rats had taken to living in his stable, and when arrested, a bronze mirror had been found in his house.

Leaving some of the militia to prepare the instruments of interrogation, I went to speak with Tobin, unsure as to whether or not he should be arrested. I found him packing merchandise in his store-room, and asked him if he had any enemies or worries. He seemed unsure as to how he should answer, and I told him that evidence had been given against him the night before. He reacted to this with anger, not fear, and fumed that somebody in the town wished to steal his wife. I asked whether, given her coldness to him, she had remained faithful, and blushing deeply he refused to answer.

Satisfied that Tobin's explanation was sincere, but still worried that his son's allegations had not been fully dealt with, I returned to Ernst. This suspect lay in my interrogation room, bound securely and with tears streaming down his cheeks. His lips quivered, and as I entered, he whimpered, more like a dog than a man. I explained, as usual, that it pained me to hurt him, that I wished only to help him, and as I took up the heated iron he dissolved into tears. I expected information to flow from him swiftly, but despite his agony and terror he did nothing but scream, cry, and beg for mercy. "Please don't make me say anything" he howled over and over, clearly hiding some secret but stubbornly refusing to confess.

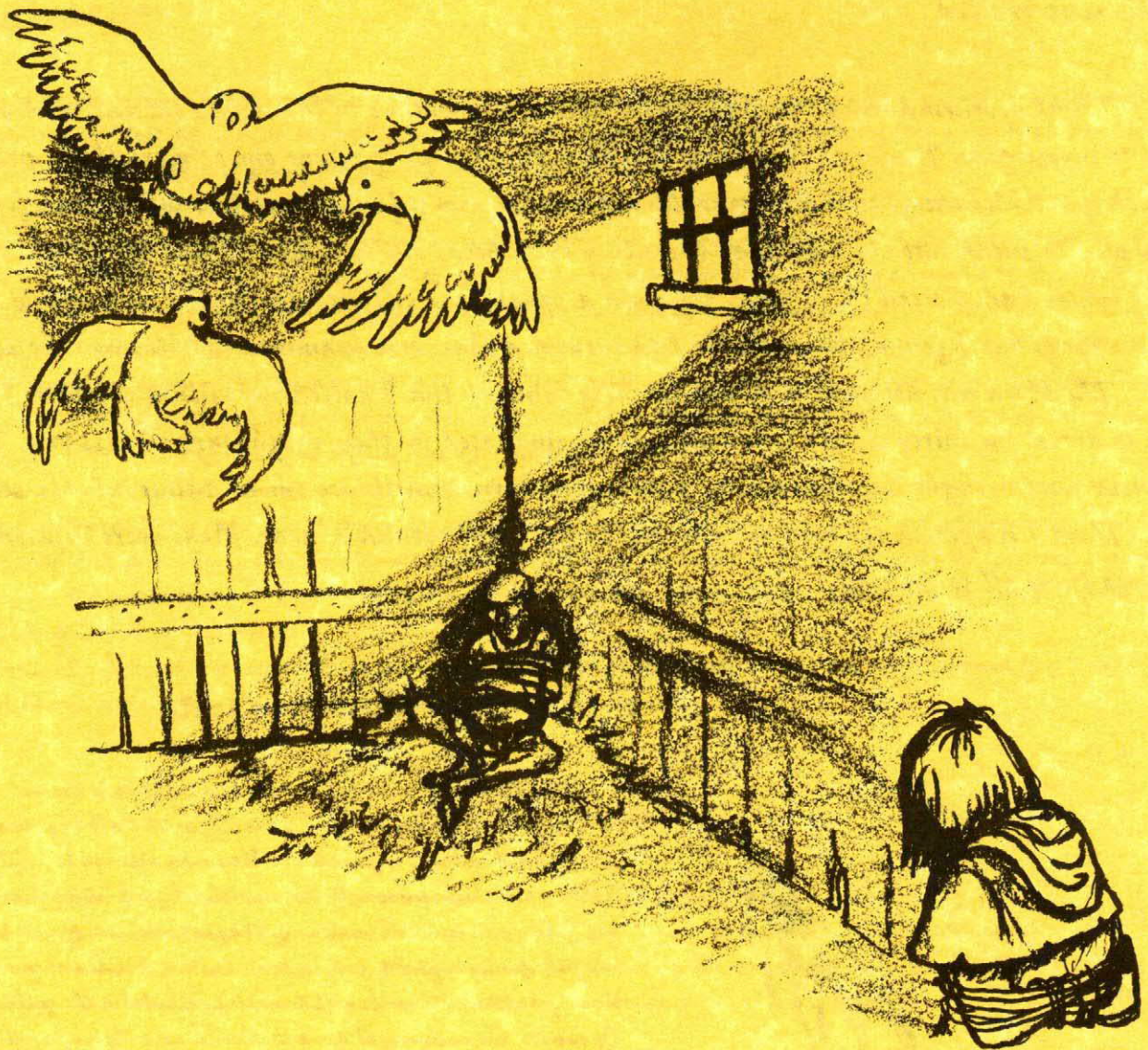
After two hours Ernst was becoming dangerously weakened, and I ceased the interrogation. His guilt was obvious, but I could not risk a longer questioning. Assigning two of the militia to dress the suspect's wounds, I had the sinner Allan brought from the cell. He had been named by Magan, denounced by his neighbours, and was reputed to have indulged in numerous sins. Unlike Ernst, however, he gave me copious information on his life. Every cut or burn brought a confession of a sin of the flesh, and his improprieties were innumerable. However, he refused to admit to worshipping demons, and it was very hard to persuade him to confess further. However, after half an hour he could not stand the pain any longer, and crying desperately he poured out a long and incoherent confession. I wrote down what he said, and had him sign it, but he told me the wrong location and impossible dates when discussing the ceremonies. Clearly he was fabricating a confession, and I retained the paper so that he could later be tried for obstructing and misleading my investigations.

By this time Ernst had been returned to the cell, and the other two suspects had understood how hard my questioning could be. I had them brought to me, also, although the night was falling and I was exhausted. I threatened these two with a similar fate to Ernst's if they did not confess, but they reacted with indignation and anxiety, protesting their innocence. It occurred to me that Magan may have given me false names to confound me.

Not wishing to cause them unnecessary pain, I suggested that they might think about their sins during the night, and speak more honestly with me in the morning. For the duration of the night, I merely had each one tied to a plank and propped up in a corner, and I retired for the night, eager to have a hot meal and long sleep.

Notes of Import

Animals are known to be very sensitive to the taint of a demon, and although I could sense nothing about any of the suspects in this case, I considered that an animal might be able to do so. Beasts are known to avoid those tainted by demons, or sometimes to flee from or attack them. Only unclean animals, such as rats and carrion birds, are attracted to those tainted by demons, and the servant of a demon is often betrayed by the presence of such creatures. Mirrors, too, are often possessed by the servants of demons, as the creatures of the Infernus may



appear to their followers in such surfaces, or may send images of the past or future through them. Many servants of the Infernus are more frightened of their fellows than of any Inquisitor. Not only do they fear the revenge of their masters and allies, but also hope that they may be rescued. They must be made to understand that there will be no rescue, and that they will suffer more for refusing to help the Inquisitor than if they betray their evil associates. Equally, an Inquisitor may try to gain a cultist's trust by offering protection from demonic vengeance, such as sanctuary in a church, or transportation to a distant land to start a new life.

Many servants of the Infernus, when confessing, falsely accuse innocent people along with the guilty. Sometimes this is because they wish to condemn the innocent to the same fate as themselves, and thereby trick the inquisitor in committing the sins of cruelty or murder. Sometimes it is because they hope that the Inquisitor will discover the guiltlessness of these people, and thereby assume that all named in the confession, including the guilty, are in fact innocent. In other cases, a partially accurate confession results from an Inquisitor's failure to completely break the resistance of a suspect.

A Rescue Foiled

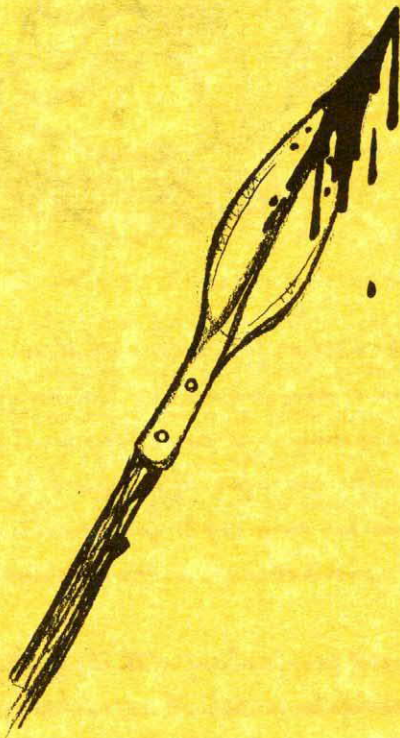
I was awoken during the night by the sound of shouting in the streets outside, and quickly went to investigate. It seemed that there had been an attempt to rescue one or more of the prisoners, or perhaps to kill them, so that they could not divulge any information. A single hooded figure had attempted to sneak into the building where they were held, but had been chased off by my militia, one of whom had pierced the figure's hip with a spear. The villain had lost his pursuers in the town and escaped, but I found the man who had wounded him, and examined the blood on the spear.

The blood did not seem to be demonically tainted, and I called my militia together. I ordered them to arrest the thirty people who had been incriminated by their neighbours' confessions. These suspects were brought into one room of a two-room barn, and thence one at a time into the second room. There I inspected the hips of each, looking for any wound or scar. None were injured, and I allowed them all to go home.

Notes of Import

Attempts are often made by cults and demons to rescue their captured companions and servants, or at least to prevent them from divulging information. They may attempt to infiltrate or attack the prison. Poison may be slipped into prisoners' food. Innocent cell-mates may be possessed and forced to slay the guilty captives, and in some instances a demon may simply appear within the cell to rescue or butcher the guilty. Of course, the cunning of demons should never be underestimated. They are quite capable of attempting to rescue innocent people, in order to mislead the Inquisitor and condemn the guiltless with false implications. Indeed, it is possible that evidence of a cult may be completely falsified by demons wishing to preoccupy an Inquisitor or provoke the groundless execution of innocents. Unjustified execution, of course, constitutes the sin of murder.

Demons often fortify their servants with magics. This usually involves giving these evil mortals magical artefacts, but they may sometimes cast magics upon their servants at whim. Such magics are likely to aid the servants in committing or encouraging sin, or may simply protect them, such as healing magics to seal wounds and hide scars. Physical demonic objects may also be a boon to the Inquisitor, as their bizarre appearance and clear taint makes them easy to discover, and merely their possession may justifiably condemn the owners to death.



Ernst's Confession

In the morning, I had Ernst brought in again. I told him that he could now abandon hope of aid from his comrades, as we had chased them off last night, but I think that he already knew. I had barely begun my interrogation when he moaned that he would confess, and he then began to quietly list his evils, sobbing all the while.

He told me of the firelit revels, of their timing and dates, of the animals that were sacrificed there. I asked who attended the ceremonies, and he replied that he would not tell me unless I promised to acquit him. No doubt I could have forced him to give me the answers, but I decided to build his trust in me and so I agreed. He said that the meeting was addressed by the wandering preacher, Martyn (and I cursed my stupidity for not having realised that it was he who had been tainted in the market place), who presented them all with several silver coins, bade them drink fine wines and eat spiced foods which he provided, and praised the luxuries which could be bought with greater quantities of cash. Clearly this was engineered by a demon of greed, or (less likely) a cunning demon of gluttony. Also present at the rites were eight others, led by Nathaniel (who led them in prayers asking for wealth and happiness), and including Grenda, the wife of Tobin the merchant.

I then asked if any other women were present, that he had not mentioned, and he said not. However, I reminded him that he had to be completely honest if he wanted to be acquitted, and asked if Magan, Ruth or Hanna had been present. He affirmed that Magan had been there, and when I asked if she was, in fact, the leader of the Coven, he uncertainly said that she was. I inferred from this that she had remained a quiet leader, perhaps rarely even attending, letting Nathaniel appear as the leader and thus protect herself if the cult were ever discovered.

Finally, I asked if human sacrifice was ever made, and although he at first denied it, he soon confirmed that it had. Having received this verbal confession, I wrote it all down and had him sign it.

Notes of Import

Even the weakest or most desperate suspect may still hide elements of the truth when they confess. Even though they appear broken or repentant, they may still hide the vilest of their evils in order to protect themselves, their fellows or their masters. The denial of human sacrifice is typical, and they are often loathe to give the identities of their leaders.

Further Questions

After speaking to Ernst, I was sure that the three suspects arrested with him were probably innocent. So, the two that were tied to boards I had cut down, and simply asked them if there was anything they wished to tell me. They vented their anger on me verbally, calling me many names, and showed no remorse. I believed that they were innocent, but had the militia beat them for their insolence and decided not to release them yet.

I then had Magan brought to me, and told her that Ernst had named her the leader of the cult. She made no reply. I then had some of the militia come in with their cudgels, and asked her again if she denied being leader of the cult. She simply stood before me motionless, staring at a set of blood-stains on the floor. I asked the militia if they saw that she had refused to deny it, and they said that they had. Then I asked them if they would bear witness to this in court and again they agreed.

Finally, I had Ruth brought before me, tightly bound as usual. I told her that Magan had confessed to being a member of a demon's cult, and that evidence suggested her to have been the leader. I noted that Magan may simply have been covering up for her mother, motivated perhaps by love or fear. Ruth replied that I was an agent of the Infernus come to torture and condemn innocent women. Appalled by this blasphemy, I took a scalpel and cut out her tongue. She fell unconscious immediately, and later died from her bleeding. That was the end of her lies.

Notes of Import

Suspects cannot be allowed to insult an Inquisitor and ignore his authority as they please. Insubordination must be punished.

Given Ernst's slowness in naming Magan, and the hopeless ease with which he gave his confession, it was important that she be given the chance to deny the charge and defend herself. No suspect should ever be condemned on the uncorroborated evidence of a single confession. The suspect should always be respected, and their guilt should never be presumed.

It is a typical ruse of demons and their servants to discredit an Inquisitor, and thus obstruct an investigation. This kind of subterfuge cannot be tolerated.

My First Hypothesis

It seemed that a number of people from the town, between five and ten of them, had been worshipping a demon in the woods. Their leader was Nathaniel, but he was advised by or subservient to Magan. She, in her turn, had probably learned how to contact or worship the creatures from her mother.

Two factors, however, were anomalous. Firstly, it was Tobin's wife who was implicated in the corruption, but it had been the merchant himself against whom the initial allegations had been made. Either Tobin was involved alongside his wife, or Tobin was innocent, and his son Rulph, who had made the allegation, was attempting to discredit him.

Secondly, Allan did not seem to be involved in the cult, yet his sins were so many that he must have been repeatedly tempted by a Seducer. This, too, would have to be investigated.

Further Arrests

I immediately ordered the arrest of Tobin's wife, Grenda, with Tobin himself and their adopted son Rulph. While Grenda was being prepared for interrogation, I spoke with Tobin, using no force or threats to coerce him. I simply said that I had grounds to suspect his wife of dealing with demons, and said that it would go easier on her if he told me all that he knew of her activities. Full information from him might make it unnecessary to torture her, and I pointed out that it was his duty as a husband to save her what pain he could. I also noted that as her husband, he might himself come under suspicion if she was convicted, unless he had volunteered evidence himself.

Tobin was clearly distressed by this, and said that he was unaware of any Infernal dealings. He did, however, say that his wife had been absent from home some evenings, and that he supposed her to have been seeing another man. I asked when she had been absent, and he gave me several dates, some of which corresponded with the dates when Ernst said that the ceremonies were held. Again, I wrote out his words, in case he refused to testify against his wife in court. He signed the paper with healthy regret, and I had him released.

Notes of Import

A cunning Inquisitor can easily manipulate ties of family loyalty. While friends and relations often cover up one another's crimes, the natural desire to save loved ones from suffering may also be used to extract evidence. People are also prone to give evidence if they believe that their silence endangers them.

Releasing Allan

Before interrogating Grenda, I permitted Allan and the two arrested with him to be released. However, I had the sinner followed and careful note taken of his movements. First he went to the inn, where he ate and drank copiously, and he then went to visit the woman called Hanna. When I heard this, later in the afternoon, I immediately ordered that the innkeeper and Hanna be arrested, and that Allan be brought in again.

Further Interrogations

The bulk of the day was occupied with questioning Grenda, but she stubbornly refused to divulge any information. After several hours she was too weak to be interrogated further, and I instead began to question Rulph. As the instruments were prepared, I spoke softly with the lad, saying that I did not believe him to be involved with the cult, but that he certainly knew more than he had told me. If he spoke now, I said, I would not pursue the matter further.

Rulph immediately explained that he had heard his father muttering to himself, but had thought little of it. It was his mother, he said, who suggested that an Inquisitor be brought in to investigate these murmurings. At first, he claimed, he had not wanted to incriminate his adopted father, but Grenda persuaded him, saying that if Tobin died or was exiled, all of his wealth would pass to Rulph. I wrote this out as the lad spoke it, and had him sign the confession.

It seemed clear that a demon of greed had inspired Grenda to covet her husband's goods, to conspire to murder him, and to lure Rulph into the same sins. However, I decided to interrogate the lad anyway, in case he had neglected to tell me anything. For an hour he protested that he had been open with me, and then the pain overwhelmed him and he lost consciousness.

By this time, Issak the innkeeper, Allan and Hanna had all been arrested, and I spent an hour endeavouring to extract information from each of them. Issak denied encouraging others to be gluttonous or debauched, and argued that he merely sold food and alcohol to those who desired relaxation or required sustenance.

Allan admitted to the same long string of sins which he had already confessed to, involving many acts of wanton drunkenness and gluttony, and numerous illicit relationships with local women. With a little persuasion he admitted that he was responsible for these indiscretions, and that he had deliberately led others into sin. He also agreed that Issak often encouraged wanton gluttony and drunkenness, and all these things I wrote down and had him sign. However, the sinner vehemently denied dealing with the creatures of the Infernus, and as there was no taint of the Infernus about him I felt compelled to believe him.

Hanna also admitted to leading several men into sin, and she too signed a statement that she was responsible for these sins. When asked if she were a member of any cult, she at first denied it, and later dissolved into tears, saying that she would say anything I wished if it would end the pain. I encouraged her to confess truthfully, but her desperation convinced me that in fact she was innocent. And so I had her wounds dressed, and had her taken back to the cell.

During the night, I had guards set around the buildings where the prisoners were kept, and also ensured that I was guarded by at least three men at all times.

Notes of Import

In their war to capture our souls, the main weapon of the Infernus is sin, and no Inquisitor should overlook any instance of sin. Equally, there may be more than one cult in a single town or region, and many Seducers may assail the same area at any given time. Therefore, an Inquisitor who discovers a single conspiracy should not assume that there are no other Infernal plots afoot.



Grenda

Notes of Import

It is not always necessary for demons to tempt mortals directly. In this case, Allan, Hanna and Irak already encouraged others to commit sins of the flesh. And any sin, however it is inspired, allows the Infernus to take a portion of the sinner's soul.

Sometimes demons quietly safeguard mortals who spread sin, so that such folk may appear to have better fortune than most. At other times, the Infernus gives aid directly to these unwitting servants, presenting them with unclean artefacts or protecting them from demon-hunters. More often, the demons merely ignore such mortal "reducers", pleased to gain souls without any effort.

When their servants are threatened, the powers of the Infernus often conspire to protect them. They may attempt to discredit an Inquisitor, or to kill him, or to release or slay all of the suspects. If their mortal servants are of great value to them, they may make repeated concerted attempts to ruin the investigation, perhaps sending disguised Seducers to the area, or attacking with a group of demon Warriors.

Inquisitors should remember that a demon may possess only one person at a time, and so it is no use having a single guard in any place at any time. Sentries should ideally be set in groups of three or more.



Grenda's Confession

The night passed without incident, and I had Grenda prepared for questioning once more. She was still weak, but I was determined to extract information from her as soon as possible, before her fellows had the chance to escape or frustrate the inquiry.

I told her that Rulph had confessed to their pact, that Ernst had named her as a member of the cult, and that Tobin had confirmed that she was absent on the nights of the revels. The strength of my evidence weakened her resolve, but still she refused to speak for over an hour. Worried that this stubborn woman would not sign a confession, I had two of the militia present when she began to give evidence, and within two more hours she had listed the same names that Ernst had given me, including Nathaniel's. I did not ask about Magan, but was satisfied that Grenda and Ernst had corroborated one another's evidence.

Immediately, I had Nathaniel and the others arrested, and discovered that the headsman carried a fresh wound upon his hip. I announced that a trial would be held one hour before dusk, and had a large pyre built overlooking the town, with several large stakes to which the guilty could be tied to be burned.

The Suspects

Briefly surveying the newly arrested prisoners, I picked out the three who were the most pathetic and scared, and spent one hour interrogating each. From these I required only the times and dates of the fire-lit revels, and the names of those who had been present. Two of these gave me the information that I wanted, and willingly signed their confessions. Pleasingly, these two confessions agreed exactly with Ernst's, notably in the list of the cult's members.

As is usual, one or two of the suspects tried to deny the charges, and one claimed that the confession was fabricated. The latter case was easy to deal with, as a number of townsfolk attending the trial identified the signature. The coherence of the confessions, and evidence supplied by their neighbours, soon persuaded most of those attending the trial that these were far from innocent. However, one or two voices in the audience shouted that the confessions were gained through torture, and the men may have said what ever they thought I wanted to hear. I confirmed that the questioning had been hard, pointing out that the servants of the Infernus would hardly betray themselves willingly, but pointed to the close agreement between each.

The dissenters continued to question the confessions, and so I had them arrested. (Later, I interrogated these, in case they had been agents of the Infernus themselves, but their disruptions seemed to be born of ignorance rather than malice, and so I merely had them whipped and released.) Thereafter, there were no more challenges from the townsfolk.

I asked if anyone of the townsfolk had solid evidence which might prove the innocence of the accused. Nobody came forward. Thus, I sentenced five of the accused to be burned to death immediately including Nathaniel. Magan and Ernst, whom I had promised acquittal, I ordered to be hung in three days hence, noting that I would consider reducing their sentences in the light of their cooperation.

Of the cult members, only Grenda now remained to be sentenced, as she had additionally conspired to have her husband condemned as a demon's servant. I read out Rulph's confession, calling two of the militia as witnesses to Grenda's spoken confession, and asked if there were any evidence to prove their innocence. Again, no evidence came forth from the audience, and I ordered Rulph to have his lying mouth sewn shut with wire, so that he would starve to death; and I ordered that Grenda be burned slowly or roasted to death, as soon as a suitable fire could be built.

Only Issak, Allan and Hanna now remained, to be tried for lesser offences, of unwittingly spreading sin, and in Allan's case there was the question of his false confession which he had signed. The cases against them were clear enough, and I encouraged the townsfolk to give whatever evidence they could concerning the accused. Most of the information brought forward further condemned them. Still, Issak's guilt remained uncertain, and so I only had him beaten. Allan was a notorious sinner, and I noted that the townsfolk should have dealt with him before, simply ordering that his property be taken from him and given to the poor. For his false evidence I had him whipped. Hanna I ordered to be disfigured, her nose cut off and her face scarred, so that she would not use her fair features to tempt more men into sin.

Notes of Import

An inquisitor must take care what evidence may be given during a trial. Factual information should always be accepted, concerning the activities and moral character of the accused. However, slanders, lies and attempts to discredit the investigation should never be accepted. Very often the agents of the Infernus attempt to disrupt and discredit trials, so that the guilty are set free, and no Inquisitor should permit this. Indeed, anyone attempting to undermine the trial should be arrested immediately.

When sentencing a suspect, any demon hunter should bear in mind the type and severity of the crime, the need to rid the world of those committed to evil, and the importance of punishing the guilty to discourage others from repeating their crimes. Thus, in this case, Allan's sins of the flesh required that he loose the means to indulge his appetite, to buy ale and wine, to support mistresses, and so forth. And as Rulph had attempted to deprive another of his life through the lies of his mouth, it seemed fitting that, by losing the use of his mouth, he should die.

Sentencing

The Inquisitors, demon-hunters and local authorities who sit as judges over the accused must decide how to punish the demons' servants, and I offer this section as guidance to these people. A careful balance must always be maintained between the need to preserve justice, and thereby not punish too harshly, and the need to thwart the plans of the Infernus at all costs.

Sometimes the demons' dupes and servants have committed criminal acts, like theft, murder, etc., and can be sentenced as any other criminal, according to their crimes. However, there are often special circumstances, which might make alternative punishments suitable (it may be unreasonable, for example, to execute someone for crimes committed while they were possessed). Equally, the hideous crimes of worshipping demons, offering animals in sacrifice, and tempting another to sin require special sentences.

Firstly, suspects may be acquitted, if there is no solid evidence against them, or if their crimes were particularly minor and the Inquisitor is inclined to be lenient. Lenience, however, may be tantamount to collusion with the Infernus, and Inquisitors should rarely permit demons' servants to escape unscathed.

Atonement is the lightest punishment, meted out to those who have committed minor crimes unwillingly or while possessed, although I myself consider it a poor substitute for proper punishments. This rare decision requires unusually soft-hearted judges, and an appropriate priest to oversee the Atonement.

Similarly, Penance, a public act of reparation, is rarely acceptable on its own, although it is not unreasonable that the guilty should publicly express their remorse and try to make amends for their actions. Retiring to live for ever in a religious community, and giving all of their wealth to the poor are examples of this.

Banishment and branding are favoured by many judges for lesser offences, such as unwittingly worshipping demons, assisting evil Thaumaturgists, sheltering half-demons, and withholding evidence, as examples. Such people may be banished from the village, region, or country, usually forfeiting their property. Still, Inquisitors must be sure that an exile is not likely to relapse, and serve the Infernus again in a different country.

Exiles may also be branded (or mutilated), so that those they meet in later life will know not to trust them. Sometimes, in larger communities, the guilty may be branded but allowed to remain. Brands vary from place to place, the hand, face or forehead commonly being marked with a hot iron, with a letter, a cross, a circle, or the sign of the Inquisitor issuing the sentence.

Mutilation is often used to punish common criminals, thieves and liars for example, and Inquisitors, too, impose such penalties for minor offences. A man who acted as a spy for a demonic cult, but was not a member of it, might have his eyes pulled out. One who stole on their behalf might lose a hand. Anyone who gives false evidence or slanders the Inquisitor should have her tongue cut out.

Fines may be imposed for lesser crimes, but the money should typically be given to the needy, or to a religious institution. Some Inquisitors are prone to keep the proceeds of such fines, but this can lead to rumours of corruption, and should be avoided.

Some Inquisitors execute anyone who is in any way associated with a demon or cult, but this may sometimes be an over-reaction. Some also kill suspects who are not actually proven to be guilty, but this is extremely unjust. Execution is and should be the most common sentence for demons' servants, and should always be inflicted upon those who sold their souls, knowingly worshipped or summoned a demon, or conspired to harm others with Infernal aid. Those committing lesser crimes, even unknowingly, may share their fate.

Methods of execution are often devised to fit the culprit's crime, and to serve as an example to their neighbours. Cooperative suspects, and those who joined a cult against their will should merely be hung. Deliberate and unrepentant suspects should be burned or torn apart by horses, while the vilest should be slowly and painfully executed, roasted, boiled, or hung drawn and quartered, as examples.

Of course, some Inquisitors believe that all demons' servants should be burned, to remind people of the flames of the Infernus, and others hold that cruel punishments serve no purpose (so that a hanging or beheading should suffice for any crime). Of course, I disagree.

Epilogue

All of the punishments were meted out in public, so that they might be examples to the others.

Nathaniel and the other four were dragged to the pyres which had been built for them, some struggling, others sobbing, others calling to their loved ones. But the dusk was closing in, and the militia and townsfolk were eager to have the condemned burned before it was completely dark, so that their pleas fell on deaf ears. The fires were burning well beneath the guilty by the time that it was dark.

Magan and Ernst were hung two days later. When the time came, I had the two suitably gagged so that they could not protest that they had been promised freedom; and hoods were put over their heads, so that they could not be sure that they were to be hung and so that the fear on their faces would not inspire pity in the spectators.

I served Rulph's mouth shut myself, in the market square. Then he was locked in a room, alone. Without water, he died in a few days.

Grenda was executed on a hill overlooking the town, gagged and blindfolded. Few people came to watch this most grisly spectacle, and I sensed that the town was becoming eager that I should leave, and so I departed soon thereafter without fuss.

Johan, who had been the first arrested, was released just before I left, and my only regret is that I had not questioned him more closely. I heard that he was later executed by another Inquisitor, and so he may have been more deeply involved than I suspected.

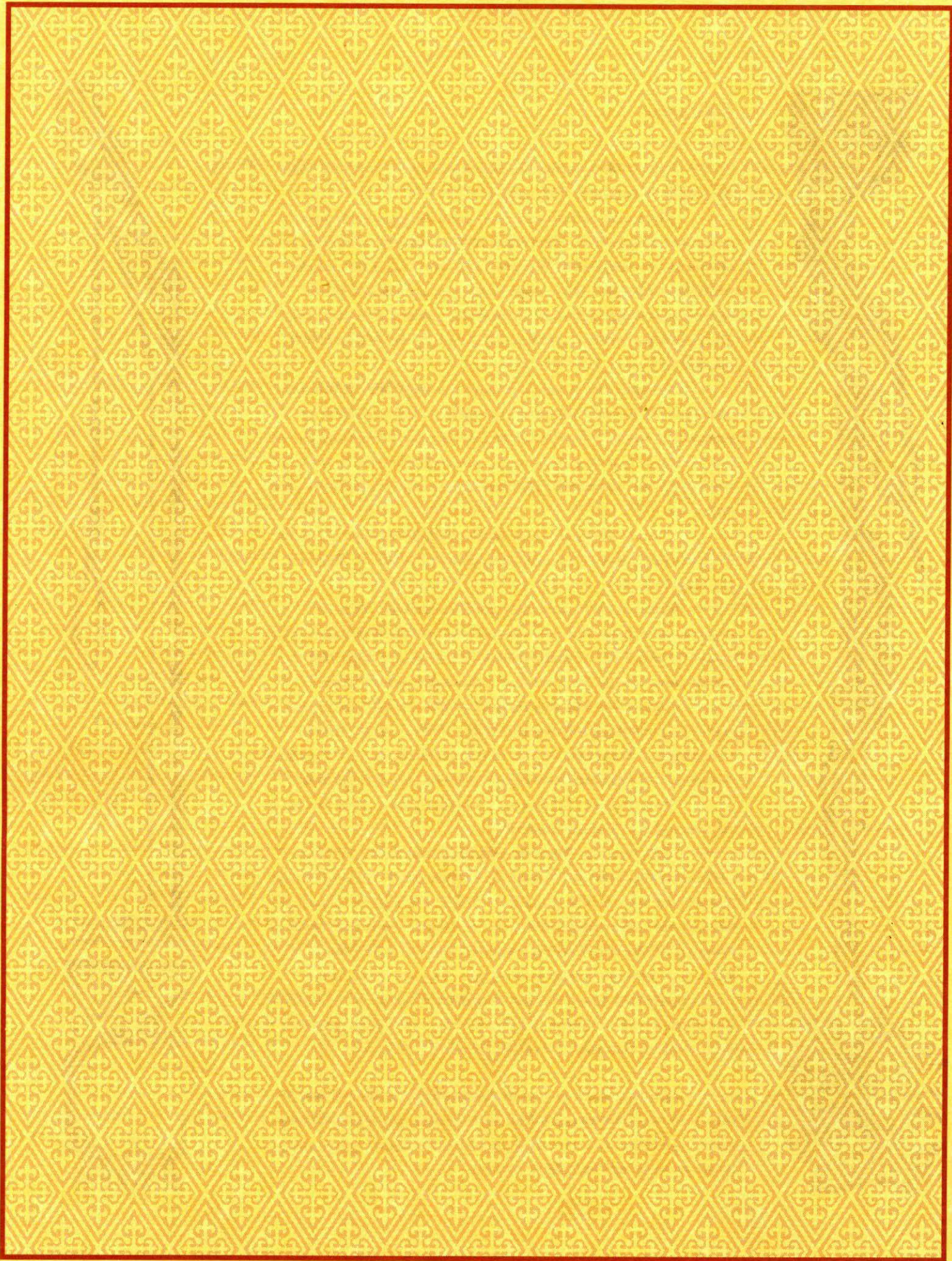
I understand that Hanna's neighbours later drove her out of the town. Allan I never heard of again.

The preacher, Martyn, was never seen again, although I asked after him wherever I went. And from this I can only deduce that he must have been a Seducer in disguise. Often an Inquisitor has only one chance to slay a demon - although there is little point in doing so, as they are immortal creatures, and can return time and again to plague our world, however often they are struck down.

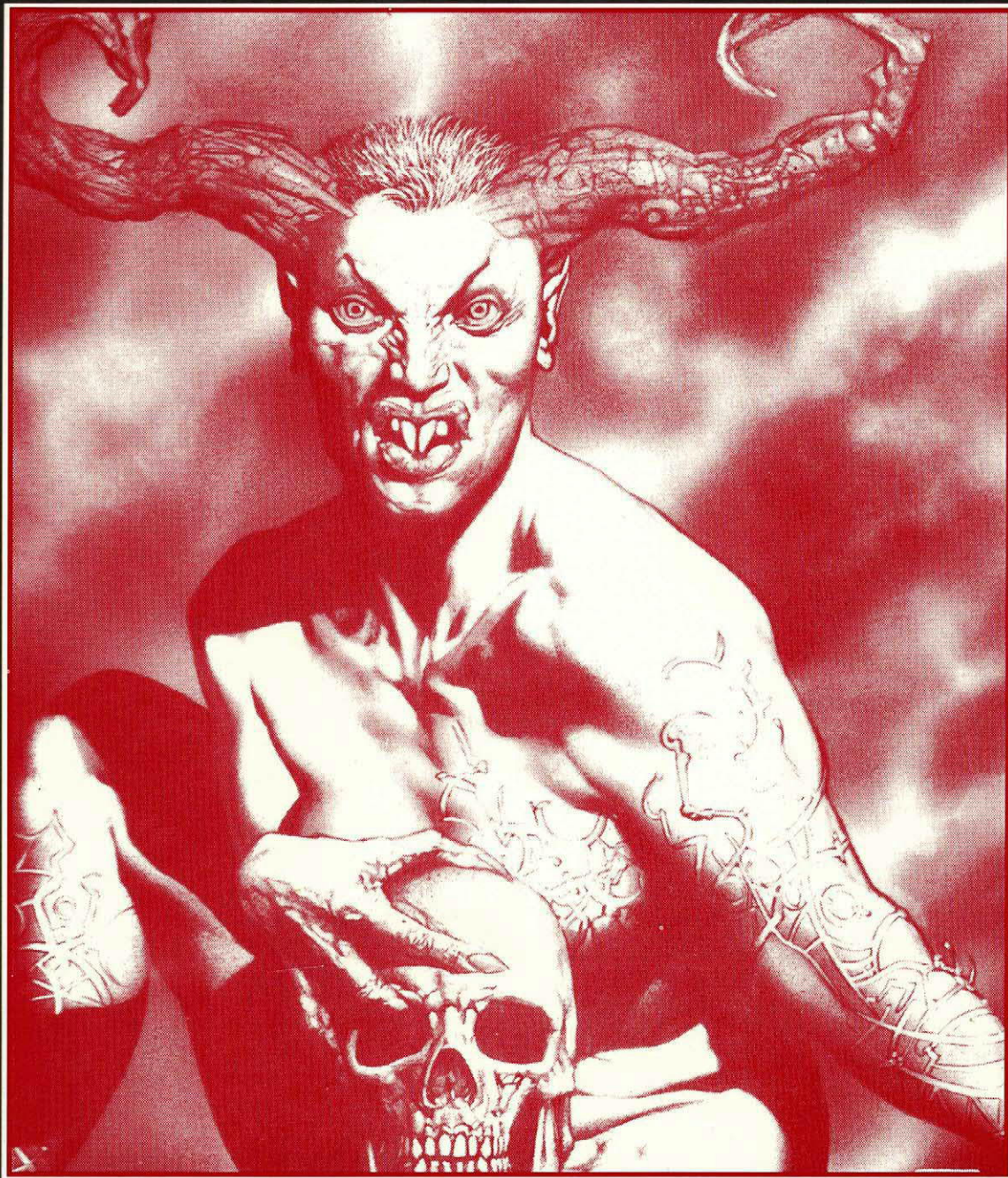
At least I had not tried to capture Martyn, as it is indeed disastrous to seize a demon. They might slay their fellow prisoners or possess the guards, and can vanish from any cell at will.

The best that we can ever do against these Seducers is to unmask them and uncover their plots. And the mortals whom we protect will rarely thank us for it. Indeed, in the case of Ehrenburg, I was never offered a single copper penny for all that I did for the town.





Gamemaster's Book



DEMONS II

Gamemaster's Book

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A Note on Language:

For the sake of convenience, the male gender is used as a neuter term throughout this product. This does not imply any chauvinism on our part, it simply takes up less space and makes for much smoother reading.



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INTRODUCTION

This supplement, which you now hold in your hands, is a sequel to the Demons pack already published by Mayfair Games. Demons outlined the plane of the Infernus, introducing its leaders, their concerns and their natures, and explained why they are interested in the inhabitants of the mortal plane.

This book goes on to examine how demons behave on the mortal plane, and how they deal with their mortal prey. In Demons II, you will find details of Cults which form to serve demons, the temptations which these creatures place before mortals, the pacts which they make, the disguises they adopt and the aid which they may give. Here you will also find a full explanation of the Cabal (the order of Thaumaturgists introduced in Demons), further information on the demons' half-mortal offspring, and the Gates between the planes.

Most importantly, this book explains how the enemies of the Infernus work to thwart the demons' plans, how disguised demons are hunted and uncovered, and who leads the battle against them: The Slayers are explained in further detail, new proficiencies are added, and a new character class, the Inquisitor, is introduced.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Demons are unnerving things, being able to appear as whatever they wish. In Demons II, for simplicity, we will refer to creatures of the Infernus as "he" or occasionally "she" if the demon is obviously being presented in a female role. This is merely to make the text more easily understandable, and GMs should feel free to have a given demon appear however he wishes during the adventure.

PLAYER AIDES

In addition to this book, the Demons II pack contains a number of other books and items for you to use in your Campaigns.

- "The Razor of Righteousness" is an "in-character" guide to hunting demons and their servants, which you may wish to give to your players.

- A handout book which explains the history of the Cabal, from a partisan but informative viewpoint.

- A book of adventures capable of keeping players and GM entertained for hours. (The second adventure in this book suggests a method in which players may find both the "Razor of Righteousness" and the history of the Cabal.)

GAMEMASTERING DEMONS

Note: Demons II frequently deals with mature themes and is intended for more mature role-playing gamers. Some consideration of the material within this supplement would be appropriate before introducing it to younger, less mature players.

The chapters which follow introduce a great number of Adventure Seeds, hints, settings and inspirations for GMs to expand into full adventures. Above all, this book is a resource pack, containing thousands of ideas that GMs can weave into their own adventures. However, there are certain key rules which GMs should always remember when using demons in their Campaigns:

- Demons want to gain souls above all else. This is usually done by inspiring mortals to sin, but pacts and tricks are also common. Demons rarely take an interest in events on the mortal plane which do not gain them souls.

- Mortals are always a demon's prey. The mortal plane is merely a source of sustenance for demons, a place where they may hunt. Mortals are never truly befriended by demons. If the creatures cooperate with mortals, it is merely because they believe that mortal can help them to gain more sustenance - more souls.

- Demons are destructive and corrupting, wholly evil. They do not create anything that does not in turn corrupt or destroy.

- Demons are not like mortals, and do not think like mortals. Often, their survival is dependent upon understanding their prey, as a fox hunter must



understand a fox, but their minds are ultimately alien to the mortal plane.

- Though lesser demons can be slain on the mortal plane, demon-lords are immortal. They cannot simply be killed, because they can always come back, again and again. To destroy a demon, a mortal must journey to the Infernus itself and slay the creature there, a quest which would challenge the greatest of heroes.

DEMONS AS ADVENTURE TOOLS

Demons are extremely flexible tools, ideal for either mindlessly bloody or obscurely intellectual adventures, in horror-fantasy, historical, high fantasy or "earthy" fantasy genres. For any GM, these creatures provide a unique resource. They may be used as incidental challenges, or as Arch-Villains. They may confront player characters with blatant threats, temptations, complex conspiracies or cunning plots. Demonic adventures may involve violence and detective work in any proportions. Numerous different atmospheres may be generated and varied challenges set, depending upon the way in which the demon's evil is manifest. Such adventures may provide escapism, brain-work, obscure analogies, or pretentious discourse, as each GM wishes.

For example, adventures based around Eligos, the demon duke of insanity, may confront the player characters with hordes of berserk warriors or maniacal Cultists, or else pit them against a single psychopath. Equally, characters may thus be placed in a brooding, gothic setting, or an adventure may be used to examine the ways in which people routinely hide from the truth, or it may involve a surreal odyssey exploring questions of objectivity and subjectivity.

MOOD

A world where demons walk is not a "nice" place. It is not a world where good and bad are clear and distinct. Rather, it is a place where creatures of pure evil may disguise themselves as trusted friends, where loved ones can be possessed or corrupted, and where an innocent encounter may be part of a demonic plan.

In order to fight demonic evil, Inquisitors

themselves use methods which many might call evil. Driven by fear, less objective demon hunters perpetrate even greater crimes. Such a world is a dark and brooding place, full of mistrust, corruption and paranoia.



INFECTED AND

CORRUPTION

• Chapter One •

In order to tempt mortals (and for other reasons too) demons must leave the Infernus and walk the prime plane. Once amongst their mortal prey, they assume disguises and affect impersonations to execute their evil plots, which they hatch with a brutal cunning borne of centuries of practice. The conditions under which they may leave the Infernus, their motives, plans and methods are all dealt with in this chapter.

RESTRICTIONS

Though most are magical creatures of vast power, demons suffer from various restrictions in their quest for souls. These restrictions stem from the demon's own strategy and timing and from the Compact, the demons' arcane agreement with the gods.

THE COMPACT

In the GM's book of the Demons pack, you will find a list of restrictions which may (or may not) have been placed upon the demons by the gods. Each GM must decide which of these restrictions hold in his own campaign, and modify the contents of this chapter accordingly. Everything written here presumes a fairly loose Compact, and a campaign in which demons play a prominent role. If a GM wishes to restrict demons' powers further, then some of the following reasons for, and methods of, demonic infiltration may become inappropriate.

TIME

One of the greatest difficulties for demons, is that they do not have limitless time to pursue their objectives. While any capable demon gives a plot time to mature, rather than pushing events along at the risk of their mission's failure, there is always a sense of urgency. Essentially, this is because the demon lords

who send the Seducers (and occasionally Warriors) to the prime plane have only so much power, and have an ever-increasing appetite for more.

The maintenance of a lord's power is dependent upon the sins (of his particular Order or Orbit) being committed, and a Seducer's power derives from the sins that it tempts mortals into. Seducers who make the greatest number of successful temptations in the shortest possible time, thus gain power for themselves and rise in their lords' estimations.

When a demon lord opens a Visiting Gate (which allows a lesser demon to travel to the prime plain, as explained on p15) for an underling to enter the world, a great deal of effort is required. The more senior the underling is, the more difficult it is to create the Gate. And the longer the underling is to stay on the mortal plane, the more effort is needed to maintain the portal. (It is for this reason that most demons disguise themselves as gypsies or other wanderers, because they may only spend a few days or weeks each month on the plane.) Demons who work too slowly, or rush into situations and make mistakes, thus gaining less power and losing their lords' favors. Eventually they are sent to the prime plane no more, and lose their status as Seducers.

DEMON MOTIVATIONS

For a demon, sin is power, and so the perpetuation of sin is extremely important, as important as farming is to a peasant, or business to a merchant. It is, in a sense, their living. The tempting of humanity is thus the most common reason for demons to leave the Infernus. Seducers may enter a community to nurture sin at indiscriminately, or may have targeted particularly promising individuals.

Arrogant and decadent demon lords often savor an interesting challenge, and send Seducers to corrupt particularly upright individuals. Sometimes these forays have the practical side-effect of removing or harming the demon's enemies; causing alignment shifts in



paladins or inquisitors, having priests rejected by their gods, etc.; but most are simply interesting diversions. More pragmatic demons recognize that one person's sin is much the same as another's, and concentrate upon those already rotten, in whom sins are most easily encouraged. (This demonic concentration explains, in part, why so many self-centered or thoroughly evil people live in pulp-fantasy worlds.)

More obscurely, Seducers may occasionally be dispatched to justify sinful activities, rather than to encourage individual instances. A demon who successfully defends a law or justifies an attitude which condones and encourages sin, thereby spreads more corruption than by tempting a single individual. As an example, a demon might shower good fortune, wealth and happiness upon a particularly greedy merchant to prove to his fellow mortals that a greedy attitude leads to satisfying life: "Proving" that a sin is good, useful or beneficial often encourages many more to sin than individual temptations.

Seducers (or warriors) may also be dispatched to harm or discredit the demons' mortal enemies. Thaumaturgists and cultists who betray demons could simply be hunted down and slain, but murdering demon-hunting slayers and inquisitors might make them into martyrs. Thus, those who provide a moral example to the populace, oppose sin, or confront demons are more usually discredited. Their dark secrets may be exposed, their hypocrisies, flaws and mistakes revealed, rumors spread, or scandals deliberately fabricated.

Agents of the Infernus also perform favors for mortals, usually to fulfill their parts of bargains or Pacts. In this case, as when they are bound by thaumaturgists, the demons' objectives are constrained by their individual agreements, but they are prone to twist the terms of each Pact in any way that might benefit them.

Demons' personal enmities may also spill over onto the Prime

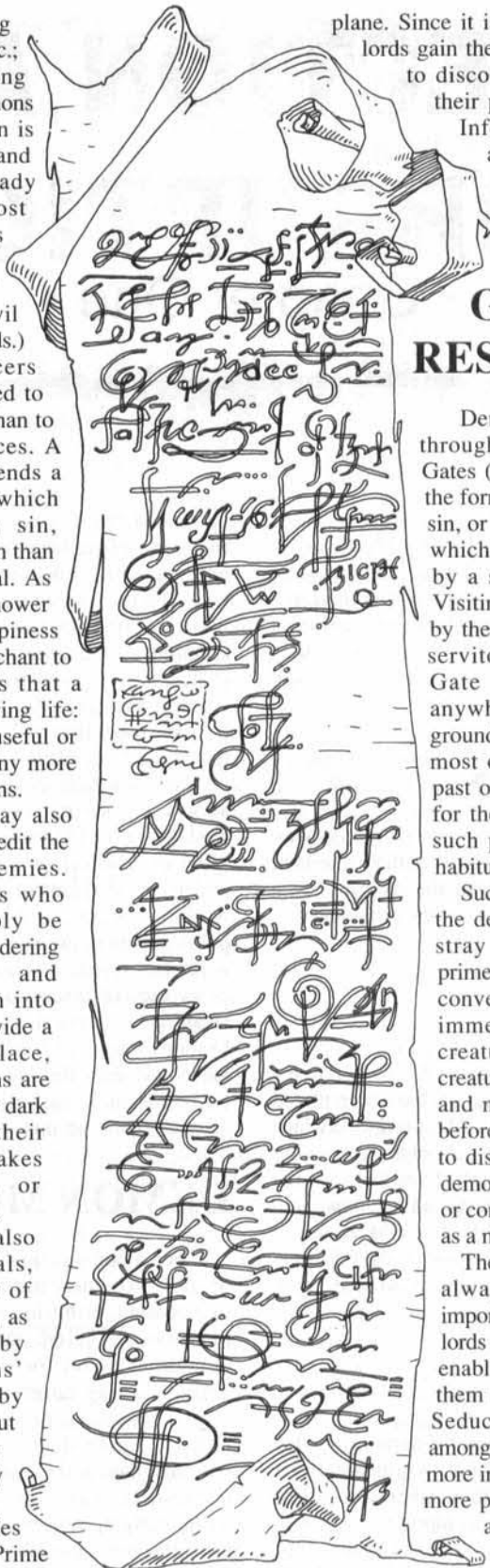
plane. Since it is in the mortal world that demon lords gain their power, they sometimes attempt to discourage their foes' sins to reduce their power. Although the King of the Infernus is becoming increasingly annoyed by the situation, it still occurs that some demons covertly discourage others' sins on the mundane plane.

GATE RESTRICTIONS

Demons may enter the prime plane through Summoning Gates or Visiting Gates (as described on p15). Essentially, the former is often a place of great evil or sin, or a place enchanted by mortals, into which the creature may be summoned by a spell, ceremony or invocation. Visiting Gates, by contrast, are formed by the demon lords themselves for their servitors to pass through. A Visiting Gate may be established almost anywhere except holy or consecrated ground. It seems, however, that they are most often created around the sites of past or present sins. Perhaps it is easier for the lords to exert their will around such places, or perhaps the choice is habitual or whimsical.

Such Gates are also easiest to create if the demon travelling through does not stray far from it and remains on the prime plane only briefly. It is thus most convenient if Gates are created in the immediate vicinity of the person or creature to be tempted. Sometimes a creature appears right next to its target, and moves no more than a few paces before vanishing. More often, attempting to disguise its supernatural arrival, the demon appears outside the target's home or community, and approaches disguised as a mortal traveller.

The subtlety of a demon's arrival is always in accordance with the importance of its mission. Simply, demon lords cannot afford to waste their energies enabling insignificant Seducers to gain them trifling amounts of power. Minor Seducers, spreading petty sin, appear amongst their targets and work fast, while more important Seducers, whose sins grant more power to the demons, disguise their arrivals more carefully and work with greater care and patience.



DISGUISES

Demons usually alter their appearances when walking the prime plane. They have great control over their appearances, but their disguises can never be perfect. If demons could perfectly mimic a mortal's appearance, and change disguises at will, they would have an incredible impact upon mortal society, and would be almost impossible to discover. Moreover, player characters (except for specialists such as slayers and inquisitors) would be unable to uncover only the stupidest demons, which would make for boring or frustrating adventures.

Each GM should therefore decide how perfectly demons may mimic mortals. The following list suggests several limitations to their powers, which GMs should consider. To keep players on their toes, different demons might be given different limitations. For example, demons of the Mind might have excellent powers of disguise, while those of the Flesh might be unable to mimic ugly or impoverished mortals, and those of the Soul might appear as deformed parodies of humanity.

It is plausible that:

- A demon may only disguise itself as a mortal it has seen. It may only mimic the voice of someone it has heard, and the movements of someone it has observed.

- Demons may only appear as a person who has already committed a sin. Perhaps the sin must be of the demon's own sphere.

- No demon may maintain a disguise continually. For at least one hour per day the creature must return to its natural form. Alternately, they must drop their disguise for one day each week, one hour in every three, one minute per hour, etc.

- Demons, like mortals, must sleep for a quarter of the day while on the prime plane. During this time, they appear in their natural, horrific state.

- A demon may only change its appearance three times per day. (Or once, seven times, or what ever the GM feels is appropriate.)

- A disguise is never perfect. Some trace of the demon's Infernal nature remains. Examples include a cloven foot, fiery eyes, a clawed hand, a rasping voice, sulphurous breath, or fangs. A deformity should be chosen for its dramatic potential, or to illuminate the sphere or personality of the demon. Such demons may easily pass themselves off as half-demons, and more examples of physical aberrations may be found on ps 67-69.

IMPERSONATION

Demons do not think in the same way as mortals. They do not feel emotions in any real way. Ultimately, they do not understand their prey. Even if a demon can mimic the appearance, voice and movements of a mortal, they are incapable of accurately replicating human personalities and mannerisms. Even the craftiest Seducer, therefore, may react inappropriately or inexplicably at

times, trying but failing to simulate a mortal response to an emotional situation. Many seem unusually cold or self-contained, showing little concern when pity, fear, or some other emotion might be expected. Easily baffled by emotion, demons also find it difficult to understand mortals who are distressed or irrational. Subtle innuendo, tact and insinuation frequently elude them.

Demons also have no access to the memories of those that they impersonate. Thus, they do not know the details which normal mortals take for granted, including common knowledge like where the village well or tavern is, or personal details like pet-names and private slang.

SEEING THROUGH DISGUISES

Demonic disguises are not illusions, hence spells and abilities which penetrate illusions do not reveal their true natures: True Seeing, or a similar spell, may however be used to penetrate demons' disguises. A Wish spell is required to remove a disguise, allowing all to see the creature's true form. Lesser magics may also prove useful. Slayers' and inquisitors' abilities permit them to detect the presence of the creatures, while Detect Evil, Holy Word and any other spells designed to detect or affect evil creatures function as usual against disguised demons.

Characters without the aid of such magics may also be able to deduce the nature of a disguised demon. Clever players may engage suspicious NPCs in conversation, hoping to catch them out for their lack of local knowledge or unusual emotional responses. Other tests may equally be created by innovative player characters, designed to see whether an NPC's touch or presence affects water, plants, animals, etc. Moreover, in any fraught or distressing situation, a demon may give itself away: All those who are immediately aware of the demons' reactions to such situations should make Insight checks. Successful checks reveal that the behavior is extremely unusual, and GMs might suggest to the player characters that such NPCs may be insane, inhuman or possessed. A successful Demon-lore check then reveals that the person is in fact a demon, or is at least possessed by such a creature. Demon-lore and Insight checks cannot be used to distinguish between a disguised demon and a possessed mortal, the behavior of both is identical. Dice-rolls should not, however, replace role-playing and detective work. The uncovering of demons should always rely upon some measure of deduction. Secretly observing suspects, asking leading questions, interrogating acquaintances and so on should all be necessary to uncover a demon.

REVEALING DEMONS

Whenever demons infiltrate a community, it is necessary that they are revealed and destroyed for the protection of society. This need has spawned numerous professional and amateur demon hunters, who devote part or all of their lives to rooting out these creatures



(their methods are discussed in detail in Chapter 8). Anyone, however, may be confronted by a demonic threat, and folklore, magic and common sense all provide the means to recognize, if not defeat, such a menace.

Old-wives tales and legends contain many references to demons' behaviors. Some superstitious methods for identifying demons are grossly unreliable, often leading half-demons, vagrants, sinners and lunatics to being accused as demons. Others, however, grow from an accurate understanding of how demons operate. Callous strangers, withering flowers, curdled milk and spoiled meat, anxious animals - all of these things recur in folk tales, and may betray a demon's identity. "The Razor of Righteousness" (included in this pack) contains scores of examples of these superstitions.

Common sense may also play its part in uncovering demons. People who forget the common details of their lives and pasts are always suspect. A person who smells of sulphur, withers plants at a touch and makes babies scream at a glance is perhaps not all that he or she claims!

Unfortunately, it is the spells and abilities of inquisitors, slayers and thaumaturgists which most surely identify disguised demons. And while the existence of well intentioned specialists is of great aid to the common folk, there are all too few of them, and many use their talents to make their fortunes from the commoners' vulnerabilities.

METHODS OF CORRUPTION

The following list suggests both immediate and complex temptations for the sins which are most easily introduced into play. They should provide GMs with guidelines and examples of the predicaments that player characters and NPCs might find themselves in. Notes will be given under each heading regarding which demon or Order might encourage which sin. These suggestions are not exclusive however, as demons will use any of these ploys if it will achieve the sin they desire in the end. GMs might develop some of these examples into complete adventures, or use them for incidental encounters and background events. This brief list is far from exhaustive, and provides only for the simplest of situations. Demons are expert at tempting mortals. Even the stupidest of Seducers have learned a few tricks from their betters. GMs are encouraged to use every ounce of devious cunning which they possess when constructing demonic plots for the player characters.

FALSE WORSHIP

Actively encouraged by Great Runstibble and his minions. Often encouraged by Great Phryxis, Great Forneus, Great Volak, and Great Marchosias.

-In the midst of a catastrophe, such as a civil war or famine, a disguised demon begins a rumor that, by "returning" to the worship of the "forgotten" deities, the

people may save themselves.

-A "Cult of the Emperor" might spring up, worshipping past or present mortal rulers as gods.

INFIDELITY

Actively encouraged by Great Gutterfowl and his minions. Often encouraged by Grand Polyphon, Great Forneus, Great Orobas, Grand Phenex, and Great Sabnock.

-While a group of men are traveling far from their wives, they come upon a cosy Inn. There, the barman (a disguised demon) plies them with strong wine to weaken their resistance, and his sensuous daughters (more demons) attempt to seduce each of the married guests.

-While her husband is absent on business or at war, a woman notices a dashing young man in the market (a disguised demon), with all the attractive qualities that her husband lacks. After several brief, enticing encounters, she finds herself in some difficulty, perhaps confronted by an assailant, and the mysterious man comes to her rescue. Eventually the disguised demon attempts to seduce the wife.

REVENGE

Actively encouraged by Great Tufforp and his minions. Often Encouraged by Grand Anthraxus, Great Dantalion, Great Marchosias, Great Agares, and Great Gusion.

-One loud-mouthed Seducer in a beer-swilling tavern, and a group reluctant to avenge an insult might find themselves driven by peer pressure to begin an increasing spiral of violence. "He did what?" "He never!" "You can't let him get away with that, now, can you?" "Hey, you by the bar, yeah you. Have you heard this..." "Now would you let the bastards do that to you...?"

-Over a period of several months, two Seducers insinuate themselves into two rival households, posing as nobles, merchants, or priests. They quietly encourage the rivalry between the two families, and one persuades its family's leader to rewrite his will. A clause is included stating that, should he be slain, his son only inherits the family's wealth after he avenges the murder. The inevitable murder soon follows (an important member of the rival family being made the obvious culprit), and a series of reprisals commences.

TREACHERY

Actively encouraged by Grand Anthraxus and Great Forneus and their minions. Often Encouraged by Grand Polyphon, Great Agares, Great Tufforp, Great Orobas, Great Gusion, and Great Sabnock.

-A messenger, carrying a mysterious package through town, converses with a tired mercenary (a disguised Seducer). The demon steers the conversation to the subject of the delivery, and seems amazed at the messenger's loyalty. The package might contain almost anything; stolen goods, for example. Shouldn't the messenger check to see what is inside? If the contents are valuable, what right does the wealthy employer have to such riches? Such treasures would be better

distributed amongst beggars, donated to a temple, or even kept by the deserving messenger.

-A Seducer infiltrates an army's camp, where several forces have come together in an uneasy alliance. Disguised as one of the leaders' advisors, it walks the camp, asking suspicious questions of the other soldiers. As a shadowy form, it is seen skulking behind officers' tents. Faked documents are sold to one commander by a thief (also the Seducer), implicating another leader in a plot to summon a horde of demons. Appearing as another leader, the creature tries to hire or order several men to murder other leaders, and then anonymously warns the targets of the attempts. Finally, in demonic form, it deliberately botches an attempt to assassinate the most senior commander, and before long the entire army has fragmented. Soon the factions are fighting amongst themselves, and the camp is riddled with distrust and misinformation.

BANDITRY

Actively encouraged by Great Andrealphus and Great Vapula and their minions. Often encouraged by Grand Anthraxus, Great Tufforp, and Great Agares.

-There is a man by the bar, drunk and rambling (actually a Seducer). "That old medicine seller", he is saying, "is a crook and a charlatan, selling phony potions at exaggerated prices. Why, all the gold he has taken today would be better going to a temple or the poor than lining his over-stuffed pockets, and wouldn't it just serve him right if he got robbed on his way home tonight". (Of course, the medicine seller doesn't make much profit, and his remedies may be very effective.)

-As a famine sweeps the area, Seducers appearing as vagrants and peddlers travel from village to village. They claim that although the peasants have nothing to eat, there is grain available. The merchants in the towns, the lord on the hill and favored villagers all have stocks of grain, which they are hoarding. In the town, meanwhile, the same Seducers say that farmers in the country

stockpile their produce and refuse to sell it to the townsfolk. Forged documents and token caches of grain are procured, to add plausibility to the rumors, and soon the populace turn to brigandage, plundering each others barns and houses in search of these fictitious stores.

CORRUPTION

Actively encouraged by Great Orobas and his minions. Often encouraged by Grand Anthraxus, Great Forneus, Great Eligos, and Great Agares.

-A petty Seducer spends a great deal of time persuading guards and junior officials to overlook crimes or relax laws. As a beautiful young woman she pleads that she be allowed to break the curfew in order to visit her fiance, fluttering her eyelashes and offering a small bribe.

-A Seducer hatches a plot to breed riots and lawlessness in a major city. They ensure that important government posts are gained by quite under-qualified or power-abusive people, by bribing a noble or cajoling an electoral college. Once the people are in place, the Seducers bring misfortunes and miseries to the city (ships wrecked, storms, diseases, etc.) in order to breed discontent.

FALSE CRUSADES

Actively encouraged by Great Marchosias and Great Volak and their minions. Often encouraged by Great Runstibble, Great Vapula, and Great Gusion.

-A young woman is seen emerging from the priest's house at dawn, and soon a Seducer is spreading rumors of the holy man's moral laxness. Half-remembered rumors are dragged up from the past and embellished, and fresh fictions circulate. Soon an angry mob are milling around in front of the priest's temple, demanding his dismissal. The city militia are called, and someone (the Seducer) starts handing out cudgels....

-A group of soldiers or adventurers sit in a tavern, cursing some imagined injustice. In truth, they have merely been misinformed about a certain situation, by a Seducer who at this moment walks past the table,



differently disguised. "Coincidentally", this passer-by has maps of the area that the mercenaries were speaking of, and knows of a merchant who travels that way the following morning. Perhaps they would like to buy a map and join up with the merchant, so that they might deal with these "awful injustices". Along the rout, the Seducer again meets them, in yet another disguise, and feeds them further false rumors. By the time they realize that they have misunderstood the situation they may have already shed innocent blood.

GREED

Actively encouraged by Great Vapula and Great Andrealphus and their minions. Often encouraged by Great Orobas, Great Marchosias, and Great Gremory.

-A wealthy man is traveling to the temple, responding to a plea by the priests for money for the poor. He has decided to make a generous contribution, but on the way he speaks with a Seducer. The demon turns the conversation to the subject of the poor. Why, it says, they are just wasters and crooks, too lazy to work and always stealing from decent folk. now, if a man works for an honest living, why should he be asked to give his hard-earned cash to these riff-raff?

-Two Seducers enter a desert trading camp, one disguised as a wealthy silk-merchant, the other as his attractive daughter. The "merchant" makes a public proclamation that, in a year he will return to the camp and give his daughter in marriage to the wealthiest man there, along with a dowry of twelve silk-laden camels. The news spreads across the deserts, and for the next year the Seducers, differently disguised, spread rumors of treasure hordes and lost cities, hoping to inspire every trader and adventurer in the region to pursue riches as they never have before.

ENVY

Actively encouraged by Great Gremory and his

minions. Often encouraged by Great Andrealphus, Great Orobas, Great Vapula and Great Gusion.

-A young woman visits a local monthly market, apparently the wife of a hunter or woodcutter (actually a disguised Seducer). She chats readily to the plainer women of the town, gossiping with them about the young and beautiful, the rich, and the apparently happy. "Aye, she's got lovely hair, and those clothes; ooh I'd love to have clothes like that, wouldn't you? Well, have you heard what they say about her hunk of a husband...?" The young women come to envy their more fortunate peers more and more.

-A Seducer ensures that the proudest, loudest and brashest soldiers are promoted within an army or militia. Stories of their incompetence, corruption and unworthiness are then circulated amongst the lower ranks, while the newly promoted officers flaunt their privilege.

GLUTTONY

Actively encouraged by Great Rofocale and his minions. Often encouraged by Great Orobas, Grand Decarabria, and Great Dantalion.

-A wandering vendor carries a tray of fresh pastries through the streets, their mouth-watering scent carrying up to the rooms overlooking the street. The vendor (a Seducer) has accepted orders for all these cakes, but if anyone wants to buy a whole batch, it will only take him a couple of hours to make more. Unfortunately, having bought a batch of these heavenly tasting pastries, the customer are told that they do not keep well, and may be tempted to consume them all in one day before they go bad.

-A wandering cook (a Seducer) arrives at a castle, looking for work. Her talents are soon appreciated, and she is given the task of producing the dishes for the lord's own table. The meals she prepares are gorgeous, and there is always more than enough to go around. The housekeeper tries telling her to make smaller portions but she will not listen, and the household frequently



gorge themselves rather than let her creations be wasted. Further, she cooks her most magnificent dishes very rarely, so that even when delighting in her normal fare, diners dream of her greater masterpieces.

MURDER

Actively encouraged by Great Gusion and his minions. Often encouraged by Great Tufforp, Great Forneus, Great Andrealphus, Great Eligos, Marchosias, Great Vapula, Great Agares, Great Botis, and Great Sabnock.

-A Seducer poses as a travelling herbalist, giving balms for various ailments. Along with the healing herbs, he also sells "rat poisons", particularly to those with unhappy relationships and enemies. As he grins to his customers, "There's no canker you can't remove with the right potion."

-A young man, who harbors a secret desire to kill a particular person, is approached by a disguised Seducer. The demon offers the man the means to perform the murder, in return for a minor service or nominal price. The disgruntled youth is provided with a magic item or poison which will kill the target, and the means of getting to and from his enemy undiscovered. When the murder is committed, the demon plants evidence incriminating an innocent man. The innocent suspect will certainly be convicted and sentenced to an undeserved death.

SUICIDE

Actively encouraged by Great Botis and his minions. Often encouraged by Great Forneus, Great Eligos, Grand Rubibat, Great Dantalion, and Grand Decarabria.

-A peddler (Seducer) tours the land, knocking only at the doors of those who are desolate or depressed. His tray bares a varied but specialized selection of wares: sturdy nooses on long, thick ropes, infusions of hemlock and vials of quicksilver, razor-blades and sturdy knives.

-A Seducer, disguised as a messenger or friend, comes to the chieftain's wife and says that her husband has fallen in battle, and that the neighboring tribes are marauding through the lands. Suicide might seem preferable to a life of slavery or a fate worse than death. The chief returns, victorious, to find his wife dead. Thereafter, on the anniversary of her death, he is visited by her "ghost" (actually, the Seducer), who lures him up to a rocky bluff and there vanishes, or floats just out of reach above the perilous drop, beckoning.

CRUELTY

Actively encouraged by Great Sabnock and his minions. Often encouraged by Great Tufforp, Great Andrealphus, Great Marchosias, and Great Agares.

-A Seducer poses as a physician whose treatments are extremely painful, such as unnecessary operations without anaesthetic, but are only carried out with the consent and aid of the patients' families, wherein the relatives must hold the patient down. The Seducer's

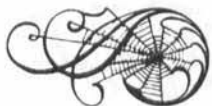
favorite treatment, however, is a potion administered to a person with only minutes to live, which keeps them alive and half-conscious for days without offering any chance of recovery. The potion is only administered when the death would be a painful one, thus prolonging the agony, and the family must always administer the draught themselves, so that they are fully responsible for the pain that is caused.

-A kingdom or empire has long had a tradition of slavery. But now, because of a new government, slavery may be abolished. Aware of the changing attitudes, and impatient to be made free, the slaves become restless. Seducers infiltrate the country, stirring up and betraying, the slaves, especially those with more lenient owners, sorting out the trouble-makers and nipping revolts in the bud, as well as "proving" that the slaves' are untrustworthy. The Seducers' aims are to ensure that slavery continues for as long as possible, and that its abolition is as painful as possible. When it eventually is abolished, the Seducers incite the ex-slaves and the authorities to punish the former slave owners with "appropriate" cruelty.

COOPERATION

Inevitably, the efforts of one Seducer may benefit several demon lords. A Seducer encouraging murder might coincidentally cause considerable cruelty and treachery, while the murders might lead to reprisals (vengeance) and executions (murder, arguably). The above examples provide numerous illustrations of such situations, and it is a rare achievement for a Seducer to encourage a single sin. However, on occasion Seducers may cooperate to corrupt a single target, and it is then that they are most successful. Whereas tempting a mortal to perform a single sin is often quite difficult, a group of interrelated sins might ironically be encouraged more easily. For example, a disguised demon might encourage a thief to steal (banditry) a hoard of gold (greed) from an old widow, knowing that she may starve without her savings (cruelty), and then so flatter the criminal that he becomes proud and even boastful (pride). It might normally be quite difficult to tempt a thief into sins of pride, or even cruelty, but by linking these in with the sins of banditry and greed (which he or she may be more prone to) even more of his soul is lost.

Fortunately for mortals, the convoluted politics of the Infernus make it rare that thralls of different lords cooperate to seduce mortals. However, when the lords can strike alliances, their combined temptations pose much greater threats to mortals and the Infernus profits greatly. It should be noted however, as pointed out in the Demons Gamemaster's book, that some demons are the sworn foes of others, and the politics within the Infernus might sometimes prohibit cooperation. For instance, while Marchosias might cooperate with Dantalion to inspire a mortal to sin, he probably would not assist Malphas, due to the latter's enmity towards Grand



Rubbibat, unless a great prize was to be had. Likewise, Grand Decarabria would probably discourage Rofocale from cooperating with Vapula to prevent that Duke from gaining more power.

MORTAL ACCOMPLICES

In tempting mortals, or during other missions on the prime plane, demons may find it expedient to enlist the aid of one or more mortals. Mortals have more comprehensive understandings of their plane than do most demons, find other mortals more comprehensible, and are not immediately slaughtered by any slayer they might meet. Moreover, particularly talented individuals (like player characters) may have special skills which a demon lacks.

Mortal allies, however, are often hard to win. Few people would willingly serve such a creature. And most folk would eventually become suspicious of a disguised demon, given the creatures' imperfect disguises and impersonations, and their effects upon their surroundings (see pgs 25-29 for examples of their corrupting effects). Nonetheless, some mortals might agree to serve a demon. Examples of such people include hardened cultists (see Chapter 5), thaumaturgists, and those who owe a service in return for demonic aid (Chapter 6).

Mortal accomplices may be used to spread or to corroborate rumors, to negotiate or spy on the demon's behalf, to escort or guard the creature, or to fight for it. They might be used to help tempt a specific individual, discredit an inquisitor's investigation, or to perform mundane roles in grander schemes.

LOSS OF THE MORTAL SOUL

Each time a mortal sins, a portion of his soul is lost. GMs should consider at what point a mortal has, in fact, no more soul to lose, and what happens then...

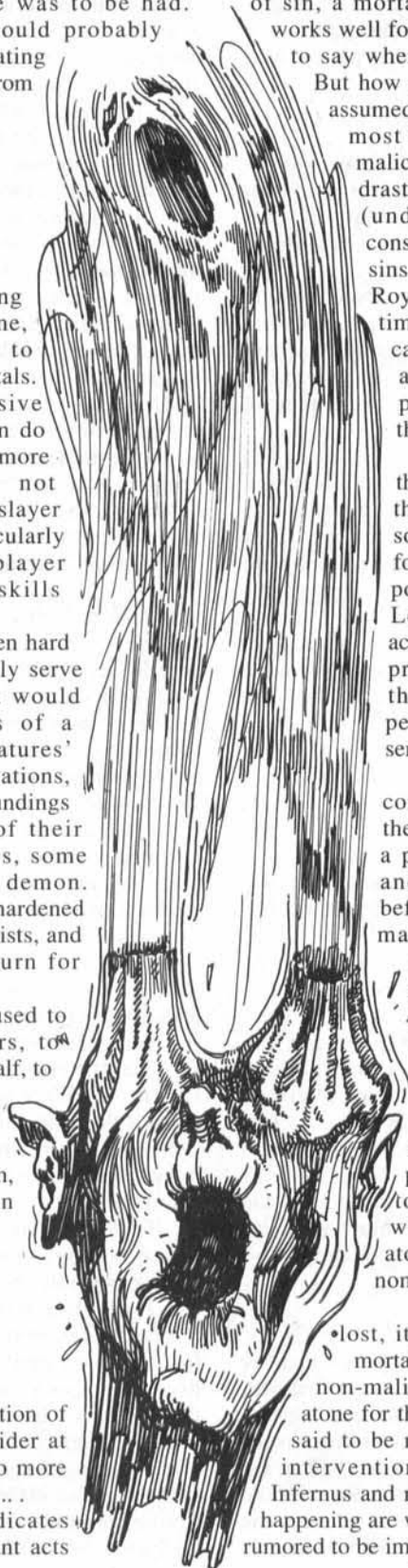
The Demons supplement indicates that after four deliberate and blatant acts

of sin, a mortal's soul is lost. This simple rule works well for brief campaigns, and makes it easy to say when a player character's soul is lost. But how grave need these sins be? It can be assumed that these "official" sins are of the most heinous nature, committed with malice and forethought, and that the sins drastically and adversely affect another (undeserving) person. GMs should consider, however, to what degree lesser sins degrade the mortal soul. Does the Royal Executioner commit murder each time he dispatches a criminal? There can be few people so saintly that they are not motivated by envy, foolish pride or lust at least four times in their lives.

Every time a mortal sins merely for the sake of committing that sin or for the sole purpose of causing harm to some undeserving person, that sinner forfeits one quarter of their soul. This portion is irredeemably lost forever. Lesser sins, those committed accidentally, unintentionally or without proper forethought, are redeemable through prayer, ceremony, or by performing some virtuous deed or a service for the church.

Any time a notable sin is committed intentionally but without the intent to cause harm, such as when a person chooses to indulge himself and eat all the many pastries set before him (committing gluttony), he makes a save vs death. This roll is modified by +2 if the character is good aligned and +1 if neutral. After four such saves are failed, the sins are considered permanent unless the sinner atones. Such atonement is normally carried out through the sinner's church and usually involves ceremony or the performance of considerable service to the church (specific atonement will vary by religion). This atonement absolves the sinner of all non-malicious sins.

Once a mortal's soul is irredeemably lost, it will go to the Infernus upon the mortal's death. If the soul was lost through non-malicious sins before the mortal could atone for them, it still goes to the Infernus. It is said to be retrievable however, through deitic intervention or by actually traveling to the Infernus and recovering the soul. Accounts of this happening are wholly unsubstantiated and the task is rumored to be impossible.



THE GATES OF THE INFERNUS

• Chapter Two •

By the will of the gods, the Infernus and the prime plane are separated by the differences of their natures and the will of the gods. The two are, and for the sake of the prime plane must always remain, irreconcilable. However, there are ways in which the inhabitants of one plane may enter or affect the other. There are the spells (particularly Thaumaturgical), sacrificial altars, sites of demonic temptation, and the physical or magical openings which connect the planes. All of these are called "Gates".

PORTAL GATES

The most infamous type of Gate, but perhaps the least common, is the physical passage through which the most courageous, foolhardy or insane may enter the Infernus. Minstrels and story tellers weave tales of huge iron doors or sulphurous cave mouths leading to the demons' realms, but in reality such Gates are typically much more subtle and varied than the legends say. A Gate may indeed be comprised of a cave mouth or a pair of doors, but such Gates are often not obviously demonic. Caves may be sweet smelling or rancid, narrow fissures or vast caverns, sparkling with quartz or black with coal. The Gates in these places may be tiny (perhaps only inches tall) or so huge that they could be mistaken for cliffs, and may just as well be formed of silver or ivory as lead or iron. Physical Gates may just as easily be the gap between two standing stones, a cleft in the trunk of a gnarled tree, or any other opening.

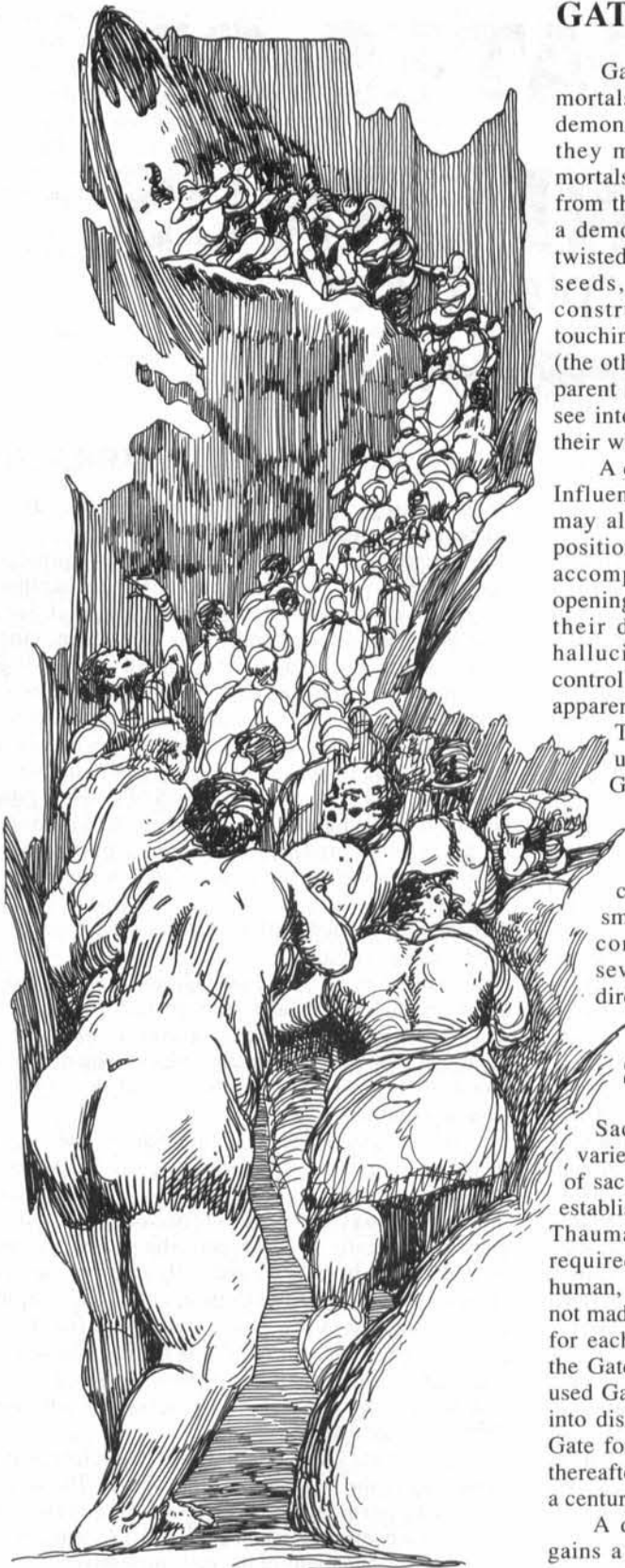
In addition to the difficulty of identifying a Gate, there are the problems of travelling to, opening and passing through these portals. Usable Gates are usually hidden in desolate or isolated places, those nearer to habitation having been barred long ago by wizards and priests, and if known to a group of Thaumaturgists (like the Cabal), may have magical or hired guardians. Wizards and clerics opposed to the

demons may also have set magical wards and guardians over the Gates.

Opening a Portal Gate presents numerous difficulties. Walls of Force and other enchantments may prevent access to a Gate. Magical locks, unaffected by Knock spells, may keep them closed. Some gates may only be opened by a single, indestructible, magical key. Such obstructions may have been set by the demons themselves, to keep out unwanted intruders, or by powerful wizards and priests, or even by the gods. Having passed through the Gates, travellers usually find a ward of massive power, effectively marking the beginnings of the Infernus, set by the gods to prevent demons from passing freely from the infernus to the prime plane. An unfortunate side-effect of this may be that half-demons and demonically created artifacts may not pass out of the Infernus, perhaps forcing travellers to abandon companions or prized possessions if they wish to return through such Gates. Any portal which does not have such a ward presents a major threat to the inhabitants of the prime plane, since demonic armies could, if they wished, simply maraud through these openings and ravage the world.

The Princes of the Infernus invariably set a guard or spy to observe each Gate, ensuring that trespassers do not stray into their realms. Immediately upon entering the Infernus travellers are confronted by the portal's guardian, typically a Gatekeeper, who will be reinforced in 1-100 turns by a fiend and 1-10 scourges (see each monster's folio page from Demons) should the intruders prove violent. In a few cases, trespassers find that no guardian opposes them, but this is typically because the rulers of the Infernus have a particularly cunning or vicious strategy best served by luring the interlopers deeper into their realm.

Almost all Gates are extremely ancient, having existed since the beginning of the worlds. The creation of a new, permanent Portal Gate is a major feat, requiring a complex Archmagic (Skill 13), and possibly attracting the attentions of the gods themselves.



GATES OF INFLUENCE

Gates of Influence do not allow the passage of mortals, objects or demons. They exist to give the demons magical access to the prime plane, so that they may more easily spread their sins amongst mortals. A typical Gate might be half of a rock taken from the Infernus and planted on the prime plane by a demon's followers. Other common examples are twisted trees grown on the prime plane from Infernal seeds, or amulets and mirrors of demonic construction. A demon may use such a Gate by touching or gazing at a certain item in the Infernus (the other half of the rock if the Gate is a rock, or the parent tree if it grew from a seed) allowing them to see into the prime plane and can cast spells or exert their wills through them to affect the plane.

A demon may perceive the area around a Gate of Influence as if it were in the Gate's location, and may also use any of its spells or powers from that position. More usually, demons use these Gates to accomplish more subtle mischiefs. Through such openings, they may communicate telepathically with their demonic thralls, send dreams or drunken hallucinations to encourage their particular sin, control the weather for short periods, and even cause apparently random accidents to befall their enemies.

The range of these more subtle effects depends upon the rank of the demon and the size of the Gate. Thus, a demon prince using a crumbling megalith or ancient tree as a Gate might

affect anyone within an area up to the size of a small country, while the same prince could only affect an area within a mile of a small Gate, such as a ring. A petty demon, by contrast, might create subtle effects within several miles of the megalith, but could only directly affect the ring's wearer.

SACRIFICIAL GATES

Sacrificial Gates are perhaps the most minor variety, being used primarily to conduct the souls of sacrificial victims to the Infernus. Such gates are established by Cults' ceremonies, or occasionally by Thaumaturgists. One hundred blood sacrifices are required to open a Gate, at least one of them of a human, demi-human or humanoid, and if sacrifices are not made there regularly the Gate will close. As a rule, for each year in which sacrifices are properly made, the Gate remains open for a decade, so that the most used Gates remain open for the longest after they fall into disuse. (For example, if Sacrifice is offered at a Gate for two years, it remains open for twenty years thereafter, and if it is used for ten years, it endures for a century afterwards. etc.)

A demon to whom sacrifices have been made gains a limited ability to affect the area around the

Gate. Such a demon may detect the presence of any person, animal or monster within a mile of the Gate, perceiving their alignment and class, but not their identities or intentions. Attempts to damage the Gate, magically or physically, are also immediately known to the demon. Further, the demon may exert minor influence on natural forces around the Gate, such as the weather, the behavior of animals, etc.

SUMMONING GATES

Many Thaumaturgists' spells cause temporary Summoning Gates, creating a situation in which a demon may be brought from the Infernus to the prime plane. Permanent Summoning Gates, where demons may be brought through from the Infernus without wizardly enchantments, are extremely rare. In some cases a ceremony or blood sacrifice may summon a demon at such a site, and in a few cases the mere mention of its name may suffice. These Gates may be created by Archmagics (Skill 13), but more often come into being accidentally.

Sacrificial Gates, well used over a long period of time, may "widen" to permit the demons to pass to the prime plane. Sites where a single demon is repeatedly summoned over a number of decades may sometimes become portals to the Infernus for that demon's casual use. Most commonly, demons may be accidentally or deliberately summoned at places where their own sin has been repeatedly practiced, or where they have achieved great individual victories. For example, Great Botis may thus be summoned to the site of a mass suicide, or a minor demon of the Order of the Flesh may be summoned in the treasury of a miser or the dining hall of a glutton.

No demon summoned to the prime plane may linger indefinitely. Each Summoning Gate has a specific, varying "time limit", after which the creature must immediately return to the Infernus. Commonly, a demon must depart before the following dawn, within an hour, or by the next Holy Day.

VISITING GATES

In some places, any minor demon may enter the prime plane without being Summoned by a mortal. Like Summoning Gates, Visiting Gates have "time limits", after which the demon must return to the Infernus. Additionally, a demon may only use a gate a certain number of times in any period (three times per lunar month), and it may not travel more than a certain distance from the Gate, (often being bound to remain within a few yards of the site). No Visiting Gate may be created which allows a demon lord free access to the mortal plane, except by the King of the Infernus, Amdosias himself.

Visiting Gates are sometimes created by

mistake. If a mortal completely succumbs to the sin of a petty demon, that creature may be able to enter the prime plane through the sinner's house, or grave, or portrait. A shrine to a minor demon may similarly establish such Gates, and some Cult ceremonies are designed to open these apertures, so that the creatures may aid in the defense of a site, advise the Cultists, or act as intermediaries for greater demons.

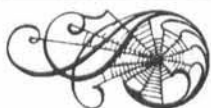
Normally, however, the gates are created by the wills of the rulers of the Infernus. Each duke, archduke or prince may create a large number of Gates, but they are unable to make use of them themselves, Gates are created for Seducers, or occasionally for Warriors, to pass into the prime plane, gathering mortal fodder or punishing the lord's enemies. A Gate for a First Canto Seducer is easy to create, while a Gate for a Fifth Canto demon is extremely difficult, and no duke may open enough gates to permit all of it's Seducers access to the mortal world. Gates for the demon lords themselves may only be created by Amdosias himself, as a special favor and with great effort. Thus, there is much competition amongst Seducers to persuade, bribe or trick their masters into maintaining Gates for them, as a Seducer who is unable to win souls, loses power in the Infernus. Even greater is the competition between the great lords to have their King open a Gate for them.

Individually, each demonic lord might open dozens or even hundreds of these Gates on the prime plane, but the world is a large place. Furthermore, the longer a demon is allowed to linger, the more demanding the Gate is to maintain. And since the lords themselves may only enter the prime plane if a mortal summons them, or if they enjoy the special favor of Amdosias, it would require the unprecedented cooperation of numerous lords, perhaps with mortal allies, to launch a real invasion of the mortal world.

PASSING GATES

Passing Gates are those through which neither demons nor mortals may travel, but through which communications and inanimate artifacts may be passed. (Note that mortal remains, animals and elementals do not usually qualify.) Such Gates are vital to demons whose ambitions extend to the prime plane, since it is via these that they may communicate with and reward their mortal servants. Spells may not be cast through Passing Gates, and demons may not project their powers through them (with the exception of magical artifacts).

Passing Gates may be created by a number of different means, such as by the ceremonies and sacrifices of demonic Cultists. Temporary Passing Gates are often established accidentally, or by the will of potent demons.



A demon may only deliberately establish a Gate between itself and a mortal who has already fallen into sin. Any demonic duke may contact a mortal who has repeatedly committed the sins of its sphere, while lesser demons may only contact mortals who have recently committed the particular sins which they sponsor.

The easiest way for a demon to establish a Passing Gate is to enter a mortal's dreams. The two may converse normally and the mortal is completely lucid, but they may not engage in combat nor touch one and other. With the mortal's permission, the demon may take any inanimate object within one foot of the mortal's sleeping form, instantly transporting it back to the Infernus. Any artifact given by the demon is found in the mortal's hand when he or she wakes. Unfortunately, only the demonic Dukes have access to mortals' dreams, and any other demon wishing to establish Passing Gates in dreams must first get the permission of one of these. Therefore, demons usually prefer to establish Gates while the intended contact is awake, despite the additional time and energy involved.

A favored medium for such Gates is a mirror. A sinful mortal looks into a mirror, and (usually) unexpectedly sees a demon gazing back in the place of his or her own reflection. The demon's image and voice are apparent only to the sinner, and not to any other observer, although the mortal's reactions may be noticed by others. The two may speak normally, and if both reach towards the glass they may exchange inanimate objects, provided that they are small enough to be "pushed" through the mirror. Should the mortal step sideways from the mirror, such that he or she would normally be unable to view his or her own reflection, the Gate closes.

Passing Gates may also be established through a number of other objects. The facets of gems, the rear panels of closets, window panes, ponds, the inside bases of tankards, and animals' eyes are all possible, depending upon the demon's temperament and sense of drama. Moreover, these Gates need not allow the mortal and demon to actually see one another. A demon might speak and listen through

an animal (a wolf, vulture or bat, perhaps) or through a corpse, disguising its own identity but being unable to see the mortal or pass objects between the planes. It is known that Eligos has a peculiar talent for these gates. As duke of insanity, he can establish these Gates with particular ease, and may then delude mortals into believing that they are being drawn through them and into the Infernus. In this pseudo-Infernus, which is largely a reflection of the mortal's own



fears and feelings, Eligos may give the mortal a tour, hoping to plunge the poor soul further into voluntary insanity. Each round the mortal is in this false Infernus he or she may attempt to save vs. spells to escape from the delusion.

Particularly corrupted individuals may involuntarily create Passing Gates themselves. Each day during which a mortal is obsessed by sinful thoughts, there is a 10% that a Gate will be formed, to the surprise of the demon as well as the sinner, in a mirror, pool, or some other suitable medium.

PORTABLE GATES

While most Gates are static, some may be carried about, or move of their own volition. There are stories of castles which appear in different locations at different times and of unopenable doors which manifest in different buildings every midwinter's eve, all of which are reputed to be Portable Gates to the Infernus. Certain Gates are active only when certain stars conjoin, or the moon is in a particular phase. Some gates may actually be animals, magpies and vultures, for example.

Summoning and Sacrificial Gates may occasionally be portable: A Thaumaturgist's spell, which may be cast almost anywhere, is an extremely common example, but enchanted sacrificial daggers, altar cloths and candles are also found. A special set of candles, set in a circle and lit, may summon a specific minor demon, and a powerfully enchanted blade might send to the Infernus the souls of all that it slays. More usually, however, these are Portal Gates or Gates of Influence, appearing as boxes, chests, buildings, tents, or other appropriate objects.

THE THEORETICAL "GATES"

Theoretical Gates are the cosmic or theoretical obstructions which separate the dwellers of the prime plane and the Infernus. When Inquisitors speak of "holding fast the gates of the Infernus", or the Cabal talk of breaking down the gates, they are not referring to actual, identifiable barriers. Rather, they are speaking metaphorically.

For the Cabal to break down these Theoretical Gates, they would have to at least open many other, more tangible Gates. Perhaps such a feat would require, or ultimately end in, the merging of the two planes. The gods would likely not allow such a re-ordering of creation.

When the enemies of the demons talk of "keeping the gates shut", they mean that the two planes and their inhabitants should be kept completely separate. They often mean, simply, that demons and their works should be destroyed throughout the prime plane. Eradicating sin may also be referred to in these terms.

SAMPLE GATES

Following, are listed several sample Gates to the Infernus of various kinds which can be used as is or modified for use in existing campaigns.

THE HALL OF STATUES

Portal Gate

Since the dawn of the world, Gates to the Infernus have stood in the Leiden Mountains. A pair of doors without visible handles, hinges or joints; fifty feet tall and twenty feet wide; they stand in the south face of a huge granite cliff. They are made of a dark, pitted stone, but are completely hidden by an ancient palace; a vast Classical structure, full of fluted columns and balconies; in which the doors form the rear wall of the Throne Room.

The palace has been lifeless for a thousand years, its two hundred inhabitants turned to marble statues by the gods for interfering with the gate. They must remain stone until some other mortal attempts to pass through the Gate. Then they will be returned to flesh and given the chance to redeem themselves, returning to stone unless they foil the attempt.

Opening the Gate is actually not difficult once it has been identified, although it does require a powerful wizard's spell. A Knock spell is unusually sufficient, though it must be cast at the twentieth Skill Level, or more plausibly a Limited Wish spell could open the Gate.

However, reaching the palace is more difficult. A group of wizards (perhaps the Cabal) are continuing to investigate the Gate, wondering how to open it without rousing the statues, and have left a score of undead in ambush by the only pass which leads up to it. Moreover, any attempt to interfere with the Gate, once inside the palace, will disturb the original inhabitants.

Once successfully through the Gate, travellers begin to walk down a broad, stone tunnel. The temperature fluctuates wildly, varying between being uncomfortably hot and freezing cold. The floor is soft but unbreakable, and is the colour of desiccated flesh. After about a mile, a tingling mist fills the cave, and the floor breaks up into slabs, curiously resembling human backs, which produce a slight groaning noise as they are walked on. The mist fills the passage for about one hundred yards, and thins as the cavern opens out into the flickering red-brown light of Diannor where an obese Gatekeeper bars the way. This demon has spent millennia watching the tunnel, but so far only a single spider has ventured through (he recalls slowly squashing it in absurd detail). It is delighted to have "guests", and hopes that they will want to fight instead of guessing its riddle of passage. When asked, however, it has

forgotten its question over the years, and desperately tries to invent others. (Such as "What number am I thinking of?", "What is the Twenty Seventh Letter of the Sclytherian Alphabet?", or something equally inane).

Eventually it remembers its riddle: "What lock is neither solid, liquid nor air, which admits the trespasser but not the householder?" The answer, of course, is the mist (liquid and air at once) through which the travellers have just come, but through which the demons cannot pass. In fact, the Gatekeeper can speak of little but the mist, which it has spent so long scrutinizing, and most of its vocabulary consists of gibberish words to describe the vapors, like Curould, Rollnot and Wafstling.

After slaying the Gatekeeper or answering the riddle, the foolhardy travellers are through the Gate...

THE VANISHING WARDROBE

Portable Gate

The Wardrobe is a former circus magician's chest, standing six feet high, three feet deep and three wide, painted in browns and greens, garish yellow and bright red. Across the front the conjurer's stage name is daubed inexpertly, "Magnifico The Magnificent". The wardrobe is carried as part of a wandering circus's paraphernalia, and is used by "Magnifico" as the climax of his routine. An attractive member of the audience is invited to step into the wardrobe, the door is closed, gibberish incantations are recited and the door reopened. Not surprisingly, the volunteer has vanished. The door closed, verbiage repeated and the wardrobe opened once more. The volunteer reappears quite unaware that any time has passed since he or she first entered the closet. But as well as this apparently harmless use, the Wardrobe has other more sinister purposes, unknown to the untalented Magnifico, but well known to the chest's previous owner.

On the night of the full moon, at midnight, the Wardrobe becomes an opened Portal Gate, leading to the palace of Decarabria, prince of flesh in Thanis. Stepping into the Wardrobe at this time, a person finds himself in a large, perfumed closet, in a bedroom of Decarabria's palace. To return to the prime plane it is merely necessary to step back into that same closet, thereby returning to the Wardrobe.

On each night of the full moon, there is also a 50% chance that a minor demon, serving Decarabria, will enter the prime plane through the Wardrobe, returning by dawn. The demon's purpose is to spread gossip, flirt and seduce the virtuous, spreading the sin of lust. Its outward appearance will always be that of someone who recently stood in the Wardrobe, usually one of Magnifico's attractive volunteers, and its

activities while on the prime plane are bound to earn its human double a degree of infamy.

THE GRANDFATHER OAK

Gate of Influence

In a light wood, near a sleepy village, sprawls an ancient oak, a vast tree with knotted bark and contorted limbs. Each spring its leaves bud after all of the other trees in the wood, and in winter they cling to its branches when the rest of the copse is bare. From the low hanging branches and the browned hollow of the trunk, strangers might deduce that the old tree is dying, but in fact it has looked this unhealthy for as long as any local can remember.

The old oak is a Gate of Influence, controlled by Furfur, demon duke of foolish pride. Through it, the duke watches the area, looking for mortals who might be easily tempted into sin, and then sending dreams, good fortunes, or Seducers to corrupt them.

Every spring equinox, the nearby villagers celebrate an "ancient festival" at the tree, actually a remnant from the days when a Cult used to worship Furfur there. They carry garlands of flowers into the wood to drape around the old oak's boughs, before returning to their village for a feast and a fair. There, they compete with each other to prepare the tastiest food or to exhibit the finest vegetables, and Furfur ensures that those who are most likely to become excessively proud have grown the finest produce or prepared the tastiest fare. Furfur is pleased, of course, by the petty pride which this enduring festival spreads, but it longs to be worshiped again by a fully fledged Cult. Recently, a child was conceived beneath the oak's boughs, and when it grows, as Furfur's half-demon progeny, it may be the ideal founder of such a Cult.

THE IRCINE

Portable Gate of Influence

The Ircine is a beautiful and clearly magical bird, affectionate, tame, and loyal. Its feathers are purest white, so pale that at night they seem to shine with their own light, and it is renowned for its gentleness. Strange but true stories circulate, telling of how an Ircine might sometimes land on the shoulder of a tenderhearted lady, and stay constantly by her for the rest of her life. Even more strangely, it is said that these creatures are both celibate and immortal, none having ever been known to die or mate.

In fact, only five of these birds exist, being the magical creations of the demon prince Grand Anthraxus, father of Treacheries. Their beauty is an illusion; their virtue, a sham. Their real purpose is to bring ruin to the



most virtuous households of the prime plane, whose greatest ladies they become the pets of.

Each of these 5 birds is a Gate of Influence accessible to one of the great demons of the heart, and in their wake disasters follow. One Ircine spreads pandering and false praises; one spreads heresy and false religion; the third encourages infidelity; another bloody retribution; and the most beautiful, Anthraxus' own, foments rebellions and betrayals of innumerable varieties. The demons, of course, are cunning in their uses of these birds. Not all of their mistresses' households fall into immediate turmoil, and these great ladies are never themselves tempted or led astray by the demons. Often, the ladies remain the only members of their courts not corrupted, and the greatest evils rarely become apparent while they still live, so that the Ircine is often seen as a lucky mascot and symbol of purity.

The illusions which cover these birds is difficult to dispel magically. A Limited Wish or similarly potent spell may reveal its true appearance, and if a bird is slain the illusion vanishes. In reality, their feathers are a deep black, flecked in red, and their hooked beaks betray them to be birds of prey or carrion creatures. When slain, the bird's corpse is rapidly consumed by writhing black maggots, which hatch from within its belly and consume all trace of it within ten rounds.

THE DEVIL'S PIT

Sacrificial Gate

Barely visible from a little-used mountain pass, the Devil's Pit is a rough gorge cutting between two jagged mountains. Local peasants whisper that at the base of the gorge is a cave which leads straight to the depths of the Infernus. In front of the cave, they say, is a crumbling altar, and above the ravine are the haunted ruins of a village where diabolists once lived. In truth the cave is quite natural, but for generations sacrifices were offered to the demons at an altar in the gorge. The sacrifices were only halted forty years ago by the razing of the diabolists' village, which may be haunted.

Descending into the ravine appears dangerous. A narrow, rocky path clings to the side of the crevasse, sheer cliff face falling away beneath it, and characters of good alignment find the ground particularly treacherous, gusty winds unbalancing them and apparently solid hand holds crumbling at their touch. Each good aligned character must make two Dexterity checks every 100 feet for 1000 feet. Anyone failing both plunges down one hundred feet into the ravine. At the base of the cliff one or two skeletal bodies may be found, where past explorers fell to their deaths attempting to negotiate the path.

At the base of the ravine there are the crumbling remains of a stone-walled shrine, and an ugly block of rough stone which must have been the altar (and is still the Sacrificial Gate). The Gate can only be destroyed by powerful spells, such as Holy Word or Wish, or by obliterating the altar stone (such as with a Disintegrate spell). Lesser spells which drive off evil or magic may close the Gate temporarily, but not indefinitely.

Unless the Gate was closed, good characters must make Dexterity checks as before when climbing back out of the gorge. Any other characters who had vandalized the shrine or attempted to destroy the altar finds that the terrain and weather similarly conspire against them. All those falling to their deaths in the gorge have a 25% chance of landing in the shrine area, their blood pouring out onto the ground near the altar and their souls thus being delivered to the Infernus.

THE RUINS OF IBN SUF

Summoning Gate

In the depths of an arid desert lie the ruins of a once great temple complex. The shrines and altars of Ibn Suf stretched over several square miles, and the wards and charms laid to protect them endure to this day, preventing any evil creature from setting foot anywhere about the area.

The temple complex was laid ruin, however, by the greed of its priests, who abandoned the holy site in favor of the growing cities, where rich donations could be extorted and luxuries could be easily purchased. And so, to this day, a demon of greed may be easily summoned in the centre of the complex. In the main courtyard, a great column reaches up from the cracked and sand-scarred pavement. The pillar stands over fifty feet tall, and is split and chipped. Its gold inlay has turned inexplicably black or been picked off, and brown-red stains cover the flagstones beneath it, where previous summoners have spread offerings.

To summon the demon, three goats (or similar creatures) must be slain at the base of the pillar, and their entrails spread around it. At least one hundred gold coins must be scattered with the slaughtered beasts. The summoner then retreats to a safe distance and waits.

During the night the demon arrives, half human and half serpent, all dressed in rags of human skin, and slithers down the column to collect the gold. However, it must not touch the ground or it will be destroyed. The summoner may then engage it in conversation, asking about the plots and affairs of its master, Great Vapula, duke of greed. The creature is well informed about the duke's plots, and may reveal who the duke is tempting, how, and with what

success. All the creature seeks in payment for information is gold, and although it demands thousands of pieces it would settle for a single piece if it were convinced that the summoner could give no more.

Unfortunately, the creature would sooner lie than tell the truth, thinking that it has made a greater profit if it has sold false rather than accurate information, and summoners who appear gullible are told shameless lies. The demon must return to the Infernus at sunrise or before.

THE MERCHANT'S COFFER

Visiting Gate

In a large house on a hill, just outside of a town, a wealthy merchant lived, named Vladac Ivovash. He worked hard and grew wealthy, but maltreated his servants, who threatened to leave the household. Outraged at their insolence, Vladac killed the main troublemaker and shackled the others to prevent them from escaping. For several years he forced them to work without pay, but at last the cook poisoned his food and the servants freed themselves. The house stood empty for some years, haunted, the locals said, by the ghosts of the merchant and his murderous cook. But recently a new owner has moved in, also a merchant. An astute and sensitive man, he has nonetheless begun to complain that his servants are lazy, cutting their pay to fill his own pockets. Unknown to outsiders, the merchant has a new councillor...

Vladac's cruelty has opened a Visiting Gate to a Seducer of the Second Canto. It is an unimaginative tempter, and a fairly fragile creature (2 HTK dice, AC 9, THAC0 19 and 1-6 damage with each claw, casting Knock spells at will). It is a short, dwarf-like figure, with pale skin and blood-stained hands, manifesting in the merchant's stone Coffers (a huge stone chest, once used by Vladac to store his treasures). The Seducer approaches the new owner bashfully, once each month, offering a lamb-skin purse of twenty gold coins. It is a "spirit of good fortune", it claims, bearing a generous gift and wishing only to share some wine and chat for a while. The new owner is becoming used to these visitations, and welcomes the coinage, and is coming to take more notice of its ideas.

In conversation the demon flatters the merchant, praising his astute dealings and hard work, but criticizing the servants. They are paid good money, but are lazy, why should the assiduous trader waste his money on slovenly scrubbers? The servants should work as hard for the merchant's money as he did himself, surely? Slowly the demon's twisted arguments are convincing the mortal.

RAASTIBLE'S POOL

Passing Gate

This pool is a circular pit, three feet across and eight feet deep. It is filled with the black water of the Sea of Tears, in the Pit of the Infernus, and forms a link between the Arch-Duke Raastible and the mortal world. The pool is lined with blocks of grey marble, now fused together and turned darker by the water, and a black scum had collected around the its edge, creeping up the stone and over the pool's lip as if trying to escape.

The Gate is the prized possession of one of Raastible's more potent human allies, and all that a mortal need do to attract the attention of the demon is to stand in front of the pool and speak its name five times. The Arch-Duke may decline to respond, but usually appears as a shadowy form in the water, which ripples as it speaks.

Physical objects may be dropped into the pool for Raastible, or appear just beneath its surface if being delivered by the demon to its human servant. Unusually, because Raastible is so linked with death, the physical remains of mortal creatures may be taken to the Infernus via this pool.

The water of the pool is deadly poisonous. Anyone drinking even a sip must save vs. poison or take 1-100 points of damage. It also dissolves any sort of flesh, and any person or creature submerged in the liquid must save vs. poison each round, or take 1-10 points of damage.



THE SYMPTOMS OF THE CANKER

• Chapter Three •

The sections below should give GMs a good idea of what events surround a demon when it walks the mortal plane, and how those who come in contact with it may be affected. The primary purpose of this chapter is to help GMs establish an appropriate atmosphere, and to build up an aura of the unknown in their adventures. Few of the effects suggested here have a great impact upon the game's mechanics, doing no real damage, and leaving personal statistics unaltered, but they are important in portraying demons effectively, and in creating interesting adventures.

SIGNS AND OMENS

GMs should consider how a demon's arrival might be foretold. The atmosphere of demonic adventures may sometimes depend upon the build up to the creature's arrival. To prepare the player characters for the demon's climactic entrance, signs and omens might appear, hinting at the evil which approaches.

Most obviously, the effects which surround a demon might begin to be observed before it arrives. Creatures usually surrounded by storms might be preceded by sporadic gales, thickening cloud, and distant rumbles of thunder. Demons which destroy plant life might be presaged by the sudden wilting of wild flowers or a blight on local crops. Equally, peasant superstition often claims that certain animals can foretell the approach of evil. The early migration of birds, the appearance of a fabled animal or the birth of a deformed lamb might suggest a demon's approach. A comet or shooting star, an eclipse or a conjunction of the stars might presage the arrival of a particularly powerful creature. The birth of a child with a certain birthmark, or the inexplicable death of a hermit could also mark the approach of great evil.

GMs should not worry too much about why, for example, a six-legged lamb might foretell the arrival of a demon of despair. Equally, it may seem strange

that if a demon lord decides to send a thrall to the mortal world, signs of the demon's coming could precede the lord's decision. An effective demonic adventure relies upon atmosphere more than logic, and if events serve to build the right mood it doesn't matter if they are not logically explicable.

"Aye, we've not had a fog as thick as this since I was a lad. Like smoke from some great fire, it was, drifting across the moors, all lit up by the moonlight. That must have been, what, thirteen winters gone. I remember that, you see, because it was about then that th' old MacDowel house burned down. A messy business that."

"Anyhow, I'm to be off. There's a difficult lambing to see to with the crofters. Hope you're comfortable enough for th' evening, though it's a chill night, to be sure..."

NOTICING TAINTS AND OMENS

In some instances, taints and omens can be quite subtle, and not everyone will notice them. An absence of animals may require a Tracking or Survival proficiency check, as folk from towns wouldn't know what to expect in a wilderness or forest. An Animal Handling check is required to discern the strange behavior of domesticated animals, an Astrology check notes an ominous comet, etc. More broadly Insight checks may be required to notice minor effects such as a single pane of glass having cracked. Greater effects may be blatantly obvious such as horses becoming uncontrollable, huge windows shattering, etc., requiring no checks to notice.

Having become aware of a strange sign or omen, a Demon-lore check must be made to identify it as a sign of demonic activity. If such a check is failed, the character is merely aware that it is a "bad sign" or might conclude that there is some rational explanation for the event.



TAINTS AND PRESENCE

On p17 of the Demons Gamemaster's book, you will find several examples of the ways in which a demonic presence might become apparent to mortal eyes. The following sections expand upon those passages.

Demons are powerful creatures, alien to the prime plane and embodying all that is evil. As such, their very presence corrupts whatever comes in contact with them, and their impurity leaves an almost tangible stain. Wherever a demon goes, some effect of its passage may be noticeable. Minor seducers frequently leave subtle, barely visible traces, which may be mistaken for natural damage or decay, while demon lords are accompanied by dramatically blatant effects.

Any person, place or object coming into contact with a demon also becomes tainted. The "taint" may

last for hours or months, depending upon the power of the demon and the intimacy of the contact. The effects of a demon's presence, and how taints may be acquired, noticed and removed, are all explained in the sections below.

POTENCY

Type one and two demons affect their surroundings only in the smallest ways. Perhaps a plant's leaves brown if touched by the demons. Animals might be disconcerted by their presence, or a baby whimpers as they pass. But clues are no more blatant than these, and their presences are rarely noted by mortals.

Type three and four demons emanate a more powerful evil. Each individual typically has a certain

characteristic effect on its surroundings, as well as numerous lesser effects. For example, a demon might be particularly inimical to animals, or might always be followed by fierce gales, or may turn fresh water stagnant.

The presence of more powerful creatures inevitably causes greater damage in numerous ways. Demons of the upper hierarchy of the Infernus could not walk the plane for long without rousing suspicion. A demonic duke, for example, might wither all plant life by touch, rouse all animals within 12" to a frenzy or terror, and cause all meat in the same area to become rotten.

If the demon King Amdosias were ever to walk the mortal plane, forests would die as he passed, lakes would turn stagnant and animals would flee in panic-stricken hoards. Infants would die at his touch, women be made barren by his gaze, and men lose their courage and strength at his approach.

Seducers are always aware that they have such effects on their surroundings, and are careful not to give themselves away. Those who are repulsive to wildlife stay clear of all animals, for example. Warriors are either unaware or uninterested in these tell-tale effects.

EFFECTS

The following are examples of the ways in which demons unavoidably effect their surroundings in the mortal world. GMs should assign these effects to demons based on the role that the creatures are to play in adventures. Used carefully, each may be used to dramatic affect, or to provide the player characters with important and timely clues. Used indiscriminately, these effects might give characters clues too soon in an adventure, or disturb the atmosphere of an individual scene.

AIR: Disturbing smells (of sulphur or decay, perhaps), a chill in the air, humidity, stuffiness or aridity might presage the arrival of a demon, or indicate its presence.

ANIMALS: Animals' sensitive instincts sometimes detect demons when sentient mortals cannot. They may react with fear, aggression, curiosity or anxiety, imperceptibly in the presence of a minor demon, but extremely if faced by a demon lord.

CHILDREN: The younger the child, the more sensitive it is to demonic evil. Babies often respond to a demon's presence by crying or excreting. More potent creatures may prompt the child to screech, vomit, or even die. Infants cry or throw tantrums. Older children become bad-tempered, moody or depressed. Children old enough to communicate are not consciously aware of their changed behavior, and cannot explain to adults why they are distressed.

FERTILITY: Animal and human fertility may be affected by demonic presence. The touch of a powerful

demon may render a woman incapable of bearing children, and its presence may complicate child-birth.

FIRE: Certain demons cause fires to burn more dimly or fiercely. The light may be changed (becoming reddened, for example), the smoke thickened, the scent altered. Candles may gutter and die in a demon's presence, or hot coals spit dangerously from a grate.

FOODS: Certain foods are often affected by demons. Milk may curdle, butter refuse to churn, or cheese become moldy. Meat may rot or become riddled with maggots. Mice may infest a granary.

GLASS: The arrival of potent demons is often foretold by the cracking of a window or the breaking of a mirror. Lesser demons might crack any glass container that they touch.

HOLY SIGNS: Idols, icons, symbols and religious art may be affected by a demon's proximity. A religious idol might become cold in the presence of a minor demon, while a greater creature could make symbols and icons to crack or rot, and a demon lord might cause statues to crack, bleed or collapse.

LIGHT: Light may seem to change or dim in the presence of a powerful demon. Dawn may come late and dusk early, the sun may seem dimmer, or light turn redder or greyer.

PLANTS: Many demons of Type Three and above wither plants at their touch, and demon lords may cause plants to die as they pass. Sometimes flowers wilt where a demonic temptation has taken place.

PRIESTS: Priests of law or good may be affected by or sensitive to creatures of the Infernus. They may suffer distressing dreams after being in contact with such a creature, or may feel fidgety, nauseous or anxious in their presence. Low Skill Level priests confronted by potent demons may faint, collapse or even die.

SOLID MATERIAL: Stone may crumble or split in the presence of a demon, and metals corrode, tarnish or rust.

WATER: Some demons may turn fresh water stagnant by their touch or proximity.

WEATHER: Unseasonable weather sometimes accompanies demons. Examples include warm or cool breezes, high winds, summer snows, driving rain, or hurricanes, depending upon the creature's power.

WINE: Just as water is corrupted, so might wine be turned to vinegar by the glance or touch of a demon. (Equally, beer might turn sour, or coffee become bitter.)



ASSIGNING EFFECTS TO DEMONS

The idea that demons corrupt certain types of objects, or are offensive to certain types of people, is based on the assumption that certain things are somehow vulnerable or opposed to demons, and that the power of the demonic evil therefore has a destructive effect upon them. Babies are often considered innocent, and so are particularly disturbed by and sensitive to the profound corruption of demonkind. Plant growth and human fertility are examples of fragile growth, and so are vulnerable to the destructive influence of the Infernus. Lawful and good priests simply represent the antithesis (opposite) of these creatures. Etc. Thus, the Order of a demon may dictate the effects it has on the mortal world, and these effects may imply the type of demon abroad in the area.

Demons of the Heart, sponsoring treachery, are likely to have destructive affects upon things which are constant, dependable or honest. For example, priests of justice or truth, or enduring and solid materials like stone and metal.

Demons of the Mind, committed to lies and deceptions, might corrupt clear, honest and truthful things: Priests of truth and wisdom, glass, water, air and holy signs.

Demons of the Soul, opposed to the divine, are likely to disturb holy places and people: All priests, holy signs and anything associated by the gods of a particular area.

Demons of the Flesh, being arch-materialists, are harmful to the human and the intangible: Children, fertility, and plants may be affected by any of them. Foodstuffs and precious metals may ironically be destroyed by some thralls of Rofocale (gluttony) and Vapula (greed) respectively.

Demons of the Blood, being incomparably destructive, often adversely affect those things which give life or create growth: Typically, water, fertility, plants, the weather, and foodstuffs.

PURITY

Demons are corrupt, evil, and above all impure. A taint is a residue of this impurity. Therefore, whatever is considered clean and pure in your campaign is inimical to demons. The above list includes innumerable examples of things which cultures and religions have held to embody purity and holiness (Water and fire, bread and wine, the air, light, babies, etc.). The people of a fantasy world might hold similar beliefs, or consider quite different substances to be pure. Mithril, silver, crystal, bone and blood might all be possibilities. Those things which are pure to the cultures and religions of your

campaign world should often be corrupted by the presence and taints of demons.

Equally, a pure substance, especially in large quantities, might ward off a demon. For example, a specific demon might not be able to cross fresh water, might be burned by wine, or banished by sunlight. GMs may wish to ponder the idea of purity further, and consider how it might be incorporated into campaigns to add depth, atmosphere and drama to adventures.

BECOMING TAINTED

Any contact or dealing with a demon might cause a person or thing to become tainted. The severity of the impurity depends upon the nature of such contact, and the rank of the demon. Generally, demons of the first Canto do not impart heavy taints, while demon lords may severely soil mortals. Deliberate actions such as Summoning the creatures, and physical contact with them causes major taint. Contact with a demon's blood or, worse still, its heart, is particularly damaging. Accidental contact, resulting from being tempted, for example, causes less severe taints. The exact conditions under which a taint may be gained are given below.

PERSONAL TAINTS

Casual contact with a minor demon does not taint a mortal, but prolonged or intense contacts certainly may. Mortals who have intimate contact with demons, embracing one or eating demon-flesh for example, risk gaining taints. Those coming into regular casual contact with such creatures may also, eventually, develop mild taints.

Anyone being possessed, offering sacrifice to or summoning a demon could become tainted. Likewise, the use of spells such as Charm Demon, Lesser Pact, Invocation and Infernal Communion often taint mortals. Any spell which contacts, persuades, or binds demons, or which draws upon their powers risks tainting the caster. Spells which damage, banish or otherwise harm the creatures do not cause taints.

Contact with the blood or saliva of a demon may cause mild taints (e.g. if a warrior is spattered with gore during a fight). Contact with a demonic Gate, Cult object or altar may also taint mortals, as may the use of demonic magics, weapons and artifacts.

Other activities are also said to soil mortals. Eating food prepared by a demon, sleeping in a bed or eating from cutlery last used by a demon, and sharing wine with such beings may cause taints. Of course, such rumors may just be empty superstition.

Slayers, keeping themselves pure by special rituals, are less susceptible to such soiling. They remain pure if touched by demonic blood or saliva, and if they touch a demonic altar, Gate or Cultic

object. Petty corruptions leave them unscathed, too. Sleeping where a demon once slept, for example, leaving them untainted. However, should a Slayer become soiled, by using a demonic weapon or being possessed for example, he or she suffers the normal effects of a taint, and loses all special abilities until a three week fast is performed.

When a person is in danger of becoming tainted, he or she must save vs spells. If successful he or she is not tainted, but otherwise must roll a second time. If this second save is also failed, the GM should also select an appropriate specific taint from the list of examples below. The exact nature of each taint should reflect the personality of the demon that caused it, as well as its power and the way in which the taint was gained.

GENERAL

Animals, having more refined instincts, are very sensitive to demonic taints. Most creatures avoid demons and tainted mortals. Inherently evil or unclean creatures, on the other hand, may be attracted to tainted people. A heavily sullied person is usually avoided by animals. Dogs howl as he or she passes, birds take flight, horses become nervous if ridden by the person. Minor taints may provoke lesser reactions from animals. A loyal hunting hound skulks away from an infected master, a cat hisses as he or she passes, a bat wheels about his or her house throughout the night.

Sometimes, if the taint is particularly heavy, other mortals may react similarly. Laughter may inexplicably cease when the person enters a room (the mood just doesn't seem so jocular any more), babies may begin to cry unexpectedly, and others may become fidgety. Tainted mortals may also feel uncomfortable at holy places, in temples and in the presence of lawful or good priests. In such situations, they typically develop a nagging cough, feel an urge to yawn or vomit, or simply feel uncomfortable.

Often, a person is affected in the same manner every time he or she is tainted. In many cases, a person may thus gain an easily recognizable trademark or mannerism: Bats flap around a Thaumaturgist's tower after she has Summoned a demon; a Cultist coughs in church every Sunday after performing a sacrifice; etc.

SPECIFIC TAINTS

AWARENESS: The mortal becomes increasingly aware of one particular sin. This sin is always one to which the tainting demon is linked. Plots and conspiracies concerning the sin become more obvious (extra Insight checks or bonuses, perhaps), so that innuendo and veiled hints which might have eluded the mortal now seem more obvious. At the same time, the mortal may misinterpret innocent remarks, believing them to hint at a sinful act or plot.

COLD TOUCH: Tainted mortals might feel cold and clammy. At best, others might merely be unsettled by this, or assume the coldness to be the symptom of an illness. In extreme cases, the chill is obviously unnatural, and might even be cold enough to freeze water.

CONFUSED SENSES: One of the mortal's senses may be altered or confused by the taint. For example, all meat might taste rotten, milk sour, or honey bitter, even when they're not. Alternatively, the air might constantly smell sulphurous, or strange noises be half-heard in the dark.

DEMON'S EYE: The demon which caused the taint may see out of the mortal's eye and hear through his or her ears. This may be accompanied by a mild headache, or a sense of not being alone.

ECHO: One random phrase or word spoken by the demon recurs in the mortal's mind. In extreme cases, the victim might even believe that he or she hears the words spoken by a nearby or invisible presence.

HALLUCINATIONS: Such a mortal experiences one or more vivid waking dreams, often linked to the sphere of the demon which caused the taint. These might involve visions of defeated enemies returning, of demons, corpses, ruined villages, etc. The images are not controlled by any demon, and often stem from the darker side of the mortal's own personality or past. The experiences may have a slightly surreal quality, but the victim can never be sure that they are illusory.

HAUNTED: The tainted mortal may feel that he or she is being watched or followed, although such fears are groundless. He or she may, alternatively, catch glimpses of the demon hiding in the shadows, though on closer investigation find nothing there; or awake in the night with a pounding heart and a sense of not being alone.

ILLNESS: A demonic taint might have a harmful or debilitating affect upon a mortal. Nausea and vomiting may follow close contact with a demon. Drumming headaches might follow a demonic possession. A mortal might find his or her hand crippled by arthritis for a week after signing a pact with a demon lord.

REPEL ANIMALS: The tainted person becomes particularly repulsive to animals. Wild creatures flee in panic or attack in a fury. Domestic creatures shy away from the person, cows refusing to be milked, dogs stroked or horses ridden.

SCAR: Taints may manifest physical symptoms, which persist until the taint fades away. Burn-marks, scars,

rashes, ulcers, rotting patches of skin, and stains are all possible. Areas of skin touched by demons are particularly likely to be thus affected.

UNSETTLED DREAMS: The tainted mortal suffers from disturbing or horrific dreams. The contents of such nightmares are dependent upon the demon which caused the taint. So, mortals soiled by contact with a thrall of duke Botis (suicide) may dream of taking their own lives, or of their loved ones committing suicide. Those tainted personally by the duke, might have particularly vivid nightmares, and then wake to find a very real noose hanging over them.

OBJECTS' TAINTS

An object might become tainted if it is used for any evil purpose by or concerning demons. This includes pens used to sign pacts, knives used to offer sacrifices, the material components of Summoning spells, and a weapon with which a demon harms a mortal. Further, objects used by demons over prolonged periods may become tainted, including beds, drinking vessels, clothes, etc. Anything coming into intimate contact with these creatures may also become soiled. A weapon which draws a demon's blood may become corrupted, as may clothes and armor splashed by such gore, and it is said that if anything which touches a demon's heart should be discarded immediately.

Each time an object is in such intimate contact with a demon, or otherwise likely to become tainted, the GM should roll a percentage die: A Type One demon has a 50% chance of tainting the object. This percentage increases with the demon's power, 60% for a Type Two demon, 70% for a Type Three, 80% for a Type Four, 90% for a Type Five demon or demon lord.

GENERAL

Clothes and porous materials may soak up and exude the scent of the demon, or a smell closely associated with it. Sulphur and rotting flesh are typical scents. Animals may be repelled by a person carrying a soiled artifact, as if the person were tainted themselves.

Objects may also behave strangely in holy places and before holy people. For example, a scabbard might give way as a tainted sword clatters noisily to the floor in a temple. A tainted bottle or mirror might crack when a lawful good priest looks at it.

SPECIFIC

ALTERED TEMPERATURE: The tainted object

seems unnaturally cold, or else too warm (body-temperature, perhaps). If touched by a demon, this abnormal temperature may be concentrated where the object was in contact with the creature.

ATTRACT EVIL: A tainted artifact attracts creatures and perhaps people of evil alignment, or animals which symbolize evil. A mild taint might simply attract a few rats or bats, or a single hyena. More potent taints may cause an infestation of maggots, or attract a pack of rats, or a minor evil creature. A particularly severe taint might attract undead, giant rats, etc.

BLOOD: Stains or patches of human or demonic blood appear on the object. These may be tiny patches or large puddles, perhaps shifting or smelling of sulphur, depending upon the severity of the taint.

CAUSE DECAY: The tainted object rots, corrodes or decays anything which it is in prolonged contact with. A sword rots its scabbard, clothing causes its wearer an itching rash, a bowl causes the cupboard or shelf it is on to fall from the wall.

HARMFUL TO PLANTS: The tainted object causes plants to shrivel or die. Cut flowers placed near (or in) the object wilt; Leaves and stems touched by it crumble or die.

LURCHING: The object occasionally lurches or pulls: a sword wavers in one direction, a lantern pulls in a person's hand, or a goblet falls from its shelf. Such objects may pull towards or away from a certain thing linked with the demon which tainted them: The demon itself, sinners, an ongoing sin, etc.

MALICIOUS: The object seems almost to have a life of its own, and deliberately tries to harm animals and mortals. Its actions are always subtle, and arguably accidental. For example, a hammer slips from an anvil onto the blacksmith's foot, a lantern falls from its peg in the barn and starts a fire, a dagger works loose and falls from its scabbard so that an innocent passer-by cuts her foot treading on it.

REFLECTION: The image of the demon is visible in the tainted object. This might involve a shadowy reflection in a mirror, the distortion of a portrait or sculpture of a mortal, or the creature's outline appearing on a plain object.

REPEL ANIMALS: The tainted object has a particularly strong affect upon animals, who may shy away from the thing, flee from or attack whoever carries it.

UNSETTLED DREAMS: Any person sleeping in, by,

under or with such a tainted object suffers confusing or horrific dreams, some of which may seem prophetic or disturbingly real.

LOCATIONS' TAINTS

Usually areas do not gain demonic taints if a demon simply passes through a place, although its journey may be marked by minor corruptions: a stagnant pond, a dead dove, a withered lily, etc. Places may gain taints if a demon is worshiped or destroyed there, if a Gate is opened or a pact signed there, or if the demon loitered in the area for a few hours. Conducting a Summoning stains an area heavily, and lesser taints may result from two demons meeting in a certain spot or the death of a mortal whose soul was sworn to a demon. The residences of those who worship or have sold their souls to demons may also gain mild taints, even though the demon is neither worshiped nor is ever present there. Entire villages or towns may gain taints if a number of Seducers are active there.

The chances of a place becoming tainted are broadly the same as for an item, i.e. a Type One demon has a 50% chance if tainting the object, a Type Two demon has a 60% chance, rising to 90% for a Type Five demon or demon lord. But as always the GM should feel free to use his or her own judgement in preference to a die roll.

Certain events should certainly taint a place, regardless of the creature's Type, such as the Summoning or destruction of a demon, and the casting of a powerful demonic magic. The area affected and the severity of the taint are determined by the GM. As well as the area becoming generally tainted, the GM may wish to select a specific taint, as appropriate, from the list below.

GENERAL

Places tainted by a demonic presence or summoning are typically devoid of animal life, all pure creatures having fled the area. There are no bird songs, and no natural rustlings emanate from the undergrowth. Only a few carrion birds, insects, and other unclean creatures skulk around ominously. Animals led into the area behave erratically, and may become uncooperative or even aggressive. Particularly stubborn animals, such as mules, refuse to enter these places. Only unclean creatures are encountered, such as rats, hyenas, vultures and maggots. Plant life also seems sparse. In the spot where a demon stood or was summoned, every plant may have shrivelled and died. Solid objects may be cracked and corroded. For example, iron rusts, copper tarnishes, silver blackens, soft stones crumble, while hard rock, glass and even diamond crack.

SPECIFIC TAINTS

ALTERED TEMPERATURE: The tainted area seems unnaturally cold, a strange chill in the air penetrating even the thickest clothing. Alternatively, the ground and rocks may be very cold to the touch, a warm or parching breeze might blow across the area, or the sun's heat may beat down with unnatural strength.

ATTRACT EVIL: The tainted area not only attracts several creatures which typify evil (bats, rats, etc.), but also several dangerous creatures. Minor wandering undead are particularly likely to stray into such places.

DAMAGED PLANT LIFE: Plants do not merely seem sparse, but are almost entirely absent. Either plants have simply vanished, or they have withered, crumbled, or burned away.

DECAY: The area has a particularly strong affect upon some type of solid material. This may be anything from wood (entire wooden houses might crumble and rot within a day), to dead flesh (bodies decomposing extremely fast, meat turning rotten, and leather saddles and armor rotting over night), to stone (pillars, walls and rocks splitting or crumbling).

HALLUCINATIONS: The area is plagued by phantom images, their complexity and clarity depending upon the demon's power. Minor demons may leave taints in which their silhouettes are occasionally visible in the night, or their their faces glimpsed momentarily in a pool or window. Stronger taints might involve surreal encounters, or visions repeating the events which caused the taint, or connected with the demon's sin.

HAUNTED: Until the taint is cleared, the souls of any mortals slain because of the demon's presence are condemned to haunt the area.

INFESTATION: Although normal animals are absent, a particular species of unpleasant or evil animal infests the area. Examples include a massive pack of rats, a large pack of hyenas, thousands of ravens, or millions and millions of maggots.

MALICIOUS: Unfortunate "accidents" occur with disturbing frequency in such places. Horses lose their shoes, carts slip from tracks, branches fall as travellers pass, embers leap from a camp fire to ignite sleeping blankets.

UNSETTLED DREAMS: Any mortal sleeping in this tainted area suffers from distressing dreams, usually reflecting the nature of the demon which caused the taint, and sometimes incorporating images of the event which caused the place to become tainted.

WITHOUT ANIMALS: Animals completely shun the area. Not even an insect or carrion bird may be seen. Carcasses lie untouched, even by maggots.

DURATION

Taints always fade away after a while. They linger according to the power of the demon involved, the nature of its actions and of mortals' sins. Generally, objects remain tainted for longer than people, and places remain tainted for longer than objects. Note that Slayers are affected differently from other mortals. They are immune from many taints, but if they are soiled, the taint remains until ritually cleansed. The list below gives an indication of typical durations. Adjust the time indicated in the list as follows:

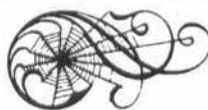
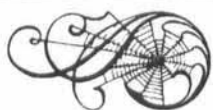
Demon Type	Taint lasts for:
1st & 2nd Circle Warriors, 1st Canto Seducers	1x time indicated
3rd Circle Warriors, 2nd & 3rd Canto Seducers, Thanes, Lieutenants	2x time indicated
4th Circle Warriors, 4th Canto Seducers, Governors, Generals	5x time indicated
5th Circle Warriors, 5th Canto Seducers, Dukes, Marshals	10x time indicated
Princes, Advisors	20x time indicated
King	50x time indicated
	or permanently (GMs option)

A DEMON'S PRESENCE: If a demon passes briefly through an area it remains untainted. Usually a type 1 or 2 demon soils an area for a period of time equal to the duration of the demon's stay in the place. So if a type 1 demon sat in a room for two hours, the room might be tainted for two hours thereafter.

DEMONIC OBJECTS: Any mortal using a magical item or weapon created by or for a demon becomes tainted for one day. Any scabbard, stand or receptacle used to hold the object also becomes tainted for one day.

DESTROYING A DEMON: Slaying a demon does not, directly, taint a mortal. However, weapons which damage a demon remain tainted for between one day. Any non-magical weapon which pierces the creature's heart could remain tainted for several centuries (GM's discretion). The ground upon which a demon's blood is spilt is tainted for a month.

GATES: Any demonic Gate, including places where sacrifices are held, remain permanently tainted while the Gate continues to exist (see ps 13-17). After the



Gate closes, the area remains tainted for a week. Anyone physically touching a Gate (e.g. an altar) remains tainted for one day.

FACTS: Pacts taint the mortal signatory for 1 week, and the paper signed to form the pact remains tainted until the mortal dies. Inks, quills and other accouterments carry a taint for a day. The site of the Pact remains tainted for one month. If the Pact spell is cast, but no deal is struck, the caster and the site are tainted for only one week.

PHYSICAL CONTACT: Objects used by a demon retain taints for one day. Mortals in casual physical contact with the creature (e.g. shaking hands) are tainted for only a few moments, those splattered by its blood are tainted for one day, and those in close personal contact with it are tainted for one week.

SACRIFICE: Any mortal conducting a sacrifice becomes tainted for two weeks. The implement used to kill the victim remains tainted for a month, and other accouterments (candles, bowls, etc.) are tainted for two days. The sites of sacrifices are usually tainted as any other Gate.

SPELLS: Many spells of the Infernal school taint the caster, the site and the material components involved in their casting. Spells which taint are those which manipulate and compromise with the forces of the Infernus, including Invocation, Call, Bind and Communion spells. These taint the mortal caster and the casting site for two days per Skill Level of the spell, and the material components and any assistants for one day per Skill level. Banish, Dismiss and Detect spells do not taint the caster, Summon and Pact spells have special effects (see above and below).

SUMMONING: A serious business, requiring the invocation and manipulation of the unclean powers of the Infernus, summoning taints a mortal for two days (Type One demon), two weeks (Type Five Demon), or even a month or more (for King Amdosias or Rundigard). Physical objects used in the ritual remain tainted for a similar period, while the site of the Summoning are affected for twice as long.

RANDOM TAINTS

Although GMs should ideally assign Taints based upon the sphere of the demon infecting an area, there may be times when it is simply more convenient or more unpredictable to roll randomly for a Taint. The following tables allow GMs to quickly determine the specific effects of a taint upon a person, object or place, simply by throwing 1d20.

MORTAL TAINTS

1: Awareness
2-3: Cold Touch
4-5: Confused Sense
6: Demon's Eye
7-8: Echo
9: Hallucination
10-11: Haunted
12-13: Illness
14-15: Repel Animals
16-17: Scar
18-19: Unsettled Dreams
20: Roll 2d10-1, and consult this table again, applying both results.

OBJECTS' TAINTS

1-3: Altered Temperature
4-5: Attract Evil
6: Blood
7-8: Cause Decay
9-10: Harmful to Plants
11-12: Lurching
13-14: Malicious
15-16: Reflection
17: Repel Animals
18-19: Unsettled Dreams
20: Roll 2d10-1, and consult this table again, applying both results.

LOCATIONS' TAINTS

1-3: Altered Temperature
4-6: Attract Evil
7-8: Damaged Plant Life
9: Decay
10-11: Haunted
12: Hallucinations
13-14: Infestation
15: Malicious
16: Unsettled Dreams
17-19: Without Animals
20: Roll 2d10-1, and consult this table again, applying both results.

REMOVING A TAINT

Normally, taints fade away after a short time. Sometimes, however, they may last for many years and, understandably, many people wish to remove their taints as soon as possible, without waiting for them to wear off. In these instances, appropriate spells or rituals are required.

Slayers may cleanse taints which they themselves have gained, as explained in Chapter 8, but cannot cleanse others. Some priestly magics prove effective include Atonement (if the taint was gained involuntarily), Heal, and the Inquisitor's Dispel Taint spell. At the GM's discretion, prolonged prayer, bathing in holy water or some other ceremonial cleansing may also remove a taint. Wizards may only remove a taint with a Wish spell.

GIFTS FROM THE LEFT HAND

• Chapter Four •

Mortals may seek demonic aid for a wide variety of reasons. They may be grief-stricken widowers seeking the resurrection of their wives, frightened soldiers seeking protection in battle, or power-mad wizards seeking world domination. But for all, a request for demonic aid is a dangerous or foolhardy option, as the creatures of the Infernus are treacherous and devious opponents.

DEMONIC ASSISTANCE AND ITS PRICE

The demons themselves are usually happy to grant assistance to mortals, provided that they can glean some advantage or profit in exchange. Most are primarily concerned with the internal politics of the Infernus, and seek firstly to advance within its ranks, but it is rare that mortals may directly affect these conflicts. More usually, they try to use the opportunity to spread their particular sins, thus gaining power. In some cases, mortals have been known to forfeit their immortal souls in exchange for the aid of demons.

Often demons grant "gifts" that require or encourage mortals to sin, or which inspire sin in others. Thus, a demon of familial betrayal might grant a magical sword which gains vast powers only after taking the life of the wielder's closest relation.

In some cases, a demon will aid a mortal without asking anything in return, since they benefit merely by granting the request. For example, a demon associated with the sins of lust or jealousy may freely grant a boon of beauty and sexual appeal, which thereby inspires lust and jealousy in others. In almost all cases, mortals who seek demonic assistance come to regret it. It is typically the powerful demons who are the most cunning, and their assistance, which is the most potent, is inevitably the least trustworthy.

DEMONIC SERVICES

Demons may agree to perform services for a mortal on the prime plane. Seducers and Warriors may be dispatched by dukes to harm or destroy a mortal's enemies. Through subtly manipulating natural forces, accidents may befall people or animals, crops may be destroyed, or natural "omens" falsified.

Demons are particularly likely to agree to destroy some one or thing if they can directly profit from it. The dukes thus prefer to use Seducers to destroy people, although the process is a slow one. If mortals can be consumed by laziness or insanity, for example, their sins fortify the demons as well as bringing about their downfall. Likewise, mortals who can be persuaded to commit criminal sins may be captured and executed (particularly if the demons conspire against them), which benefits the demons far more than if they slew them themselves.

Petitioners requesting a demon to immediately slay an enemy must offer considerable compensation to the demons, or at least persuade the fiends that the target has some valuable loot which might be taken. Additionally, many demons would rather capture a target than kill him outright. Gusion, duke of murder, would rather deliver the victim to the petitioner, who must then finish the job personally and commit a greater sin of murder, while Botis would wish to persuade the victim to commit a swift suicide rather than face a slow execution. Dukes such as Agares and Dantalion create particularly unpleasant fates for their captives.

If persuaded to act against a mortal, individual demons often add peculiar embellishments to their missions. For example, Agares (villainy) favors complex plots which harm numerous innocent bystanders, while Forneus (treachery) would prefer to inspire a friend or ally to act against the mortal.

NATURAL EFFECTS

Mortals may ask demons to intervene with the natural world. The demon lords may cause major natural effects such as a mighty storm or heavy rain and, at the GM's discretion, may cause such disasters as droughts, earthquakes and floods. All of these effects, however, are destructive, rather than creative. However, there is almost always some demonic taint to the weather caused by demons, something apparently disturbing or unnatural. Rain water may be oddly colored, or even poisonous; winds icily cold or uncomfortably warm; and so on. Likewise, some taint may linger a round the site of an "accident".

With greater ease, a demon may cause unfortunate "accidents". For example, a horse may lose a shoe or go lame, a rickety barn might collapse (perhaps crushing some virtuous mortal), or a dead tree might fall to block a path: The barn or tree would have fallen eventually, and horses often lose shoes. All the demon has to do is to influence when this happens.

Whether manipulating nature or precipitating accidents, demons must expend a great deal of willpower. The effort required is similar to that needed to open a Gate, and cannot be attempted frequently. GMs should note that while such "natural" events may add to the atmosphere of an adventure, player characters may become extremely frustrated if "accidents" too frequently befall them. Such events should form the backdrop to an adventure, while the plot itself focuses upon a more tangible conflict which will provide a satisfying resolution for the players.

DEMONIC INQUIRIES

Another major service often asked of demons is the provision of information. The honesty of each Infernal leader is given in the monster folio of the original Demons supplement, but those indications are simply guidelines. For instance, Runstibble answers 50% of questions truthfully, but he need not answer randomly. Rather, he is likely to answer honestly or dishonestly depending upon what it is in his interests to say, and his lies may be quite cunning fabrications. Nonetheless, demons often think and act against the laws of human logic, and not all are cunning, pragmatic, or even sane by mortal definitions. Their answers are often dependent upon their inexplicable personalities as much as upon what it is in their interests to say.

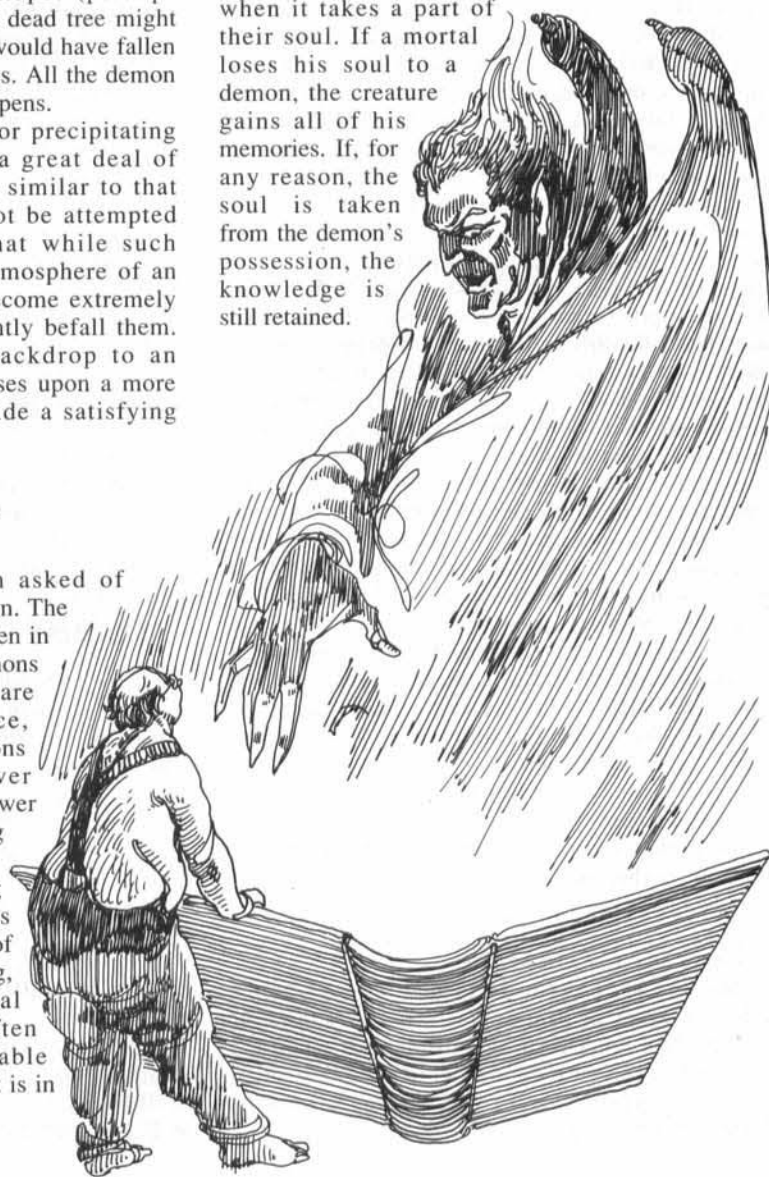
DEMONIC KNOWLEDGE

Each GM must decide how much knowledge each demon is privy to. Depending upon the mood and focus of the campaign, a GM may wish demons to have an almost god-like omniscience, or to know almost nothing of mortal affairs. Some possible extents of demonic knowledge are suggested ahead.

- Demons may know the circumstances of each sin committed in their own Order or Orbit. The actions, personalities and motivations of all those involved in a sinful incident are known to the creature.

- Seducers and Warriors only know of what they have encountered. Demon lords know all that their Seducers know of the mortal world.

- A demon gains some of a mortal's memories when it takes a part of their soul. If a mortal loses his soul to a demon, the creature gains all of his memories. If, for any reason, the soul is taken from the demon's possession, the knowledge is still retained.



- If a mortal considers, even briefly, committing a sin, the demonic patron of that sin is aware of their thoughts. Thus, for example, Sabnock (cruelty) knows when every mortal has ever considered deliberately hurting another, and Polyphon (prince of lies) knows every untruth that every mortal has ever thought of uttering.

- Every demon lord understands the motives and plans of every single evil (or chaotic) mortal.

- Demons know everything that occurs within the range of one of their Gates of Influence (p 14).

WORDING OF THE PACT

When a mortal makes a deal with a demon, formal oaths are often sworn, wherein the exact nature of the bargain is set out. A common method of doing this is through a thaumaturgist's *Pact* spell, where the bargain is set down on paper and signed by both the mortal and demon. Once the pact is concluded, the demon must fulfill its side of the deal to the letter, unless the mortal first breaks the pact. It is debatable whether or not oaths are binding on a demon if made without a *Pact* spell. Thaumaturgists tend to claim that the spell is necessary, while cultists and others claim that demons must always keep their oaths.

Exactly why demons might be bound to the virtue of honesty is left for each GM to decide. Perhaps it is a part of the Compact, from which demons of the Mind may be exempt; maybe they simply pretend to be so constrained so that mortals become complacent; or perhaps it is all some kind of twisted game which some or all of them play at.

In any case, many of the tragedies and treacheries arising from demonic aid stem from the loose or poor wordings of the demonic pacts. By making ambiguous deals, demons retain the ability to betray their mortal associates without breaking their agreements. Many blatant word-tricks are easily spotted by mortals who seek the demons' help, since they are usually on their guard against such treacheries. Still, a few mortals continue to be deceived by the oldest and most over-used ploys. A few of these are worth noting.

"I will not harm you."

This does not prevent the demon from sending its servants to butcher the mortals, but simply from acting against them personally.

"I shall give you vast wealth."

This does not prevent the demon from taking the wealth back again as soon as it is given. Nor does the demon explain what form it will take, or when the wealth will be given ("enough gold to sink a ship" would be most unwelcome if it appeared on deck during an ocean voyage).

"I shall not prevent you from leaving this place."

Strictly speaking, this does not commit the demon to letting the mortals leave unharmed, nor even alive.

"You shall live in peace until the day that you die."

A peaceful life may result from being completely isolated, or from being in a coma. "The day you die" may also be today.

"I will spare you the pain of her death."

This may mean almost anything. The demon may intend to kill the mortal before his love dies, drive him completely insane so that he no longer cares, or imprison him somewhere for eternity so that he never hears of her death.

"I shall give you a life-long lover beyond your wildest dreams."

Dreams, of course, are weird things, and one's "wildest" dreams may contain all manner of nastiness. The oath does not specify the lover's personality or morality. Such a lover need not be affectionate, caring, or even human. It may even be dedicated to shortening the mortal's otherwise long life. Alternatively, the lover may be so beautiful and perfect that her mere existence provokes others to plot her kidnap or seduction, the mortal's murder, etc.

"The city shall be yours to rule after our victory, if you will open the gates for my army. I shall instruct my commanders not to kill the livestock, nor to massacre the civilians, nor wilfully damage the buildings nor loot any dwelling. Nor will we linger after the battle, nor interfere with your monarchy in any other way."

This may seem like a fairly conclusive oath, but in fact it has one large flaw: While the commanders are ordered not to damage the city, the rank-and-file soldiers are not so restrained, and may even be ordered to raze the place completely.

"At noon tomorrow, if you summon me, I shall present to you a sword which inflicts wounds which do not heal without magical intervention. It shall be stronger than the sword you now carry, sharper and more durable, balanced identically, no heavier or lighter, and no shorter or longer. It shall have no other effects than these. In return you will give me the body of Aargrael Dastrig (slain by you two days ago), at that same time and place."

A suitably pedantic oath, a demon would have the greatest difficulty finding a way to betray the mortal. The exact nature of the demon's service and payment are specified exactly. However, it is unlikely that any demon would agree to such a well worked out oath, unless the corpse in question was outrageously important to it.

PAYMENT

When bargaining with a demon, a mortal must agree upon the price to be paid for the demonic assistance. Except for the rare occasions when demons offer aid without an explicit payment, the mortal must pledge his soul to the demon, perform a service, commit a number of sins, or present it with physical gifts.

PAYMENT IN SOULS

Crass and foolish demons may simply demand the promise of the petitioner's soul in return for their aid. Ultimately, this is what every demon would most like to gain in any exchange. But few mortals are stupid or desperate enough to surrender their essences so easily, and so demons are constantly striving to find new ways of tricking mortals into losing their souls. A well used ploy is to demand that the mortal serves the demon in the Infernus for a year as payment for a favor, while in truth the year is a period of unspeakable agony, in which the demon tortures the mortal so unbearably that the soul is willingly given to end the pain.

PAYMENT BY SERVICE

Some more powerful demons mastermind complex plots to spread sin and moral decay across the prime plane, and welcome the assistance of powerful mortals in these affairs. The demon may require a certain person to be assassinated, a magical artifact stolen or destroyed, or rumors circulated as payment for demonic assistance. Unless it believes that such mortals might serve it again in the future, demons have no qualms about sending mortals on suicidal expeditions or framing them for the crimes of more valuable allies. In most cases, a demon will ask mortals to perform a service linked to its own particular sins. Thus, demons of the the Blood may require assassinations to be performed, demons of the Mind asking that false rumors be spread, and so on. Occasionally, demons may wish to kill, discredit or infernally taint a particularly troublesome slayer or Paladin, or some other enemy of the Infernus.

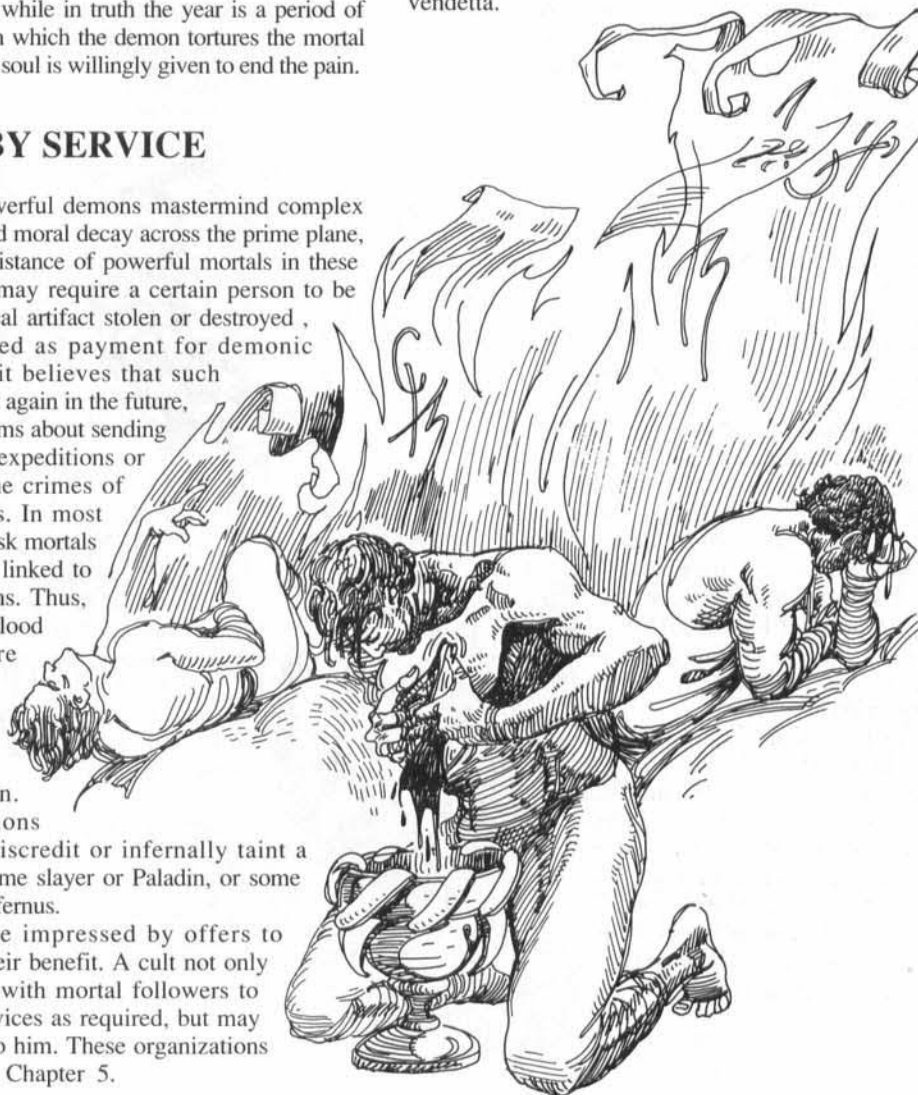
All demons are impressed by offers to establish cults for their benefit. A cult not only supplies the demon with mortal followers to commit sins and services as required, but may also sacrifice souls to him. These organizations are explained fully in Chapter 5.

PAYMENT BY SIN

If they have no single service which they wish to be performed, demons are often content to urge mortals into committing sin. After all, each time anyone commits the sin which they preside over, the demons gain power. Thus, each may ask a particular heinous or distasteful sin be committed as payment, the sin varying according to the demon's Order or Orbit.

It is easy to imagine what acts some demons might demand. For example, Gusion, duke of murders, might require the murder of an innocent as payment for simple assistance, or the massacre of a village or region in return for great boons.

By contrast, other demons might require more subtle and difficult payments, asking mortals to encourage others to commit sins. Botis (duke of suicides) might demand that a certain number of suicides be provoked, or Tufforp (revenge) might require a mortal to assist in a particularly unreasonable vendetta.



PAYMENT BY SUMMONING

Greater demons are often eager to have themselves or their minions roam the prime plane freely, in order to tempt mortals, punish betrayals and win souls. Such roamings are not without risk, and a powerful demon would be loathe to ignore the politics of the Infernus for any length of time, but sometimes even the greatest of creatures may have reason to personally visit individual mortals. Any mortal able and prepared to summon demons and let them loose might do so in order to extract favors and concessions from the rulers of the Infernus.

PAYMENT IN PHYSICAL OBJECTS

There are sometimes physical objects from the prime plane which are coveted by the demons, and these artifacts may be required as payment for demonic aid. Magical devices, with powers beyond the demon's own, may be highly prized. Any object enabling the demon to cast additional spells, if only on the prime plane, is of value, though it is liable to be of equal worth to its mortal owner.

Potent magical artifacts which harm or hinder demons may also be sought out by the rulers of the Infernus. Even if they cannot use these objects themselves, they can at least ensure their destruction, or keep them from the clutches of their enemies.

The physical remains of notable mortals are also important to demons. If an entire corpse resides in the Infernus it cannot be resurrected without the demon's cooperation. The bodies of notable slayers and inquisitors are particularly sought after, along with the remains of priests and wizards whose followers might perform services for the corpse's safe return.

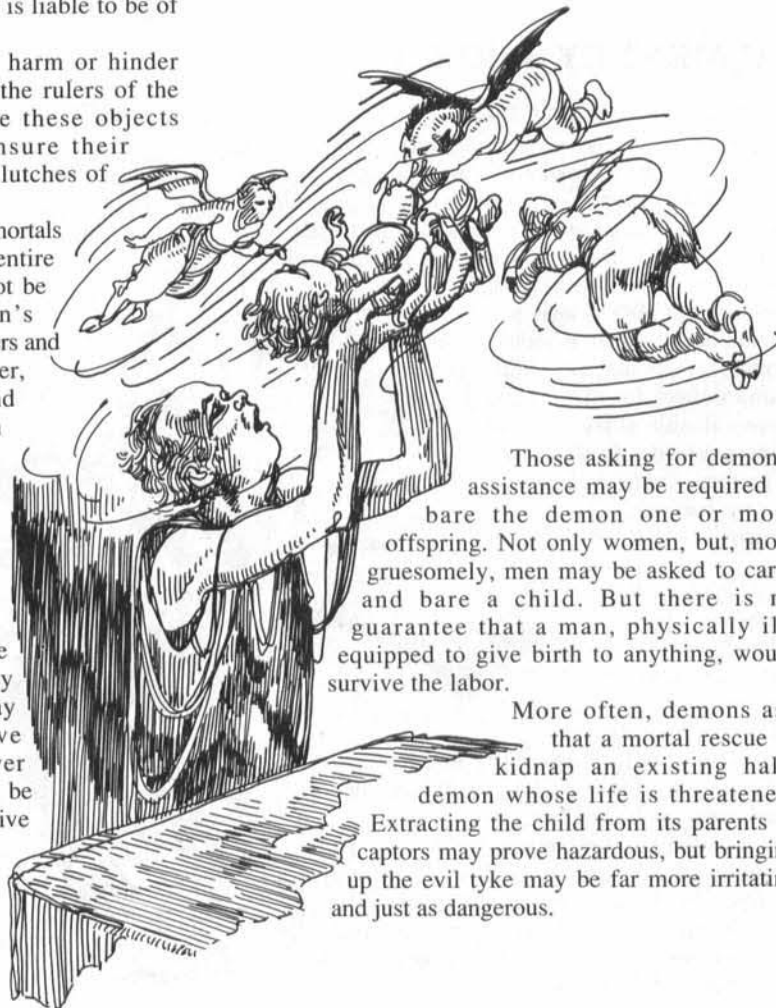
Live enemies are particularly prized. The rulers of the Infernus are always impressed by any offer to deliver mortal foes to the Infernus alive, where they may be kept securely in perpetuity.

Finally, many demons are dominated by the very sins which they sponsor. Some powerful demons may fulfill their own desires, or have cravings which no mortal could ever satisfy, but the lesser ranks may often be bribed with. Demons of greed may give aid in return for riches or works of art, demons of gluttony demanding bizarre banquets, and so on.

Demons also value or collect articles with poetic or symbolic significance to them, much to the mystification of mortals. There seems no practical reason for their interests, and perhaps they are simply collectors, enthusiasts hoarding memorabilia, but mortals offering imaginative bribes invariably receive favorable hearings from demons. As examples, a demon of betrayed love would be eager to own the heart of a woman abandoned by seven husbands; a demon of miserly greed might want the purse of a wealthy skinflint who starved because he was too mean to buy food; a golden brooch for which three sisters had murdered each other might delight a demon of envy.

PAYMENT BY DEMONIC CHILD-BEARING

Many demons wish to spread their foul seed throughout the mortal plane, and may seek surrogate parents to bare their children, or guardians to look after them once they are born.



Those asking for demonic assistance may be required to bare the demon one or more offspring. Not only women, but, more gruesomely, men may be asked to carry and bare a child. But there is no guarantee that a man, physically ill-equipped to give birth to anything, would survive the labor.

More often, demons ask that a mortal rescue or kidnap an existing half-demon whose life is threatened. Extracting the child from its parents or captors may prove hazardous, but bringing up the evil tyke may be far more irritating and just as dangerous.

PAYMENT IN ARREARS

Demons may propose that, in return for a service or object, a mortal may simply "owe them a favor". In most instances, demons have no way of forcing mortals to keep their sides of the bargains, but welshing on an oath is an unparalleled method of raising a demon's wrath, and a powerful demon is a deadly enemy. Demons, by contrast, have made cheating mortals an art form.

Exactly what a demon might demand at any future date depends firstly upon its plans and motivations. Demons may use such mortals as pawns in their greater plots, to encourage their sins, to eliminate mortal traitors and enemies, and so on. More vindictive creatures may merely wish to ensure that the mortal is severely inconvenienced, or destroyed, not wishing any "petty mortal" to get the better of them.

Most importantly, the exact wording of the oath determines what service the demon may demand:

"Do for me one favor."

The demon may reasonably ask the mortal to perform any feat on their behalves. However, they are rarely foolish enough to ask a mortal to perform a suicidal task, since the mortal will inevitably refuse, though if the mortal foolishly consents, so much the better. More often, the demon request some apparently innocuous service, where the danger to the mortal is not evident.

"I may take one thing from you."

Usually proposed in exchange for an enchanted artifact, the mortal is unlikely to see the demon again until the day he or she dies. Then, of course, the demon or it's servant arrives to claim that one thing, the mortal's soul.

"We shall negotiate your payment later."

Demons typically view this as an open invitation to harass and terrorize a mortal for the rest of his life, forcing as many services from them as possible. Further, once a demon has established that a mortal is unscrupulous enough to serve it, it may return or send its servants to them in the future, hoping to persuade or bully them into performing further favors for it, with or without the demon giving aid in return. GMs must decide the extent to which a demon may return to victimize mortals in this way, depending upon the terms of the Compact in their campaigns.

CHALLENGES

The demon lords are immortal. Many have held their ranks for centuries. After they have made and manipulated so many thousands of oaths, the novelty and achievement of cheating mortals begin to wear thin. They

become complacent, arrogant, and bored. Thus, many are delighted when an innovative mortal presents them with an interesting challenge. Furfur, duke of pride, seems unable to turn down an original challenge, and Forneus (treachery) is also easily persuaded, being unable to accept that any mortal could gain victory in a battle of wits. The two usual forms of challenges which demons will accept, are innovative oaths, and competitions.

OATHS

While demons become used to dealing with strict bargains, a truly interesting oath is a rare thing. The opportunity to exercise their cunning is rarely passed up by the demon lords.

The following oaths are not strict and formal, but are obscure or unusual. They provide the demon with interesting puzzles to wrestle with, while allowing the mortal the chance to make great gains without paying the demon in return.

Such oaths need not be proposed by the mortal (although the phraseology used here implies that the mortal is speaking), but might be suggested to mortals by a bored demon. Player characters might become embroiled in a mortal's attempt to squirm out of one of these oaths. A demon could make such a proposal to a player character.

"I may request your aid in an undertaking upon the mortal plane seven times. If the task is possible and does not violate the Compact, you must comply. After the seventh request is fulfilled, you may take my soul. Should you fail to fulfill any request, you may never have my soul."

The mortal may attempt to thwart the demon's efforts to fulfill the requests. Should the demon succeed six times, the trick is to never ask for the seventh favor. Of course, most demons can work this out, too, and they must force the mortal into a situation of such pain or peril that the seventh request must be made in order to save the mortal's life or end his suffering.

"My father was slain by three men. I seek an enchanted sword, as the one my cousin Llwydd once owned, to aid in my revenge. When I have killed all three of these men I shall found a cult in your honor, and offer sacrifice to you for ten years."

The mortal might get out of this arrangement by ensuring that someone else actually kills the three villains, thus gaining both a sword and revenge without having to establish a cult. The demon, of course, may send its servants to ensure that all three are slain by the correct mortal.

COMPETITIONS

Some demons enjoy a challenge, once in a while, and can become quite enthusiastic if they are asked to

make an effort to gain a soul. Demon lords rarely compete for anything less than a whole soul (or maybe several), but can be persuaded to pit their wits against challenging opponents for high stakes. Indeed, the higher the stakes, the more interested they become. The following are examples of competitions which demon lords might accept. Each could form the basis of an interesting adventure, or even a whole campaign. Again, these proposals are phrased as if offered by the mortal.

"At midnight the consul's carriage sets out for Orpus. I shall be guarding him. If you can slay him before noon you may have my soul. If, at that time, he still lives, then I will summon you again and you must give me that sword which we discussed."

Of course, the mortal never claimed that the consul would be in the carriage, nor whether it would take the usual rout. The demon may note this, and should also realize that the mortal has not specified that the consul may not be slain before the carriage leaves.

"The shaman crouched beneath that palm has sworn on the bones of the gods that he will not touch nor speak with a woman. The sister of the headman is elderly and blind. If you can cause them to lust after one another, I shall sacrifice my first-born to you, starve my sacred oxen and give you my soul. If you fail, then you must grant that I become irresistibly attractive to all women who set eyes upon me."

A demon would realize that the easiest way for a mortal to win this contest would be to murder one of the celibates. So, added to the challenge of corrupting these two, it must keep them alive. Even if the demon lost, it would delight in granting the mortal's boon in inconveniently extreme terms.

"If (and only if), in three years, you destroy the Pure Knights of Alvaine; every castle, Knight and squire; I shall grant you my soul, and I shall order every priest of law in my lands murdered, and I shall pass my kingdom to a successor nominated by you. But if you fail, Duke of the Infernus, then I, though mortal, I shall have your soul!"

(GMs might use this competition as the backdrop to an epic campaign. Should the duke fail, the king would have a prize beyond price to the other rulers of the Infernus... assuming that demons have souls.)

DEMONIC ARTIFACTS

The following objects are examples of demonic cunning. Each was created to fulfill a mortals' expressed desires, while spreading the sins of, or at least, amusing their creators.

POLYPHON'S LIVING MASKS

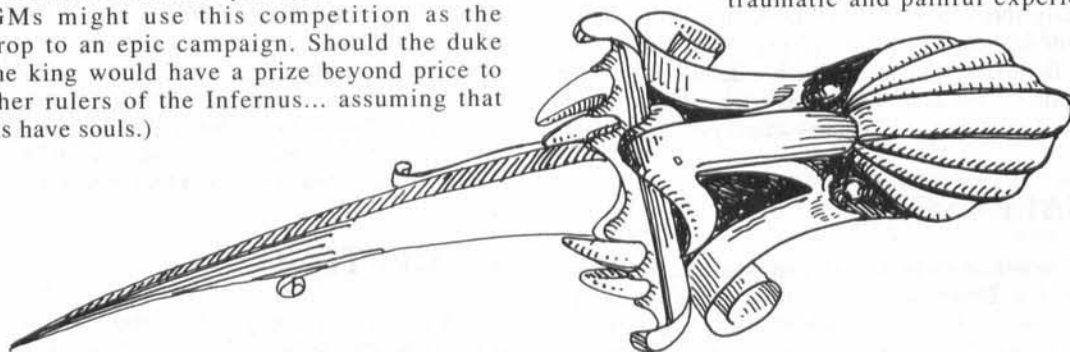
Two hundred years ago, an evil wizardess named Grennan obtained from the Great Polyphon, a knife forged from one of the demon's own teeth. With it, she could peel the face and scalp from any humanoid she killed with it, male or female, and were it like a mask.

Polyphon had dealt treachery in the bargain, however. True, Grennan could now wear the face and scalp of any person, smoothing it onto her own head, but she found that once applied, the masks could not be removed. She could never return to her original appearance. Forced to kill more and more people to evade her ever-increasing numbers of enemies, Grennan's capture and execution became inevitable. The knife, however, was never found.

Polyphon's knife is a short blade made of browned fang, six inches long. It is slightly curved, single edged, and wrapped in grey leather. When used in combat it functions as a normal dagger, but cannot be broken by any natural means, nor affected by magic. If used to skin or butcher carcasses, it gives the wielder the deft skill of a master butcher. Hides thus taken never rot or wear thin, but any meat cut by it quickly turns rancid.

The "masks", scalps and faces peeled away by the knife, are thin, limp skins, which never shrivel, rot or turn pale. By pressing the mask to his face, a character completely alters, physically, taking on the features of the victim from whom the mask was taken. Not merely the facial characteristics and hair, but also build, body and other physical characteristics. The disguise is, in all respects, perfect. Further, magical means may not be used to discern the person's original identity, and only a Wish or Limited Wish spell may counter its effects.

Once a mask has been put on, there is only one way to remove it: It must be peeled away with the knife. Of course, to have one's own head skinned is a gruesomely traumatic and painful experience



which may well prove fatal (only characters with Constitutions of 18 or higher may perform the operation themselves). Any character who attempts to do so takes 2-12 points of damage, and must make a systems shock roll each round until a new mask is applied. A failed systems shock roll results in the character's death.

It is unnecessary, of course, for the knife's owner to use the masks to disguise himself. More sensible owners might use them to disguise their servants and spies. Further, the masks may be successfully used to disguise a demon or half-demon, so the knife itself could be of great use to a demon or demon lord.

THE LILY GARDEN

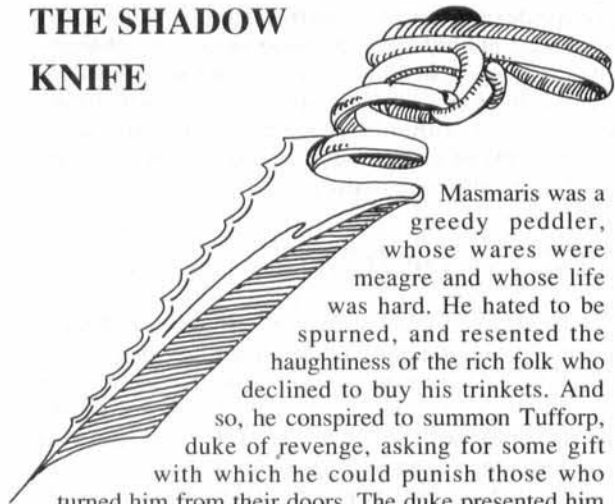
The Lily Garden was designed and created by a powerful Seducer of the Order of the Mind. Posing as a gardener, the demon approached a grieving King and offered to plant a garden to commemorate the death of a beloved Queen. Within a year, the garden was complete, trees having grown with unnatural rapidity and shrubs blossomed in their first spring.

The King loved the garden, and cried with the joy of new-found innocence as he sat in it, remembering his lost love. He lost his appetite for politics, and became sickened by the corruption and falsehood of the world, preferring to seek solace in the tranquil beauty of the garden than dealing with the difficulties of Kingship. He began to avoid his responsibilities, seeking comfort in the other-worldly paradise, rather than confronting the realities of his grief and rank, and so the Seducer scored a notable victory.

The lily garden still remains today, surrounded by a high wall. It evokes memories of a lost innocence, lifts the burden of responsibility, and dispels worries and fears. Swans glide across lakes overhung with weeping willows and flowering cherry trees. Lilies, snowdrops and chrysanthemums garland the lawns, and fountains, silver-birch trees and pagodas dot the landscape. It is, however, a dangerous place. Those who spend long in the garden find it increasingly difficult to face the harshness of the world outside. Those who spend more than 1 turn in the garden must save vs wands each round thereafter. Failure forces the character to fall into a reminiscent euphoria and wish to remain in the garden.



THE SHADOW KNIFE



Masmaris was a greedy peddler, whose wares were meagre and whose life was hard. He hated to be spurned, and resented the haughtiness of the rich folk who declined to buy his trinkets. And so, he conspired to summon Tufforp, duke of revenge, asking for some gift with which he could punish those who turned him from their doors. The duke presented him with a copper saw, thin and sharp, with which he could cut away his shadow from his body and send it out to persecute his enemies.

Delighted, the peddler took the blade and fell to "punishing" those who disregarded his wares. Whenever he was turned out from a village or castle without having sold anything, Masmaris would hide himself in a wood or copse and, severing his shadow, would send it to steal or break the peoples' possessions during the night. One night, however, he was apprehended by a group of superstitious bandits, who bound him up and, finding that he cast no shadow, burned him as an evil wizard. The saw has since passed through many hands, and no one knows what became of the peddler's shadow, which may still roam the world stealing and destroying at will.

Any class of character may use the saw, if they can discover what it does and how to use it, but the process of cutting the shadow from the body is an extremely painful one, requiring three rounds of concentrated effort and a successful Stamina Check. (On a failed Check, the character faints from the pain, and remains unconscious for 1-3 rounds).

Once the shadow is separate, it may be ordered to go any distance from the caster, for any length of time. However, a meeting point should be prearranged for the shadow to rejoin the body, as it has no special ability to seek out its owner. While the shadow is absent the character suffers no disadvantage, except that, casting no shadow, he or she is likely to attract curiosity or hostility. The shadow itself may move around freely, crossing water and land with equal ease at a movement rate of 10. It may carry small objects (totalling no more than five pounds in weight), push items over, extinguish candles by touch, and cause nightmares by passing across a sleeping person. It will usually victimize anyone whom its owner orders it to torment, but it always acts in a manner which will cause one person to blame another, thus encouraging groundless vengeance. Hog lot gates are unlatched (so that the

pig-herder attracts his master's wrath), disputed heirlooms are hidden to provoke suspicions of theft, swords hung above beds may fall on their owners, and so on. In any case, the visit of a shadow is likely to provoke considerable discord, including accusations of carelessness, incompetence, theft, vandalism, and even murder.

VISIONS OF DEATH

Powerful demons of the Heart or Blood sometimes grant the power to foresee the approach of death. Of course no one, demon or mortal, can predict the future with accuracy, but by the power of the Vision of Death a mortal may "see" how close to death another person is. If an imminent death is likely (from disease, murder, or any other cause) a pallid, cloaked figure, perhaps Death himself, is seen standing at the victim's shoulder; if a possible death approaches, but is still distant, the pale figure is seen watching from afar.

Such a power therefore allows a mortal to discern whether or not an illness is likely to be fatal, who an assassin's target may be, and so forth. As a battle approaches, an image of death moves closer to a soldier. When a person takes up a poisoned chalice, an image appears at their shoulder. The power may also provide some warning of an immediate attack, an approaching disaster or plague, or any other life-threatening event, but gives no clues as to the nature of the threat. Moreover, the mortal is often unable to perceive his own approaching demise.

This gift may be bestowed as a charm or talisman (such as a crystal sphere through which the mortal must gaze). Typically, the lords of the Infernus bestow this power upon a precious stone or a dead sinner's eye, which they insert into the mortal's eye socket. (Should such a charm ever be torn out, the mortal takes 3-18 points of damage.) When a demon inserts such a charm, it usually retains the original eye. Through further enchantments, the demon may use these eyes to spy on their mortal donors, either seeing the world as they see it, or peering into their minds.

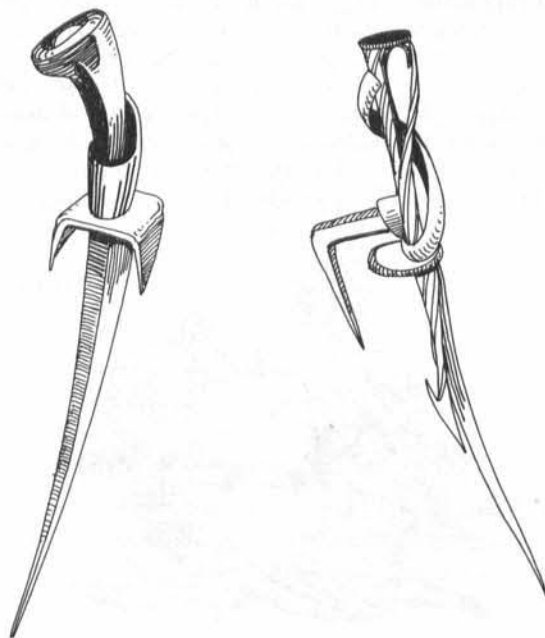
Duke Forneus has been known to bestow a special version of this gift. He implants a black crystal into an eye socket, and assures the mortal that should his own death be imminent, this "eye" will begin to ache painfully: Indeed, the gem does ache if the owner's life is imperilled, but it may also ache at other times, according to the duke's whims. These false warnings are carefully timed to breed distrust between the mortal and his companions. While sleeping, for example, the mortal is woken by the pain and notices a trusted ally approaching; or while dining at a banquet, the eye aches as a servant pours out a fresh measure of spiced wine. By thus spreading false suspicions, Forneus makes a mortal more likely to betray his friends, and thrives on the resulting sin.

JUDGING BLADES

Forged by a demon of the Mind, several Judging Blades are known to exist, and others may be created in return for a suitable payment. These are thick iron daggers, lead-grey and crudely formed, yet curiously light and well balanced. They are easy to use in combat, and seem almost eager to strike against good foes, slashing and stabbing with effortless ease (+3 against opponents of good alignment, and +1 vs. all others). But their main power is to detect lies, and to punish liars.

To use the knife to test for untruths, the wielder must push its sharp edge against a subject's bare throat until beads of blood appear along the blade. Any number of questions may then be asked, but if any of the answers are inaccurate or untrue, the blade jumps in the wielder's hand, slicing the subject's throat open. The victim collapses, and dies after one round unless a Cure Serious Wounds or Limited Wish spell is cast immediately. If all answers are completely honest, the knife cuts no deeper, but where it drew blood it leaves a marked scar.

Unfortunately, these blades are not completely reliable. Firstly, they are deliberately prejudiced, seeking tiny lies or half truths. Secondly, they do not always cut as soon as a major lie is spoken, but might wait to act after a subsequent query or at the end of an interrogation, so that the questioner does not know which of the victim's answers were untrue. Further, there is a 20% chance that a blade will simply ignore a particularly audacious or shrewd lie, perhaps in appreciation of the liar's skill. And finally, there is a 10% chance that a knife will vindictively kill any lawful good subject, regardless of the veracity of his answers. So, although the wielder may come to rely heavily upon the verdict of a Judging Blade, its occasional errors may be extremely misleading. The greatest liars may sometimes survive, while the innocent die.



THE PERFECT STATUE

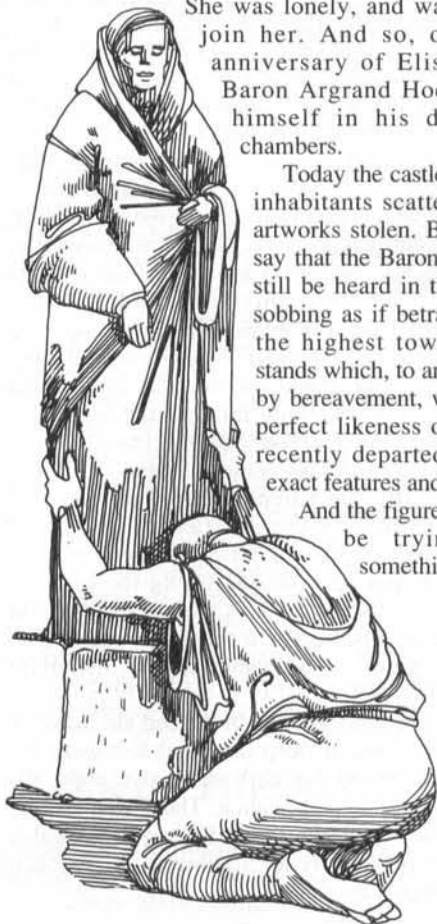
Two decades ago, a wealthy Baron held a strong castle, full of bright paintings, minstrels, servants and fine wines, particularly fine wines. The Baron, Argrand Hoefandt, was a fine courtier, often absent hunting, seeing to his estates, or unconscious through drink. His timid wife, Elisia, became lonely and depressed, and eventually took her own life. Racked by guilt and regret, and filled with strong wine, Baron Hoefandt appealed to Botis, duke of suicides, to return Elisia to him. The demon explained that he could not resurrect her, but instructed the mortal to have a life sized statue of his wife made and installed in her chambers. This done, the Baron was astounded that the statue opened its eyes and smiled at him, a smile exactly like his dead wife's.

Over the following months, the statue came to resemble Elisia more and more, the hair, features and expressions became identical to hers, although it never spoke or moved. The Baron became convinced that the statue was, in fact, his wife, and held long conversations with her, he talking and she replying with smiles, tears and frowns. Soon the Baron came to realize that the figure was trying to tell him something:

She was lonely, and wanted him to join her. And so, on the first anniversary of Elisia's death, Baron Argrand Hoefandt hung himself in his dead wife's chambers.

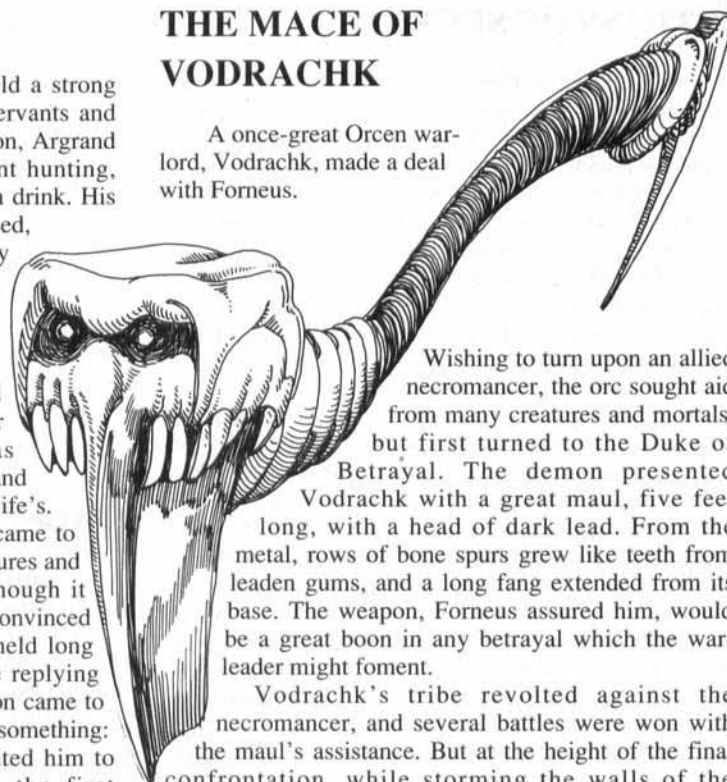
Today the castle is a ruin, its inhabitants scattered, and its artworks stolen. But the locals say that the Baron's ghost may still be heard in the corridors, sobbing as if betrayed. And in the highest tower, a statue stands which, to anyone scarred by bereavement, will seem the perfect likeness of their most recently departed, with their exact features and expressions:

And the figure will seem to be trying to say something to them...



THE MACE OF VODRACHK

A once-great Orcen warlord, Vodrachk, made a deal with Forneus.



Wishing to turn upon an allied necromancer, the orc sought aid from many creatures and mortals, but first turned to the Duke of Betrayal. The demon presented Vodrachk with a great maul, five feet long, with a head of dark lead. From the metal, rows of bone spurs grew like teeth from leaden gums, and a long fang extended from its base. The weapon, Forneus assured him, would be a great boon in any betrayal which the war-leader might foment.

Vodrachk's tribe revolted against the necromancer, and several battles were won with the maul's assistance. But at the height of the final confrontation, while storming the walls of the necromancer's castle, the maul seemed to lose its power, the war-leader was slain, and the orcs fled (one, it is said, with the mace). It was as if the maul had betrayed its master.

The weapon is notable for its bizarre appearance, fiendish teeth protruding from the lead. The primary function of the fangs, however, is neither ornamental nor practical. These delicate spikes may snap off if the weapon is lain down or stood on either end, and while it may normally be kept on a rack or rested across two logs, it cannot safely be lain aside at will, but must be carried, ready. (Many folk may find it hard to negotiate with or trust a foe who refuses to lay down such a mighty weapon.) Should a tooth snap off, another "grows" back to replace it within a week. However, the maul gains a -1 penalty to hit for each tooth which breaks off until a new one grows in.

The maul is also extremely heavy. It requires a Strength of 17 to wield, and inflicts a base 2d6 damage, +1 (or more) for its demonic enchantment. The weapon's extra damage is usually +1, but if the wielder is facing a supposed friend or ally, or is fighting against forces which he or she promised to support, the maul's extra damage may rise as high as +4 (GM's discretion), depending upon how grossly treacherous the wielder is being. However, when the wielder is most heavily relying upon the maul, the weapon cruelly fails him, becoming -4 to hit and inflicting only half its normal damage, with no magical additions.

POTIONS OF SECRETS

From Anthraxus, Lord of Betrayal, demons' servants may sometimes gain a potion which "betray" the secrets of others to the drinker. This is a grey-brown, mildly poisonous liquid, smelling of decay and tasting of sour milk, which is typically procured in beaten brass amphora.

Anyone who drinks a draught may stare intensely at as many targets as he wishes, and discern their darkest secrets on a successful Insight Check. Considerable concentration is required, and the character must remain silent and uninterrupted for half an hour, although he or she may move around, eat, drink, etc., as usual. The effect of each measure lasts for 1-6 hours.

Sins, crimes and secrets of which the target is ashamed may be betrayed to the viewer. Generally, 1-4 such secrets are perceived per half-hour of scrutiny. If the target is completely without shame, nothing is revealed. However, the potion also "reveals" one extra, false "secret" in each Good character observed, usually a sin or weakness to which the viewer particularly hates or is fond of exploiting. Additionally, the potion actively attempts to discredit any target that Anthraxus particularly hates, notably slayers, inquisitors and Paladins, the user perceiving them to be guilty of murdering innocents, accepting bribes, making bribes, etc. The potion's user, of course, will not be aware that its insights are adulterated with slanders.

The piercing stares and sullen concentration necessary to glean information are bound to be noticed by anyone nearby the user. Even if the viewer is hidden, a target making an Insight Check gains an unnerving sense of "being watched". Finally, when the effect of the potion expires, the character must save vs. poison or lose 1-4 HTK and vomit painfully.

DEVOURERS OF DISEASE

Some lesser demons, serving Dantalion (Duke of Despair), have a special remedy, guaranteed to cure any illness. Created by the Duke, their miracle cure is a jelly made of innumerable little spheres, like fishes' eggs. The paste must be swallowed, the demons say, and the illness will be destroyed. More accurately, the infection is "consumed", the spheres hatching to produce dozens of little serpents, each the sickly colour of gangrene. These worms magically devour the illness, and once they've completed that task (in 1-6 days), begin to gnaw at the victim's insides. Thus, the original disease is cured, as promised, but is replaced by a far more agonizing and lethal condition. Each day, the serpents inflict 1-6 points of damage upon their

host. He may recover three hit points per day through bed-rest, but inevitably suffers from an extremely slow and painful demise.

Cure Wounds spells may be used to heal damage, but the serpents continue to chew at their host's intestines, while *Cure Disease* spells and their like have no affect. *Limited Wish* and *Dispel Evil* spells are the most likely methods of curing this condition. In the latter case, the holy water used as a physical component in the spell must be drunk by the victim, causing the serpents to flee from his body, wriggling, blood-soaked, from every orifice (mouth, ears, etc.) to die writhing on the floor, and causing a further 1-6 points of damage to their host. If such a cure cannot be procured, the victim's long, lingering death may well cause him to surrender to despair.

GALUMANN'S BLISSFUL BED

Count Galumann was a wealthy landowner during his lifetime, but was careless with his estates and inclined to lounge around while their were tiresome duties to attend to. This unfortunate temperament was encouraged by a Seducer of the Fifth Canto, a demon of the Flesh, who gave the Count whatever luxuries he wanted, to keep him comfortable and make him lazy. These gifts included a fireplace that always burned warmly, soft cushions, liqueurs which brought on sleep and, greatest of all, the Blissful Bed. This is said to be the most comfortable bed in the world, a huge four-post frame with a down-filled mattress three feet deep, quilted covers which are always snug but never too warm, satin sheets and thick piles of pillows. Galumann spent more and more of his day in this bed, dozing through most of the daylight and sleeping through the night, for only pleasant dreams came to those sleeping under these covers.

Gradually the Count became weaker and weaker through lack of exercise, and soon became sickly. His servants squandered his money, and his tenants went unpunished for neglecting their duties. When the Count died, his estates were bankrupt, and the contents of his house were auctioned. The current whereabouts of the demon's gifts, including the bed, are unknown.

Those who spend one night in the bed are instantly able to fall into a restful sleep (no save) and wake the next morning refreshed. On each successive night, the character must save vs petrification. Those who fail the save will not wish to leave the bed when they awake. This save is modified by a cumulative -1 for each additional night past the first.



SPREADERS OF THE INFECTION

• Chapter Five •



DEMONIC CULTS

Perhaps the most efficient method of spreading sin across the prime plane is to institutionalize it, to establish groups and organizations devoted to encouraging sins, or more usually, a specific sin. These groups, broadly termed as cults, take many forms. Many are associations of sinners, bound together by their desire to commit certain acts and protected or nurtured by a demon. Sometimes, they are made up of dupes, convinced to follow a false religion, to worship the disguised demon or to pursue a false idea. Some groups offer worship, service and sacrifice to the demon, while others are not evidently religious, their demonic patrons being content to spread sin, without requiring reward.

In most cases, the demons believe that they benefit from the cults' activities, and will often intervene to protect their loyal servants. Sometimes the demons issue detailed orders to the cults' leaders, or even send an underling to run the organization.

WORSHIP

Demons do not need worship. They are not gods: They neither require prayer, nor do they have priests whose spells they sponsor. Only three high ranking demons actively seek mortal worship, Rubibat, Malphas and Furfur (the Prince of Blasphemy, and the Dukes of Hubris and Pride). However, most demons agree that it can be helpful to allow mortals to worship them, since shared ceremony focuses belief and establishes a sense of solidarity. Many therefore discourage their cults to worship them, since to have them worship a fictitious god would be to empower Runstibble. This duke of idolatry, meanwhile, positively encourages his cultists to worship nonentities and fables. Indeed, for him this is the main purpose of establishing cults.

SACRIFICE

Though many disdain worship, all demons are eager for sacrifice. Properly performed ceremonies may dispatch any victim's soul to the Infernus, where a demon draws power from its destruction or holds it to ransom.

To perform a ceremony, a cultist need not be a Priest. However, he must understand the significance of the sacrifice, assemble the correct props at the appropriate time, and follow every detail of the unholy ceremony, all at the site of a Sacrificial Gate. The process is complex, and the officiating cultist must have a special demonic sacrifice non-weapon proficiency. Any interference or interruption to the ceremony may ruin the sacrifice, ensuring that the soul departs to its appropriate afterlife, rather than being consigned to the Infernus.

Not every mortal is appropriate for sacrifice. Some must be of a certain age, gender or appearance, or of a particular race (such as a half-demon). Victims sacrificed at a particular shrine might have to be of a certain lineage. Particular moral or physical characteristics might be necessary (such as complete innocence, or a tell-tale birthmark). Occasionally, the victim may have to be related to the officiating cultist.

There is only one day each year upon which a mortal's soul can be sacrificed to a demon (though cultists might still kill victims in the name of the demon; the mortal's soul would simply not go to the Infernus). Some legends hold that this is the mid-winter solstice, or some other date, but in fact it varies according to the demon. Moreover, the sacrifice must usually be carried out at a given time (midnight being common). Similarly, lesser ceremonies may be held once each month (at the full moon, for example), when animals are slaughtered, although the demon gains relatively little advantage from these butcheries.

CULT LEADERS

Cult leaders are of various mentalities and goals. Listed below are several examples of the personalities and mindsets which are typical of cult leaders.

THE EXPLOITERS

Some demon cults are led by manipulators and charlatans, who see the cult as a way of gaining wealth, power, prestige, sex, revenge, or some other benefit. Often these people are careful not to themselves engage in criminal activities, worship or sacrifice, and may not commit the sins which they encourage in their followers. Almost all, however, are guilty of some sin; greed, revenge, etc.; and all are guilty of misleading and exploiting their subordinates.

THE EVIL

Some mortals, of course, are passionately devoted to a particular sort of sin. They may know that their actions are wrong, but they persist none-the-less, and may encourage others to share their depravity. These people are particularly valued by demons as cult leaders, as their passionate commitment to evil makes them unlikely to betray the cult.

THE SINFUL

Cults may be run by mortals who are not actually evil, but through their weakness or foolishness have committed some terrible sin. Those who have been members of other demonic cults are particularly vulnerable.

A demon who knows of a mortal's dark secrets may blackmail the person into founding a cult. If the mortal refuses to cooperate, the secret will come out. The risk of losing society's respect or incurring a belated punishment may persuade many mortals to serve a demon.

THE MISGUIDED

Demons often attempt to convince mortals that evil is good, and that by sinning the mortal actually acts laudably. In many cases, they simply describe their sins in a different light, and even the intelligent and educated may be swayed by their arguments. Massacring foreigners can be labeled "patriotism", miserliness called "thrift", murder renamed "execution", and so on. In other cases, more complex theories may be evolved, often based around the excuses of "fighting fire with fire" or bowing to necessity. Those deluded into believing such arguments also make excellent leaders for demon cults, since they repeat the demons' own arguments, and once emotionally committed to an ideal, invent their own rationalizations.

DISGUISED DEMONS

Sometimes, demonic dukes and princes install disguised demons to head their cults. In order to do this, they must expend a great deal of willpower to maintain a Visiting Gate which enables the creature to spend most or all of its time on the prime plane. A demon lord will only bother with this effort, it clearly regards the venture as particularly important.

Usually, a demonic leader is installed only in a cult's early days, to ensure that it is firmly established and to find dupes or sinners suitable to take over the organization. Demons may also be sent to help the cult perform a specific task of importance to its patron, or to guard it against an imminent threat. More often, lesser demons are used to deliver messages to the cults' leaders, or to conduct specific, quick missions (such as assassinations), since this does not require the patron to keep a Gate open for as long. These disguised messengers are particularly important to advise, aid or control leaders who do not realize that they are in the service of the Infernus.

OUTWARD APPEARANCE

If demon cults did not hide themselves from the world, they would soon be destroyed by the forces of law and good. Thus, while some may simply hide from society, most assume an acceptable public face.

Cults which hope to go unnoticed must be very small, or very isolated. If a small, backwater community or a single family had turned to demon worship, it might hope to go unnoticed by outsiders. But if it wished to spread its faith to surrounding communities, it might have to adapt its appearance to gain acceptance. A convincing disguise can make a cult respectable, interesting and attractive to outsiders. Recruitment becomes much easier, while fund-raising, preaching and expeditions may be carried out with society's blessing.

A cult's appearance does not depend upon its demon master as much as its social context. For example, a cult serving Rofocale, Duke of Gluttony, could easily masquerade as a chef's guild, a merchants' luncheon society, a peasant folk-religion (organizing frequent feasts), a family owning a particularly fruitful oasis, or any number of other institutions.

A cult usually adapts to its surroundings. It strives to appear as a normal part of its society, taking on whichever outward form is most appropriate. Moreover, it must make itself respectable, ideally seeming so virtuous that any allegation against it would seem preposterous. Thus, many cults seem to encourage, praise or embody the values of their society, often to an exaggerated extent. Charity, personal morality and family loyalty, good taste, education, honor, refinement, politeness; all of these things might be publicly praised by a cult to gain respect, even if they are anathema to the cult's actual purpose.



CULT OBJECTIVES

Demons obviously want cults to spread sin, to gain souls and to aid with their plots on the mortal plane. However, the mortals who join the cult often have their own objectives. This is particularly true if, as often happens, most of the members are unaware that their organization is a demonic cult.

Some mortals may deliberately choose to worship demons as they would follow any other faith, perhaps having come to hate humanity or the gods so vehemently that they would support the demons against the prime plane or heaven itself. Others believe the demons to be "true" gods, ousted by the current deities and truly more deserving of divine status. The desperate or impoverished may be persuaded to worship anything that promises them hope of a better life or a joyful eternity. Some follow demon cults because they crave power, or wish to spread evil in any way that they can. A few may simply be insane or consumed by sin, though these over-used motivations should be avoided for the majority of cults and cult members.

Most mortals come to join cults for quite mundane reasons, and are not evil. Sometimes their motives are obvious: People join cults to Rofocale (gluttony) because they enjoy food, and wish to attend feasts or learn to create fine dishes; cults to Tufforp (vengeance) are usually filled by people who feel wronged and seek revenge. In other instances, mortals' motives may be less direct. Many demons might persuade peasants to form "Fertility cults" worshipping them, in return for beneficial weather; other mortals may turn to a demon for aid in throwing off an oppressive ruler. Many mortals are simply blackmailed into worshipping or offering sacrifice to these creatures.

The objectives of a cult may thus be essentially laudable, misguided or hedonistic, but they are rarely wholly evil. Indeed, self-consciously malign cults are extremely rare. Few members conform to the image of the cruel, maniacal misanthrope that inquisitors and storytellers speak of.

CULT CANDIDATES

Any cult which wishes to expand or to replace lost members must learn to identify prospective new members. By approaching unsuitable candidates, a cult risks being exposed or betrayed to its enemies, and so it must select new candidates with care.

Established cults, unconcerned with expansion, may rely upon members' families to maintain a constant membership. Husbands, wives and children may be brought into the cult by existing members, as may brothers, sisters, or even parents.

Secretive cults must decide who they should approach when expanding. Here, the cooperation of a demon is extremely useful, as a Seducer or demon lord may advise the recruiters on each individual's

suitability, warning against those known to be strong-willed or virtuous, and indicating a sinner's weaknesses. Without demonic advice, the cult must rely on gossip and rumor to gauge a candidate's suitability.

High-profile cults, posing as guilds, religions or some other benign organizations, must deal with uninvited applications for membership. They must decide which applicant is suitable and which is not, but cannot be seen to turn away all virtuous folk and accept only sinners lest they rouse the curiosity of the inquisitors.

RECRUITMENT

Few mortals would wish to serve or worship the foul creatures of the Infernus, even if they are already prone to sin, and convincing new members to join is a constant difficulty for cults. Some entice candidates with mundane temptations, such as luxury, leisure, banquets, political influence and social status. Established cults with wealthy members and local influence are particularly well placed to offer such incentives, and mortals easily tempted into the sins of the Flesh are always susceptible to such bribes.

Other cults lure the curious and credulous with offers of "revealed mysteries", religious ecstasy and miracles. Others appeal to patriotism (if the cult poses as a nationalistic movement), pride (if it seems to be an exclusive organization), loneliness, and so on.

The offers made by a cult usually depend upon its public appearance. So, a cult posing as a guild or social club initially attracts members as any similar organization would, offering professional training, cooperation, leisure activities, etc.

PROMOTION

Most larger cults do not share all of their mysteries with all of their members. Particularly where a cult has been forced to accept unsuitable members to preserve appearances (such as if it poses as a guild) the junior members may have no idea that they serve a demon. In some cases, only one or two people in the entire cult might know that it has any demonic links. The longer a member remains in a cult, and the more sinful or unscrupulous they prove themselves, the more they may learn. Proven sinners are involved in the sacrifices and given positions of responsibility in larger cults. Eventually they may come to learn of the group's demonic purpose.

In a few huge cults, there may be several ranks through which a member progresses. These ranks may confer names like Adept of the First Circle or Initiate of the Inner Order, but may involve less suspicious titles, such as Socius, Elder Sister or Right Hand. As members progress through each level they are told slightly more of the cult's true nature or, at the least, they are given a less inaccurate explanation. Often, the lower ranking members are unaware that the highest ranks even exist,

and many have quite inaccurate conceptions of who leads the organization and how it is run.

Promotion through a cult, whether it confers greater prestige, knowledge or responsibility, is always dependent upon the will of the cult's most senior leaders. These few hardened sinners cannot afford to delegate power to underlings who do not understand the cult's true nature. In order to preserve the organization, they must keep a tight control over its activities, and so many cults are run by a single authoritarian leader.

LOYALTY

Having discovered the truth behind a cult, or having suffered increasing pangs of conscience, a member might wish to leave or betray the group. Some cults may tolerate members leaving, depending upon how much the individual knows, and whether he or she can be trusted to keep their secrets, but none can risk letting a member or ex-member talk with the inquisitors or other enemies of the cult.

Every cult, therefore, needs some method of dissuading malcontents from betraying them. Some have special means of assuring loyalty, such as the cooperation of a demonic Warrior, who has promised to kill all traitors, but most use simpler methods. Many cults have an emotional hold over members and ex-members. As long as friends and relations remain within the its ranks, most people hesitate to betray the organization. Should the cult be the subject of an investigation, these loved ones may be executed or banished.

More explicit forms of blackmail are also used to ensure peoples' loyalties. If a cult were betrayed it might reveal, and exaggerate, the betrayer's "evil" role within it. And any member who endangers the group might fear murder or demonic vengeance. Oaths spoken upon initiation into a cult, often contain clauses stating that if the member ever betrays the group, supernatural powers may strike him dead. Even if such oaths are merely bluff, the members remember the oaths and fear the consequences of betraying the organization. Threatening a member or ex-member's loved ones is often particularly effective. Kidnapping or threatening a child or spouse may assure a person's loyalty.

But the best way for a cult to keep the loyalty of its members is to ensure that they benefit from their membership. A cult which bullies and brutalizes its people is soon betrayed or forsaken by them. If an organization continues to supply them with the things that they want (banquets for gluttons, cash for the greedy, etc.) then it is in little danger.

ALLIES

Most cults require the cooperation or complicity of other mortals. Some must persuade the local authorities

to tolerate them. Others must use allies to preserve their secrecy, killing or blackmailing those who would betray them. Other cults may require outsiders to act as guards or spies, protecting them or warning them of dangers.

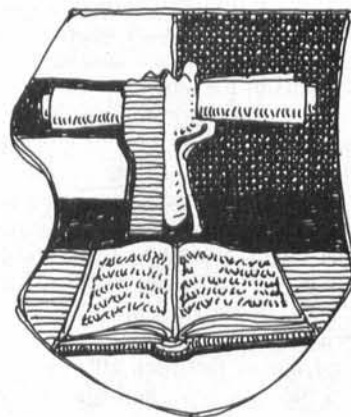
A cult's allies may be almost anyone, although their appearance and objectives make some people more appropriate than others. A magistrate, for example, would be of great benefit to a cult wishing to take over a city, but would be an unlikely ally for a group masquerading as a peasant Fertility cult.

It is not necessary for allies to understand the true nature of the cult. Indeed, it is usually preferable if they do not. Most upright folk would never work with a demon cult, or would at least require considerable reward for doing so. Possible allies include local nobles and priests, bureaucrats and officials, a guild of thieves or assassins, a mercenary company or professional soldier, a tribe of barbarians or demi-humans, a group of bandits, a slave-trader, a village headsman, a gravedigger or scribe, etc. Former cult members are particularly common allies. Even if they regret their past evils, their safety is dependent upon their pasts remaining secret, and they would be in danger if the cult were ever beset by inquisitors or other demon-hunters. Moreover, the cult may be able to blackmail or cajole ex-members, and so it can usually rely on their support, at least in times of danger.

SAMPLE DEMON CULTS

The following are sample demon cults, which a GM could integrate into his campaign. When each is introduced, the GM must decide what allies and enemies the group has, and how it fits in with the established institutions of the game-world. For each example, a general overview is provided, followed by a brief Adventure "Seed" designed to make the player characters aware of the cult. The names of locations are not given, but will depend upon the campaign, and the statistics of the most important NPCs are included in the folio.

THE WAY OF ELDER WISDOM



This rural cult worships and gives sacrifice to Malphas, demon duke of hubris, and has been established for nearly twenty years. Its members seek to elevate themselves above the common folk by the study of secret wisdoms, and their unholy master revels in their praise and sinful aspirations. The eight members of the cult are the leaders of an isolated community, including the local aristocrat and his steward, the priest, and the area's only merchant. Most were attracted to the cult by their curiosity and the boredom of rural life, although the youngest members were brought to the group by their parents.

Monthly animal sacrifices are offered to the demon, and the members spend much of their time studying thaumaturgy, esoteric philosophy and demonic ritual. During the great annual rite at midsummer, the cult's most powerful thaumaturgist summons the demon duke himself, and the fiend, appearing as an angelic being, proudly receives their homage and praises their loyalty.

Several common peasants are Servers to the cult, aiding with the preparations of sacrifices and rituals, performing mundane services

for the members (such as cooking and cleaning), and running errands for them. These Servers are not present at the cult's ceremonies and are unaware that these rites involve demons, but through them, the community has heard that their lords study strange philosophies and magics. Although some are disconcerted by such rumors, most peasants retain a respectful loyalty to their masters, and would never repeat such rumors to outsiders. Rather, strangers are greeted with an anxious silence, and are not made welcome in the region.

Should the cult be threatened by outsiders, its thaumaturgists may use Summon and Bind spells to enlist demonic support. Moreover, Malphas is pleased that these mortals have come to worship it and, in order to protect the cult, would warn them of approaching danger and send Seducers to spy upon, mislead or corrupt those threatening it.

ADVENTURE SEED

The player characters are contacted by priest who is concerned about the disappearance of a colleague. Six months ago, a pious missionary set out to establish a shrine to the temple's god in a remote, rural area. He sent several letters to the temple, telling of the shrine's construction with cautious optimism, but for over two months there has been no word of him. He asks the player characters to travel to the shrine and investigate?

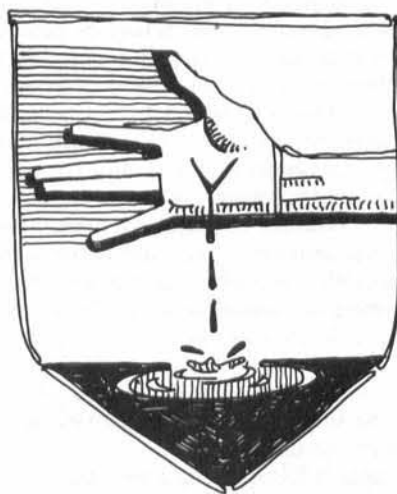
Arriving in the area, the player characters find the shrine dilapidated and unattended. There is no sign of the priest, but his diary may be found in his shack. It tells of the peasants' polite but half-hearted interest in his preaching and of the local noble's open apathy. No entry has been made for two months.

The priest was in fact been killed by a demon, on the behest of the cult, after he began asking probing

questions about the local notables and their beliefs. Player characters find the peasants extremely unhelpful, and as they begin to understand the situation may be opposed by a disguised Seducer or more blatant Warrior.

Eventually the characters observe a demonic ceremony or gain some other conclusive proof of the local rulers' demonic allegiances. They must act against the cult, which summons numerous minor demons to protect itself in a climactic confrontation.

THE SISTERS OF THE CAULDRON



The twenty "Sisters" are a group of young women, drawn from a large market town and the surrounding village. Rebelling against the strict morality of the region, they delight in midnight "revels" in the woods. Their merrymakings are not innocent gatherings, but drunken orgies, with animal sacrifices and demonic chants. On rare occasions, demons come amongst them, disguised as handsome young men, and half-demons are born of their unions. Most of the members realize that these are events held in the honor of a demon, and their celebrations fit the inquisitor's stereotype of a true demonic cult.

When first participating in the "celebrations", the newly initiated are involved only in the least sordid aspects of the rites, being told that the gatherings honor a forgotten "nature goddess". When they eventually learn the truth, there is nothing they can do. In their small communities, they would be shamed and punished if they revealed what they had participated in, and they recall that the cult's leaders are adept with poisons.

The three or four most senior members of the "Sisters", all now nearly forty, arrived in the region a decade ago, having fled an inquisition in their home

town. Initially they wanted to abandon their demonic allegiance, but cajoled and threatened by Decarabria, Prince of Lust, they re-established the Sisters and recruited fresh women from the area. Now these leaders are unable to leave the demon's service, knowing that the demon would betray them to the local authorities and they would be executed. And so they continue to recruit and corrupt younger women, and numerous male accomplices, and preserve their secrecy with blackmail and poison. Once per year they sacrifice a suitable human male to their demon-lord, hoping to retain his favor.

But for all the cult's sin and evil, an inquisitor who hoped to root them out might not be welcome by the locals. Around fifty local women have been members of the group over the last decade, and perhaps thirty men have "assisted" them over the years. All could be killed by an overzealous inquisitor, and no family would go without some member implicated.

ADVENTURE SEED

An inquisitor or priest begins an investigation into the cult, and arrests several members. The player characters, passing through the town, are approached by a notable local merchant. He believes that his daughter is involved with the Sisters, but she has fled from her home. He wants the player characters to find the girl, and either prevent her implication in the affair or, if that is impossible, to get her out of the area. Obviously, the characters' discretion is required, as they do not want to be seen to be protecting the cult, and the merchant does not wish to be seen to interfere in the investigation.

The daughter is hiding at a ruined farm, with several other young women. They may be found if the player characters speak sensitively with their friends, and they must get regular supplies of food and water, which may give them away.

Although originally a willing member of the cult, the merchant's daughter has wanted to leave ever since she discovered that it served Decarabria. However, because of her own weakness and the leaders' threats she continued to attend the gatherings. She will certainly be named by one of those who have already been arrested, and will then become a fugitive herself.

Meanwhile, the investigation is becoming increasingly bloody, and looks set to execute all of the cult's current members, if it can find them. If the player characters do not hand the girl in, they must arrange for her flight. But if she were to settle somewhere else, then what would happen? Would Decarabria seek her out and blackmail her into establishing another cult? The awkwardness of the situation could place the player characters in an unpleasant dilemma.

THE COPPER RING

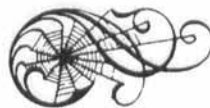
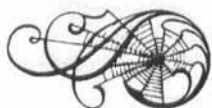


In the seedy dock-side alleys of a major port, the cut-throats of the Copper Ring meet in deserted cellars and disused warehouses. Each member wears a copper band on his left little finger as a sign of membership, and the members are united in their desire to make as much money as possible by any means available. Extortion, kidnap, theft, mugging and blackmail are the Ring's primary activities, and the leaders select members with strong predatory desires. The ethos of the group is one of aggressive exploitation. If their victims are too weak to protect themselves, then they deserve no sympathy. Pity is an unfamiliar concept to them. Those who resist the thugs' extortion demands, or attempt to organize against them, are likely to be nailed to walls, mutilated, or suspended head down in the harbor.

The Copper Ring is organized into six gangs of four to six thugs each. The gangs always operate separately and never meet together, so that most members are unable to betray more than a few others. Only if disputes arise between gangs does the Ring's leader intervene. This senior Gang-leader communicates with the other five occasionally, sharing important information and settling disputes between them. Wisely, he does not try to control his subordinates, and only a major threat or internal dispute causes the gangs actively helping one another.

To the rank and file members, the organization exists purely to make money, providing them with like-minded associates, information, and protection in a crisis. But the leaders of the Ring, known to one another as Initiates, have a more sinister agenda. Just as the junior members dispassionately exploit the poor and vulnerable, so do the Initiates, the Copper Ring's core members, profit from their underlings. They are prepared to sacrifice their fellows if need be, letting them take the fall for the Initiates' crimes, do the dirty jobs and take the greatest risks. In some instances, Initiates have even been known to murder or steal from the others. The Initiates also reserve for themselves the favors of their special ally, Agares, demon duke of villainy.

Drawn from the toughest of the gangs, the ten Initiates meet together infrequently, to coordinate their



strategies, and to share information about underlings' activities. The senior gang-leader is always an Initiate, and is considered the Ring's representative to Agares. He is responsible for conducting the annual sacrifice to the demon, for communicating with him, and relating its advice and instructions to the others.

Upon becoming an Initiate, a member swears to assist his peers, and never to betray the Ring to outsiders. Should the oath be broken, they understand Agares may take the traitor's life (though the demon is under no obligation to do so) and may find it amusing to permit occasional treacheries. When captured and tortured by the city's rulers, it is notable that Initiates always die before divulging any important information. Favored Initiates receive services and artifacts from Agares, if their callousness wins his admiration. In addition, Agares may give advice and council to the Initiates (although most have learned to mistrust its words), and may provide tangible assistance in the form of Demonic Warriors, sent to aid the Ring against serious threats. Seducers may also be dispatched to corrupt city magistrates. But these creatures always leave the gritty work of torture and assassination to the cult's members, so that their duke may feed on the mortals' sins.

The demon asks little of its servants, being delighted to have found such a villainous collection of mortals, and being especially pleased that the leaders have so little respect for their underlings. Occasionally, however, it dispatches a Seducer or Warrior to deliberately stir up trouble for the Ring, making enemies for them, and if necessary assisting them in dealing with the situation: Thus, Agares insures that there is always some skulduggery afoot, as it feeds eagerly upon the Ring's copious sins. Less frequently, it requires a service from them, typically the murder or persecution of a notable and virtuous citizen, as the just and upstanding are particularly sickening to Agares.

ADVENTURE SEED

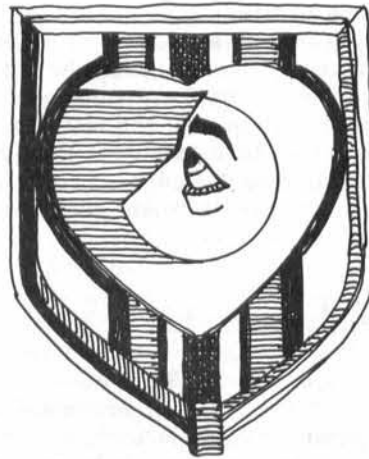
The player characters are approached by one of the city's magistrates. He has been overseeing the investigation of a particularly hideous crime, and is now being blackmailed, presumably by the culprits. His daughter has been kidnapped (for the second time in three years) and he has been warned to close the inquiry. The last time the girl was taken, he had ceded to the kidnappers' wishes and the girl was released, but he does not wish to appear weak a second time.

The brutality of the crime particularly disturbs the magistrate, as it involved the capture and pointless murder of a merchant's entire household during the burglary of his residence. The player characters might first look into this crime, the abduction of the girl, or the delivery of the threatening letter, but in any case their investigations lead them to one of the Ring's gangs.

As their interest becomes apparent, their suspects begin to go into hiding, are murdered, or are spirited from the city. The Initiate responsible for the original crime, as payment to Agares for presenting him with a fine dagger, has no intention

of being discovered by the player characters, and is prepared to threaten or murder them, or to kill the magistrate's daughter. Perhaps the characters realize that they cannot defeat the entire Ring (although they might return to the city in the future to try again). Or else the magistrate asks them to cease their inquiries, increasingly anxious as his daughter is slowly returned to him in small pieces.

THE DESERT BRETHREN



In the arid, craggy desert of the south, a scattered number of solitary monks live out their lives in pursuit of spiritual perfection. These are not normal hermits, however, but the dupes of Malphas, convinced that they may become Gods. Each of the Brethren constructs a small, stone hut near an oasis or other supply of water. They trap or forage for food, or beg from local villagers or caravans, and spend most of their time in "meditation". Their spiritual exercises are directed by The Old Man of the Hills, a ragged figure, living in a ruined "temple", deep in the desert. This aged hermit, who seems able to exist without food or water, is held in the deepest respect by the Brethren, and is thought to have transcended his mortality, and become a God.

The Old Man is, of course, a demon. He is a Seducer of the fourth Canto, serving Malphas. Visiting the prime plane for several days each month, this creature encourages the existing Brethren, and recruits new members. It provides little assistance to its followers, but occasionally performs minor magical effects to convince them that they are advancing towards Godhood, deluding them that they have occasionally achieved the feats themselves. The "temple" where he supposedly resides is a long-ruined castle, forgotten by the locals, and he may be found there one or two days of each month.

The monks worship "The God In My Heart", believing that they are simultaneously mortal and divine, and striving to bring out their latent divinity. They hold that only a special few males have this "Godly spark", and the Old Man of the Hills claims to be expert at selecting such people. The path to Godhood, however, is a long one,



requiring the recitation of "sacred syllables", self-flagellation, fasting, and other pointless or self-damaging activities. Those few thought to have become Gods have "ascended from our world". In fact, they were murdered by Malphas's Warriors, either because they were coming to doubt that they could become Gods, because they discovered the Old Man to be a demon, or simply because their disappearance would "prove" their divinity.

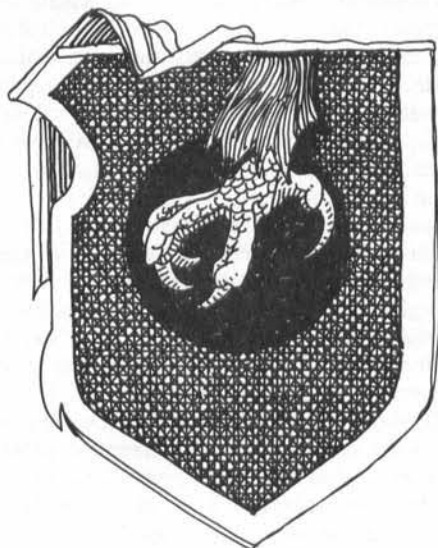
The villagers of the desert's edge hold the Brethren in the highest regard, admiring their discipline and "holy" power. Minor Seducers, serving Gremory (envy), Phryxis (sycophants) and Prince Rubibat (false worship), have taken advantage of this misplaced admiration and exploit it for their own ends. The monks' occasional visits to the villages are often accompanied by minor miracles. Stories abound of dishes suddenly filled with food, broken vessels made whole, and vermin vanishing from the city.

ADVENTURE SEED

The local King or Caliph is concerned and intrigued by rumors of wonder-workers in the southern desert. The player characters are approached by a courtier, and employed to visit the area and investigate these stories.

In the villages the characters hear of the monks and their miracles, and encounter one of the minor Seducers. In the desert, the monks seem sincere, if eccentric. But at the ruined "temple" they should find several indications of the Old Man's true nature: The shallow grave of a recently killed slayer, an obvious Gate of Influence, or even the demon himself, caught without his disguise. Do the PCs slay the Old Man? And if so, how do they convince the Brethren that they were deluded?

THE RAVENS



The Ravens are a group of particularly callous mercenaries, fighting beneath a Raven-Black Banner and offering sacrifice to Sabnock, Father of Cruelty. The band, numbering thirty or forty hardened men, hold a dark boarder castle, and sustain themselves by hiring their services to any local magnate who can afford their considerable fees. They have a reputation for barbarity, never releasing or ransoming the prisoners that they take, and are given to dramatic shows of cruelty. On one occasion, a Baron demanding the release of his men-at-arms. After a battle, he was presented with a sack filled with their hearts, which, the story says, were still beating.

The Ravens' infamy has spread far, and the local villagers live in terror of them. The servants hired to work in the castle were soon enslaved, and as they have died others have been recruited by force. Several local lords now bribe the mercenaries not to attack them. In battle, the sight of the Raven Banner is often enough to put an enemy to rout, soldiers preferring to be executed for desertion than to risk capture by the Ravens.

These mercenaries are equipped with a number of demonic weapons and artifacts, of which the Banner is not the most powerful. The Raven-Black Banner is a large ragged standard, matt black, without any symbol or device, but adorned with animal and human skulls: It renders the Ravens immune to all mind-affecting spells (*Charm, Sleep, Spook, etc.*), but to continue functioning must be soaked in the blood of their enemies after each battle. Swords and other items are designed to cause opponents a slow death, or to inflict great pain.

Sabnock, himself, demands little from the Ravens, except that they take in certain half-demons, pointing out that they will grow into ideal soldiers. Equally, he provides them with little assistance, content to remain a gleeful spectator. The magical objects which he has already given them do make them more powerful, but also enable them to sin more grossly and frequently. The demon is not "worshiped" by the band, but all prisoners are sacrificed to it. The Ravens prefer to keep their prisoners until the winter's night when sacrificed souls go to the demon, but Sabnock has misinformed them that these ceremonies may be conducted at other times, content with the depravity of the slaughter. Each victim must be stabbed at dusk, but must not die until dawn, all the while being subjected to innumerable vicious mutilations.

Only when a mercenary decides to retire or leave the Ravens does the demon intervene, ensuring that the man's enemies catch up with him, and encouraging them to punish him with "suitable" cruelty. Should one of the Ravens' leaders ever retire, the demon endeavors to be summoned by a thaumaturgist, so that it may visit the officer personally. These visits are usually quite long, and almost always fatal to the mortal concerned. Sabnock always demonstrates its most "beautiful" cruelties to them, hoping that they, of all mortals, can appreciate his art: Though they usually don't, the demon is equally disappointed and amused.

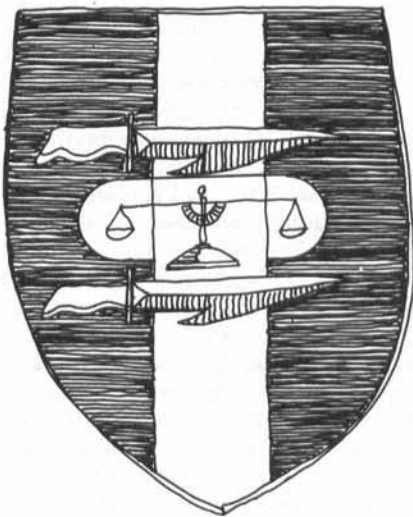
ADVENTURE SEED

The player characters might be involved in or hear about a battle, in which the Ravens have taken a large number of prisoners, among which are several nobles. The magistrates of the area decide that they are sick of being cowed by the Ravens, and hire the characters to mastermind, lead or attempt an attack on their castle, free the prisoners, empty their treasury and seize their base.

At present, half of the Ravens are camped with one of the warring armies, and so their castle is relatively undefended. Further, the magistrates are prepared to provide any assistance necessary to make the attack a success. However, it would be unfortunate if, to gain their favor, one of the magistrates alerted the mercenaries to the plot.

Some of the Ravens could escape, and may later reform the cult elsewhere. From this new base, they may decide to hunt down the player characters in revenge, perhaps with additional aid from the demon duke Tufforp.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF ALMS



This Brotherhood is an example of a cult which no longer has any real links with its demonic sponsor, but nonetheless continues to spread the sin for which it was established.

The group was originally established by thralls of Orobas, demon duke of corruption and bribery. Its purpose was to inspire underhanded business dealings and spread bureaucratic corruption through the world's trade centers, by bringing together all of the least honest merchants and officials into a secret society.

Today, the group unwittingly continues to serve Orobas. Its existence has become an open secret, but its

members do not identify themselves to outsiders. A number of disguised Seducers, serving various demonic masters, have assumed the roles of respected members of the society, using the Brotherhood's corrupt members to further their own plots.

With Lodges in many important trading centers, the Brotherhood of Alms, appears as a social and charitable society. It declares that it exists purely to organize social events for its members, and to distribute alms to the poor. A calendar of feasts and speeches create solidarity and loyalty within each Lodge, and the annual distributions of food and money give them a sense of virtue and purpose.

The members of the Brotherhood are drawn from the bureaucrats, guildsmen and merchants of the cities, important men without noble connections. Membership is by invitation only, and requires an annual fee. During the first year of membership, the Brotherhood's leaders observe all newcomers carefully. Those showing motivation, honesty and commitment may be groomed for apparently important posts within the Lodge (organizing the feasts, managing the treasury), while those equally motivated but less honest may receive more subtly important promotions.

For half the members, a Lodge of the Brotherhood of Alms is a method of making influential friends, securing favorable treatment from officials, or striking deals with fellow merchants. Such people give fellow members preferential treatment in their dealings outside of the Lodges; sponsoring one another's promotions, covering up their indiscretions, forming cartels, and so on. An extra advantage gained by the senior members, is access to a vast pool of rumor and gossip, gained by beggars and other paupers, in return for an annual "donation" of alms. These disreputables receive a large proportion of each Lodge's "charity", and may even, on occasion, perform thefts or other petty crimes on the leaders' behalves.

It is the most unscrupulous members which the Lodges' leaders admire, and strive to attract. They are also typically earmarked for high posts in the Lodge; deciding who should be invited to join, how alms should be distributed (thus controlling the beggar spies), and so on.

A constant danger for the society, is that its corrupt members will eventually destroy it, causing its disintegration through bickerings and betrayals. Thus, a rigid hierarchy has been established, wherein leaders hold their posts for life and strive to strengthen their Lodges by opposing internal fragmentation. A special "college" of electors is formed by the Master (leader) of each Lodge (usually comprised the most cunningly corrupt members) to elect his successor. The Lodge leaders then meet together to elect a Grand Master of the Brotherhood who also serves for life.

ADVENTURE SEED

The player characters are asked to investigate rumors that a particular merchant may have links with the Infernus. The merchant may be a thaumaturgist, cultist, or a Seducer, but the characters' investigations will be hampered by the Brotherhood of Alms.

The suspect has had himself accepted into this society, and has risen to occupy an important post within it. The player characters will find that a conspiracy of disinformation or silence surrounds the man, that some of the city's magistrates and militia captains seem determined to obstruct their investigations, and that beggars follow and spy on them.

THE DISCIPLES



Runstibble understands that mortals want to believe in superior beings, that they need to look to something beyond themselves, but prefer not to be challenged too deeply. Runstibble's cults are often founded around this understanding, and none more so than The Disciples.

Based amongst the upper classes of a wealthy and decadent city, The disciples bear witness to a fictitious deity, whose "secret" name is told only to members. Their ceremonies involve gibbering mass-hysteria, in which auto-suggestion, singing and subtly applied drugs are combined to provoke visions, prophesy and other "religious" ecstasies. The cult performs no bloody sacrifices, and never mentions any demon by name. There are no outward signs of evil. Their numerous long "festivals" variously involve days of gluttonous feasting, wild orgies, and drunken debauchery, but in their day to day lives Disciples are encouraged to practice self-restraint and family values. Many members feel a smug satisfaction, living such

virtuous lives while frequently indulging their basest desires. A nominal donation "for the poor" salves their consciences, and the cult's doctrines encourage them to wallow in their affluence.

The Disciples' leader is a charismatic nobleman named Sclerius, a man with great charm and few scruples. By taking considerable "donations" to cover the costs of the festivals, and by pocketing the money given "for the poor", he has amassed a notable fortune, and now enjoys power, prestige, and considerable pleasures. Although believing that he has some prophetic insight, he is aware that his "God" is a myth and that his following is built upon demonic aid. But since the Infernus asks nothing in return, he accepts their aid gladly.

Runstibble is not the only demon lord to profit from the sins of the Disciples. Rofocale (gluttony), Gutterfowl (infidelity), Volak (false prophesy) and Vapula (greed) also feed on the cults, and these five all contribute to support it whenever necessary.

Although they may arrange "accidents" to befall their opponents, the cult's actions are generally more subtle and productive. Seducers prowl the city, tempting influential people to "convert" to this false faith. Good fortune befalls its members, who then praise their fictitious god for their successes. Sclerius is also sometimes made privy to secrets, via a demonically-enchanted mirror in his bed chamber, so that he may expose scandals and have foreknowledge to mutter predictions which make him appear to be a real prophet.

The demons never demand aid from the Disciples. The cult grows, and their sins strengthen these dukes without provocation. While The Disciples cannot be linked with the Infernus, the decadent city tolerates them, and with little effort the demons make great gains.

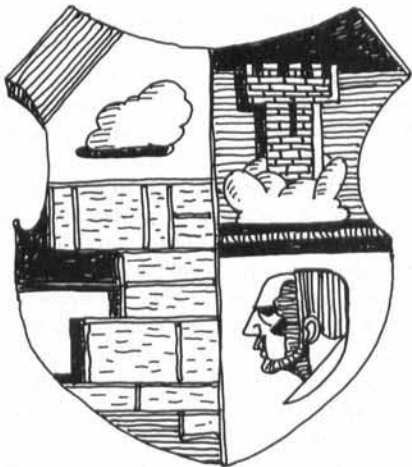
ADVENTURE SEED

The player characters are invited to speak with an influential politician. The politician is intrigued by his wife's involvement with a group called "The Disciples". His wife's affairs are her own, as their marriage was a political convenience, and her absences give him more time to spend with his mistresses, but he wishes to be sure that her associates are neither subversive nor evil. He is also considering joining the sect. The characters' assignment is to investigate the group. They may infiltrate it (if rich and respectable enough), spy on it's gatherings, and most importantly gather information on its leader, Sclerius.

Until they can find the magical mirror in Sclerius's chamber (and preferably watch him use it to speak with the demons) the player characters find nothing overtly incriminating. This adventure provides a novel investigation, where the villain is simply unwilling to incriminate himself by opposing the characters with

force or magic. Only through the use of the law do Sclerius and his followers act, and they will call upon friends in the judiciary or militia to punish the characters for disturbing their privacy.

THE TRUE NATIONALISTS



Mountain regions are often hotbeds of discontent. Largely cut off from the world beyond, such regions preserve a strong sense of national identity, and their relative poverty breeds dissatisfaction with the rule of "foreigners" from the kingdoms below. In one such region; Marchosias, demon duke of crusaders; has capitalized upon such feelings. Here he has set up a cult, calling itself the True Nationalists. These cultists have many valid grievances: The mountain communities are taxed heavily by the lowlands government, immigrants have bought local farms, governors are strict, and local garrisons are often unruly. Though the Empire brings economic benefits (such as trade and technology), Marchosias inspires the zealots to overreact to their situation.

The True Nationalists demand the withdrawal of the imperial presence, and the expulsion of immigrants. To this end, they assassinate imperial officials and local "collaborators", murder settlers, ambush soldiers, and impose their own "taxes". The greatest obstacle to their cause is that a quarter of the locals are now Imperial immigrants, many of them second or third generation settlers with no other homes to return to, and around a half of the natives oppose the objectives or methods of the cultists. The Empire will not withdraw and abandon the settlers and their native supporters to the cult's atrocities.

The cult's headquarters is high in the most inaccessible area of the mountains, where an ancient castle teeters above a ragged gorge. The imperial forces have frequently attempted to blockade or besiege the stronghold, but the defenders know of many secret passages and passes, through which provisions may be smuggled. Here the would-be King and his advisors plan

their attacks, train recruits, and conduct their worship.

In the most isolated areas, the cult has solid support and convincingly argues that the peoples' traditional gods have abandoned them and they must turn to Marchosias. Indeed, the demon's support is clearly visible. Their champions wield demonic weapons (though these are more spectacular than effective), and imperial officials are occasionally slain by Warriors from the Infernus. Marchosias himself demands no favors of these zealots, except that they pursue their enemies with utmost ferocity; that they protect such half-demons as are born in the area; and that, as part of their worship, they perform an annual sacrifice to him. (The approach to this "festival" is typically marked by numerous expeditions to kidnap soldiers and settlers, who are then slaughtered en masse.) In return for this, the demon performs minor services and provides striking artifacts, but never enables them to mount a fully-fledged rebellion.

The longer the conflict continues, the more impossible a compromise is becoming. The True Nationalists' brutalities and the imperial reprisals polarize the area, and people become increasingly angry and vindictive. And so, the demon does not grant the cultists victory, but cannot permit them to be crushed. Eventually, the region will erupt into a vicious war of annihilation, and Marchosias will delight in the senselessness of the bloodbath.

ADVENTURE SEED

The mountains' governor has asked that a small group of priests tour the isolated villages where the Nationalists are most popular. He does not want imperial priests, but neutral holy men, hoping that they might persuade the locals to reject demon-worship. And to guard these missionaries, a group of non-imperials is required (the player characters). They must escort the defenseless preachers around the villages, protecting them from the cult's assassins, hostile villagers, demonic threats and the region's natural predators. The assignment requires a measure of tact, and an ability to plan and fight.

However, additional complications could arise. Imperial agents may ask the characters to spy on the villagers during their visits, and may even ask that one of their agents be permitted to accompany the missionaries. Player characters might even be asked to assassinate important locals once they have gained acceptance in the villages.

The True Nationalists will not trust the missionaries. To them, all foreigners are the same, and the characters will be assumed to be in league with the Empire. Attempts may be made to drive the missionaries away, capture a character for interrogation (and perhaps sacrifice), or annihilate the visitors. Certainly, the unwelcoming villagers will be encouraged, by the cult, to act against their guests.

BROTHERHOOD OF THAUMATURGISTS

• Chapter Six •

THE CABAL

Nearly two hundred years ago, a score of thaumaturgists banded together to form a secret society which they named The Cabal. Despite schisms and infighting, the Cabal still exists with around sixty members.

OBJECTIVES AND FACTIONS

The explicit purpose of the Cabal is to control and manipulate the gates to the Infernus, thus increasing their powers so that they may establish themselves as rulers of the world. This objective, however, has been variously interpreted over the years. Several factions currently exist within the Cabal:

The “Traditionalists”:

These less far-sighted (or less sane) thaumaturgists have imagined that, with the Gates to the Infernus open, the demonic hordes could pour out to conquer the world. The Cabal could then establish its rule over the surviving mortals, with the demons as their lieutenants, advisors or allies. Most of the Cabal, however, has abandoned this goal, realizing that once conjured into the world the demons would have little use for thaumaturgists, and that in the wake of such an invasion there would be few survivors to rule over.

The “A-Moralists”:

Labeled “The Libertines” by fellow members, these thaumaturgists wish to spread demonic influence throughout the prime plane, spreading sin in order to destroy all morality, and thus begin a new age of guiltless freedom and unrestrained hedonism.

The “Magiocrats”:

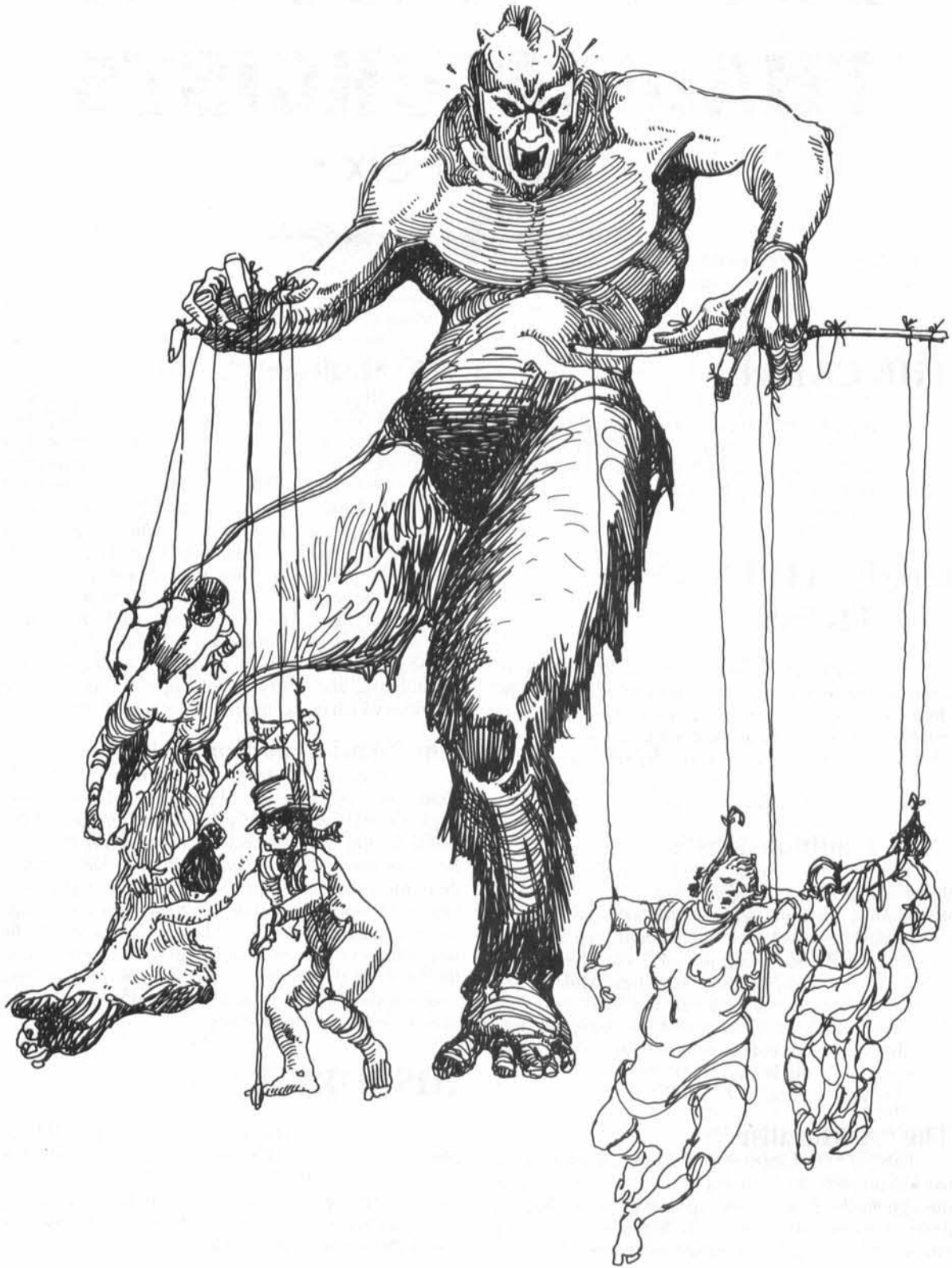
The attitude currently prevalent within the Cabal, is that of the Magiocrats. Their belief is that the objective in opening the Gates should be only to increase their own power. The demons should remain in the Infernus unless directly serving a thaumaturgist, and the uncontrolled spread of sin is not merely pointless but is actually dangerous. Sin, for these thaumaturgists, is a weapon to weaken enemies, not to indiscriminately ravage the plane. They see the purpose of magical power as the acquisition of temporal power, they do not want society, as a whole, corrupted by sin: When they rise to rule society, they want it to be worth ruling. Some thaumaturgists pursue this to its obvious conclusion, and energetically oppose all demonic activities which do not directly benefit the Cabal.

The “Anti-Traditionalists”:

A minority within the Cabal, the “Anti-Traditionalists” take the Magiocrats beliefs to even further extremes. They claim that the purpose of the Cabal should be to protect the prime plane from the forces of the Infernus by weakening the demons. Any demonic intrusion onto the plane, they argue, is a victory for demonkind in their relentless drive to ravage the entire plane. So, to protect themselves, as well as the rest of the world, thaumaturgists should actively oppose the forces of the Infernus, using demons’ services and draining their power in order to strengthen the Cabal against the demons themselves.

HISTORY

Listed here is the history of the Cabal. Those passages which appear in italics are reproduced from “The History of the Great Endeavor” handout. This handout can be given to the players to represent an actual document which their characters might discover during the course of an adventure.



THE FOUNDATION

"The glorious founder, the most magnificent Tolamuire, brought together the foremost thaumaturgists of his day, assembling them in the city of Arendur. He proposed his plan, for the foundation of a secret Brotherhood that would multiply their powers through cooperation, and after brief debate all agreed that the Cabal should be founded forthwith. Their oaths there sworn, a leader and Master was elected, and by near unanimous assent, Tolamuire himself was installed in perpetuity to that rank."

Little is known for certain about the origins of the Cabal. It is widely believed that the Cabal was founded by the thaumaturgist Tolamuire, who became its leader and commanded it through a golden period of cooperation and achievement. In fact, Tolamuire may not have been the Cabal's founder, and a few surviving early documents imply that others may have led the group briefly before him. These documents suggest that the Cabal was originally a "Brotherhood", with no strong hierarchy, and ruled jointly by the "Inner Circle", a number of founding thaumaturgists. Tolamuire may merely have been the most prominent within the Circle, or may have wrested control over it.

Regardless, he came to preside over the Cabal through its initial period of growth and success. His achievements now seem all the greater, in light of subsequent disasters, and many stories present him as a heroic or super-human figure. From these tales, a myth or rumor has evolved: that Tolamuire became immortal, and still remains the true leader of the Cabal. Such stories claim that one day, when the Cabal has proved its worth or is in need, he will return to lead the group again. There are occasional rumors that Tolamuire closely watches the Cabal, and occasionally contacts certain individuals within its ranks.

THE WHEEL

"Under the inspired direction of its leader, the Cabal gained great honor in the city of Arendur, its foremost members receiving lands and titles. And in that city a great Wheel was built, a mighty magic which would blow wide the very gates of the Infernus, and multiply the power of the Cabal one hundred fold."

The Cabal's first and only serious attempt to break through the gates of hell, the Wheel was a vast enchantment which spread across the entire city. (Explained in the Demons GM's book, page 64,) the Wheel partially breached the divide between the prime plane and the Infernus, but the demon Arch-Prince Amdosias acted against the Cabal. Some suggest that, knowing that the Cabal wished only to drain the powers of the Infernus, the Arch-Prince sent a horde of demons to destroy them

and their enchantment, while others believe that the impatient demons merely broke through the open gate in order to pillage the prime plane. Records of the time are unclear.

Until recently, the Wheel has remained unusable amidst the rubble of Arendur. The rebuilding of the city means that the Wheel may once again be activated. The present leader of the Cabal has ordered that its re-creation be investigated, while Traditionalists plot to reactivate it with or without the leader's approval.

THE RETRIBUTION

"A catastrophe befell the Cabal that day, as the ungrateful demons once more consigned themselves to the abyss. The work of fifty years was undone, and the city that could have been the seat of a glorious Empire burned red as blood."

The demonic horde sacked the city of Arendur, killing many members of the Cabal and breaking the enchantment of the Wheel before the Gates were fully opened. The Gates slammed shut, and the leaders of the Cabal fled. The city of Arendur was completely destroyed, and only recently, a century later, has work begun to re-establish it.

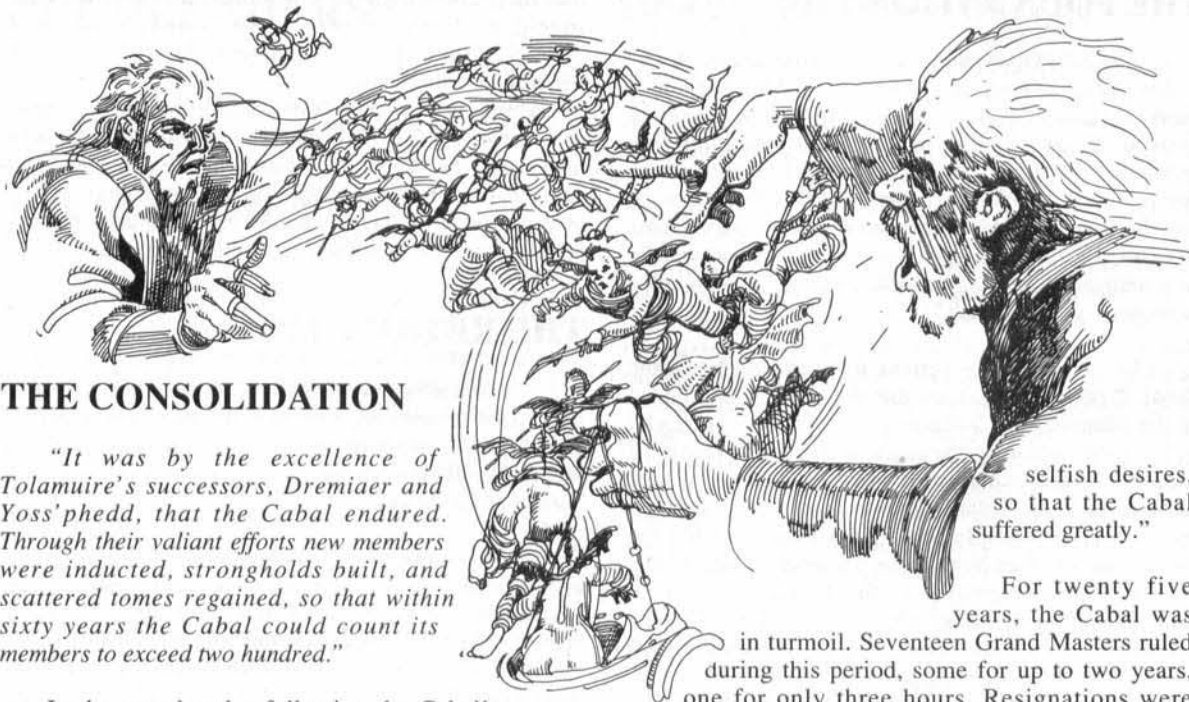
The Cabal was left leaderless. No one knew who was alive and who was dead, and its scattered members went into hiding or began to reconstruct their Brotherhood.

THE SCOURGING

"And so before the embers of Arendur were cold, the zealous fools fell upon us, the small-minded and the scared with words of cold justice and a pallet for our blood. The blades of torturers and soldiers cut as scythes. Perhaps one hundred fell before these - more terrible than any demon - and, cruelest of all, great Tolamuire was betrayed to their mercies."

After the sack of Arendur, hundreds of inquisitors, paladins and slayers came to confront the demons, and to search out the reason for the invasion. With their accompanying armies, sages and wizards, they defeated the demons, and hunted through the surrounding towns and countryside for the members of the Cabal.

Not only did their enemies spare no effort to root them out, but several instances occurred of Cabal members betraying political rivals and personal enemies to the zealots. A series of battles, ambushes and deceptions left the Cabal shattered. Worst of all, their leader Tolamuire was (it is believed) killed by a slayer. Most likely he was fleeing for his life, as many others were, when the slayer caught him, but stories still circulate of betrayal by his aides and subordinates. By the end of these persecutions the Cabal had a mere thirty surviving members.



THE CONSOLIDATION

"It was by the excellence of Tolamuire's successors, Dremiaer and Yoss'phedd, that the Cabal endured. Through their valiant efforts new members were inducted, strongholds built, and scattered tomes regained, so that within sixty years the Cabal could count its members to exceed two hundred."

In the two decades following the Cabal's decimation, a Traditionalist named Dremiaer dominated the Inner Circle. She had fought aggressively against the Cabal's persecutors while most of its members hid or fled, and through violence and intimidation had herself installed as Grand Master. She was in fact the first leader to hold the title of Grand Master, and replaced the old Inner Circle with the rigid hierarchy which has endured into the present. A forceful leader, Dremiaer established and fortified the Cabal's great headquarters of Caer Kof'Arendur (Castle of Arendur Remembered), recruited fresh thaumaturgists and pursued an increasingly aggressive and dangerous vendetta against the slayers and inquisitors.

Yoss'phedd allegedly had Dremiaer assassinated and, following the Grand Master's death, was made her successor. A more moderate Magiocrat, Yoss'phedd halted the vendettas, and initiated a period of quiet expansion. Membership rose rapidly, as wizards of many different schools were admitted into the Cabal, alongside the thaumaturgists who still remained dominant. It may be an exaggeration to say that the Cabal had in excess of two hundred members, but it certainly had well over one hundred.

THE SCHISMS

"After the peaceful death of Yoss'phedd, many irresponsible and greedy members fought and squabbled, many slaying their fellows and others breaking away to form their own Brotherhoods. None obeyed the Grand Masters, but followed only their own

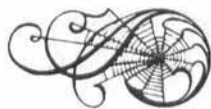
selfish desires, so that the Cabal suffered greatly."

For twenty five years, the Cabal was in turmoil. Seventeen Grand Masters ruled during this period, some for up to two years, one for only three hours. Resignations were few, but assassinations frequent, and most of the Grand Masters were relatively weak, puppets of those who took lesser, safer appointments.

At times the struggles escalated into open warfare, as mercenaries and thaumaturgically summoned companies of demons, half-demons and undead clashed in battle. Thus alerted to their activities, paladins, slayers and others began harassing the Cabal, and many wizards deserted the thaumaturgists in fear of their lives.

Not only did diviners, necromancers and other wizards leave the Cabal, but numerous thaumaturgists also fled, individually or in groups. Several thaumaturgists formed a breakaway "Order of the Silver Way", a cooperative Brotherhood dedicated to establishing the rule of the Wise (themselves) over the world. A dozen thaumaturgists and other wizards joined the Order, but the Cabal destroyed it in a sporadic war. More importantly, twenty three Traditionalists broke away from the Cabal, taking a section of the Library with them and establishing the "Seekers of the Dawn". Too powerful to crush, the Cabal had to tolerate this rival society until, at last, a strong Grand Master could stabilize the Cabal, and negotiate the reunification of the Brotherhood.

The period of the Schism thus ended when Ebertino Garhan became Grand Master. A powerful thaumaturgist and capable politician, he has ruled the Cabal for fifteen years, surviving occasional plots and instigating a number of small purges. The Cabal has not grown much in size since the "Seekers of the Dawn" reentered its ranks twelve years ago, and presently has some sixty members, most of whom are thaumaturgists.



THE CABAL NOW

The Cabal, though small, boasts members in many lands, has several allies, servants and much wealth. But it must always operate in secret because of its dealings with demons and avowed desire to open the Gates of Hell. To a certain degree, however, the existence of the Cabal is an open secret. Most people, wizards, nobles and priests alike, are unaware of these thaumaturgists, but those small groups who specialize in combating demons are often aware of their existence.

Slayers, inquisitors, paladins and others may remember the events of the Schism and the Scourging. They may not know anything of the Cabal's history or organization, nor how large it is or who its members are. But most have heard of this secret organization, even if they believe it to have been destroyed.

The Cabal is also no longer a Brotherhood, in any real sense. Torn by internal conflict and governed by a single strong ruler, it is rather an unstable dictatorship.

HIERARCHY

Listed below are the current leaders of the Cabal. Also located throughout this section are brief character write-ups for each leader. GMs should feel free to change or rearrange the Cabal's hierarchy to better fit his campaign.

THE GRAND MASTER

The Grand Master is the supreme head of the Cabal, and for the last fifteen years this has been the Magiocrat, Ebertino Garhan. He is responsible for appointing all of the lesser Masters, and they are supposed to obey his commands. He alone may declare a members "Traitor", thus legitimizing their destruction.

In order to give weight to his authority, the Grand Master is personally responsible for safeguarding the Cabal's treasury, and its numerous magical artifacts. He ensures the honesty of his subordinates by occasionally testing them; causing a rumor to reach the Master of the Light and carefully noting what version of the original story he is told, or causing the Master of the Rod to capture a known amount of money and ensuring that all is passed on to him. All of the Masters are aware that such tests occur, and thus tend to serve the Grand Master faithfully.

In order to remain Grand Master for any length of time, it is necessary to be a powerful wizard (preferably a thaumaturgist), to have a reputation for harshness, and to foster a sense of paranoia amongst the lesser Masters.

MASTER OF THE ROD

Responsible for maintaining internal discipline and enforcing the Grand Master's commands, Broadan Dereth has been Master of the Rod for twelve years. His

appointment was part of the deal by which the "Seekers of the Dawn" reentered the Cabal, and he is a staunch, ambitious but pragmatic Traditionalist. His techniques are blunt but effective. He commands or hires several groups of mercenaries, wizards and rogues, whom he sends to raid or attack the Grand Master's enemies. Suspicious that these groups are riddled with spies (agents of the other Masters) he rarely orders them to attack his own enemies without the Grand Master's permission, and if it were necessary to act against another Master will hire freelance mercenaries rather than these usual groups.

Several magical items are also at the Master's disposal. Some are in his keeping for as long as he holds this rank, while most are kept by the Grand Master until they are needed - so that the Master cannot use them against his superior.

The Master of the Rod is also responsible for ensuring that the Cabal has a steady income. "Taxes" are collected from villages and nobles near the Cabal's strongholds, while raids, thefts and black-mail all generate further revenues.

MASTER OF THE STAFF

The Master of the Staff is responsible for safeguarding the Cabal's libraries, and the post is often considered a proving-ground for young thaumaturgists, or a suitably powerless post for prominent Masters of doubtful loyalty.

The post was held by a Traditionalist from the "Seekers of the Dawn", until his assassination three years ago. Despite rumored Anti-Traditionalist sympathies, the Grand Master then appointed a young thaumaturgist named Avliste, and she has proved an energetic Master of the Staff. She has made much effort to add to the libraries, hiring mercenaries and commanding demons to acquire such books for her, and there has been no suspicion of her abusing her privileges. It is rumored that she may be promoted to a more powerful post in the near future, and she may one day become Grand Master. It is also whispered that the Traditionalists are plotting her murder.

There are three separate libraries, all contained in the fortress of Caer Kof' Aendur. The Lesser Library is available to any member of the Cabal, but the tomes may not be removed from their store-room, so that members must stay in the fortress for as long as they wish to study. The Main Archives contain histories, letters, legal documents, accounts and other aging documents; and any Master is permitted to access these, though few have any reason to do so. Finally, the Greater Library, contains the rarer and more potent books of the thaumaturgical art, and is accessible only with the Grand Master's permission.

Upon becoming Master of the Staff, a thaumaturgist invariably copies out any spells or tomes she finds interesting from the Greater Library (without

the Grand Master's permission). This is not even considered an abuse of power, but is common practice. However, there are few books or spells in the library which such a powerful thaumaturgist would not already have acquired. Many books were taken during the Schism and subsequently "lost". Several are held by the Grand Master, and successive Masters of the Staff have lost or stolen other volumes. One common ploy is for the Master of the Staff to hide the most valuable volumes from the Greater Library, knowing that Grand Masters would be less likely to order their assassinations if a substantial part of the Library were thereby lost.

MASTER OF THE SWORD

Currently held by Iassad-Arman (a self-professed Magiocrat; advisor and probable successor to the Grand Master), this post involves supervising the secret society of half-demons which the Cabal maintains. Most of these half-demons do not know that they are supported by the Cabal, and many would not approve if they ever found out. They do, however, have bonds of loyalty to their society, and the leaders owe numerous favors to the Cabal.

If the Cabal ever needed the aid of these half-demons they might call in the debts which the leaders owe, but they would only do so in a desperate situation. For the present, the half-demons are occasionally asked to perform a special task (particularly if the Grand Master feels that he cannot trust the Master of the Rod). The Master of the Sword may also ask the half-demons to perform simple tasks to serve his own personal interests. The Grand Masters usually turn a blind eye to this common abuse.

Iassad-Arman is the only senior Master who is not a thaumaturgist. He is actually a diviner, made Master of the Light a decade ago, and given these responsibilities when his predecessor proved unreliable. Because of his divinatory talents he still performs most of the functions of Master of the Light in addition to supervising the half-demons, and is the Grand Master's most loyal supporter.

MASTER OF THE LIGHT

The Master of the Light is responsible for gathering information of all kinds; exposing plots against the Grand Master, spying on the Cabal's enemies, and so on. Toward this end; spies are hired, thefts sponsored, divinatory magical artifacts leant by the Grand Master, and demons summoned and questioned.

Although vital for the security and stability of the Cabal, the Masters are not often as effective as they should be, as it is not always in their own personal interests to serve the Grand Master with complete loyalty. The Master of the Light may easily cover up his

allies' indiscretions, spy upon the other Masters, and pass on distorted information. The potential for such abuses of power gives a competent Master of the Light a great deal of influence within the Cabal.

The current Master of the Light is the disgraced Ersanil, implicated in a plot to topple the Grand Master but too influential to simply murder. Then Master of the Sword, she was replaced by Iassad-Arman, who has since purged most of her spies and supporters amongst the half-demons. The Grand Master, moreover, has given her no opportunity to abuse her present appointment, rarely supplying her with money or artifacts to gather information, and paying little heed to her reports. For the most part, the Cabal now relies instead upon the Masters of the Sword and Word for divination and rumor.

Ersanil has no interest in the Cabal's supposed objective. She is simply a pragmatist, interested in securing power for herself over her fellow thaumaturgists, and thus courts the favors of many young, aspiring members, supplying them with spells and aid in return for their loyalty. She has also ensured that rumors have begun to circulate implying that her loyalist supporters may have been contacted by the returned Tolamuire. Should she be implicated in any further plots, however, she may fall victim to a suspiciously premature death.

MASTER OF THE WORD

The communications between the Grand Master and the individual members are coordinated by the Master of the Word. His messengers circulate questions, demands and declarations throughout the Cabal, often returning with gossip and requests for the Grand Master. This Master may therefore decide which members receive what information, and which of their communications reach the Grand Master. The messengers also gather a great deal of apparently trivial information concerning the members' activities, and may often be used as spies. At present, with the Master of the Light disgraced, these messengers are increasingly used to gather rumors, and to check up on Ersanil's own agents.

For nearly thirty years, Jallak Mae-Aban has served as Master of the Word. He is a staunch Magiocrat, but is foremostly concerned to preserve the stability of the Cabal. He remembers the chaos of the Schism, distrusts the Traditionalists and, having supported Ebertino Garhan's succession, does not intend to see him overthrown. If a new Grand Master should be required, he would likely support Iassad-Arman (master of the Sword), or perhaps Avliste (Master of the Staff). In any case, he has no desire to become Grand Master himself. In the mean time, he serves The Grand Master faithfully, though he exaggerates the dangers posed by the Traditionalists and by greedy pragmatists such as Ersanil.

THE APPRENTICE MASTERS

The rank of Apprentice Master is largely honorary, conferring status without power. The sole major advantage of attaining this rank is that only these wizards may be elevated to the more senior posts, and ambitious members are often eager to become Apprentice Masters. Any powerful thaumaturgist is routinely made an Apprentice Master, although several are members with less magical ability and greater influence within the Cabal. There are usually at least seven Apprentice Masters at any given moment.

Minor advantages are sometimes gained by Apprentice Members. The Masters of the Sword, the Rod and the Word may appoint a lesser thaumaturgist as their apprentice, or to mind their responsibilities if they are preoccupied or absent, and this may be an opportunity to gain personal advantage or to demonstrate loyalty and ability. The Grand Master or other Masters may sometimes ask Apprentices to perform special tasks, which may be of great importance to the Cabal or may merely be to test them. The Archives are open to Apprentice Members, and each has a suite of rooms set aside for them at Caer Kof' Arendur.

CABAL MEMBERS

Thaumaturgists and other wizards are attracted to the Cabal by the advantages of cooperation, a network to share arcane knowledge with, the use of an established library, and the possibility of gaining political power within or through its hierarchy. Some of these advantages are illusory (few who seek political power achieve it, and the Greater Library is a shadow of its reputed glory), but others are very real. The lesser library is also a boon to inexperienced thaumaturgists, and many receive greater wisdoms through the patronage of the Masters.

But membership is not without its dangers, and those who ally themselves with the Masters are particularly imperilled. Junior members may suffer if they become pawns in the plots of their superiors; being exposed as collaborators, scapegoated for the Masters' crimes, and making enemies of the Masters' opponents. Also, it is often the younger thaumaturgists who are swept up by inquisitors' investigations, and individual members may be sacrificed to the Cabal's enemies as part of a broader strategy.

TRAITORS

Although it may be more expedient to simply murder individual opponents, the Grand Master may declare any member "Traitor". This means that other members may not have dealings with, and are encouraged to hunt down and kill, the offender. Those doing so may thereby earn the Grand Master's gratitude and a token reward.

Traitors are not always hunted down, particularly if

they are notably powerful wizards, and the Grand Master may order that the traitor be allowed to escape. Sometimes the individual is even warned of the impending declaration, as it may be sufficient that he or she simply goes into exile or hiding.

Sometimes Masters may actually provide sanctuary for fugitive Traitors (although it is a great risk to accept such offers). Masters may shelter their allies, or those from whom they wish a favor, and argue for their pardon.

Such declarations may always be revoked, and may therefore be issued as warnings to powerful thaumaturgists, or in order to ensure a temporary banishment.

JOINING THE CABAL

Joining the Cabal is a difficult thing to achieve. The Cabal has many enemies, and is constantly aware of the dangers of being infiltrated. It may therefore take a year or more to gain admission, during which time the candidate is carefully tested.

APPROACHED BY THE CABAL

Most candidates are invited to join the Cabal by an associate or friend: Most will never have heard of the Cabal before. The member who issues the request is invariably the Sponsor, two or three Tests are performed, and a little spying is conducted into the candidate's background. Such candidates rarely have to wait more than six months to be accepted or rejected by the Grand Master.

APPROACHING THE CABAL

Those who take the initiative and approach the Cabal for membership, are subject to the most rigorous testing. The Cabal is immediately suspicious of such people. Unlike candidates of the Cabal's choosing, these candidates may have to wait up to three years while they are thoroughly tested. Spies will be sent to dig into the candidate's past, looking for links with hostile groups, hopeful to uncover secrets which might later be used to blackmail the candidate.

SPONSORS

Every prospective member must have a sponsor within the Cabal who is held responsible for the candidate. If the candidate breaks his or her Oath within three years of joining, the sponsor may be declared Traitor. If the Oath is broken at a later date, the sponsor is not necessarily held responsible, but may be viewed with suspicion. It is therefore usual for members to be sponsors only for those they know well. Those who are not powerful enough to keep watch over a candidates do not usually risk becoming sponsors.





THE TESTS

A series of spells and procedures are used to determine a candidate's suitability, before he or she may take the Oath and join the Cabal. For thaumaturgists, the simplest method is to summon or contact a demon, and to delve into the candidate's motives and loyalty. Great demons such as Dantalion or Gutterfowl would ideally be consulted, but the Cabal do not wish to cause offense to the demonic Dukes and Princes by asking trifling questions, and so unless there is cause for some doubt, lesser demons are typically contacted.

Ingenious but mundane tests are also used to establish the candidate's sincerity. One common ruse is to have a member or agent of the Cabal pose as a representative of a rival group of mages, and to offer the candidate valuable spells, cash, or artifacts in return for aiding in the assassination of one of the Cabal's Masters. Alternatively, a member might confront the candidate claiming to be an inquisitor, and then try to glean information about the Cabal from him or her with threats or bribes. Ideally, the candidate will report such approaches to their contacts in the Cabal, but simply refusing the proposition is considered an adequate reaction. The testing of any candidate will be overseen by several Masters, each individually setting one or more tests. The Masters of the Light, the Sword and the Word are usually responsible for the testing.

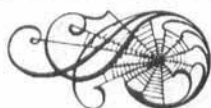
THE FINAL DECISION

Each candidacy is considered by the Grand Master, though he doesn't usually meet the candidate personally. He decides what testing is necessary, and assigns the task to the Masters, who also, typically, do not meet the candidate in person.

Most who are rejected, die soon afterwards. The most dangerous are assassinated before they leave the Cabal stronghold. In certain situations, a candidate may be accepted even though he or she has not satisfactorily passed the tests. Some may be secretly re-tested in the months to come, if it was decided that they were previously on their guard against such ruses. Those who are believed to be agents of the Cabal's enemies may be accepted, watched closely and then murdered when their plots are better understood.

THE OATH

Once accepted into the Cabal, the fledgling member must take an oath. Although it varies under different Grand Masters and under different conditions, the usual Oath of Allegiance is always fairly similar. A typical formulation might be: *"I swear these things truly: That I shall devote my life to the goals of the Cabal; that I shall obey the Grand Master of the Cabal; that I shall not betray the secrets of the Cabal; that I shall not betray the identity of its members. These things I swear upon forfeit of my blood, my body, and my soul."*



A Grand Master might add a clause defining the "goals" of the Cabal, a Traditionalist perhaps including mention of the rule of demons across the world, or a Magiocrat adding that the Cabal should seek rule over the world. Special circumstances might also cause the Oath to be altered, and an individual's Oath may be altered according to their own backgrounds.

PROMOTION

All promotions and appointments are made by the Grand Master. He decides who should be made Apprentice Masters, which of those are raised to become Masters, and who are "retired" or cast out as Traitors. The Grand Master may also pardon those declared Traitor, and dismiss or reappoint Masters. Officially, he is also the only member permitted to order murders, thefts and spying into others' affairs (though in practice most members indulge in such activities).

Promotion is not always dependent upon merit. It is not even dependent upon magical power. Apprentice Masters must be of some power (Skill Level 5) but many must be quite outstanding (Skill 9) before finally achieving this promotion.

The most frequent reason for promotion is that the Grand Master seeks to elevate a like-minded ally to a position of importance. Faithful service is often rewarded (though those who served past Grand Masters are rarely honored), and those who seem to agree with the leader's goals receive more rapid promotion. Grand Masters also make promotions as favors to powerful allies, or to placate opponents.

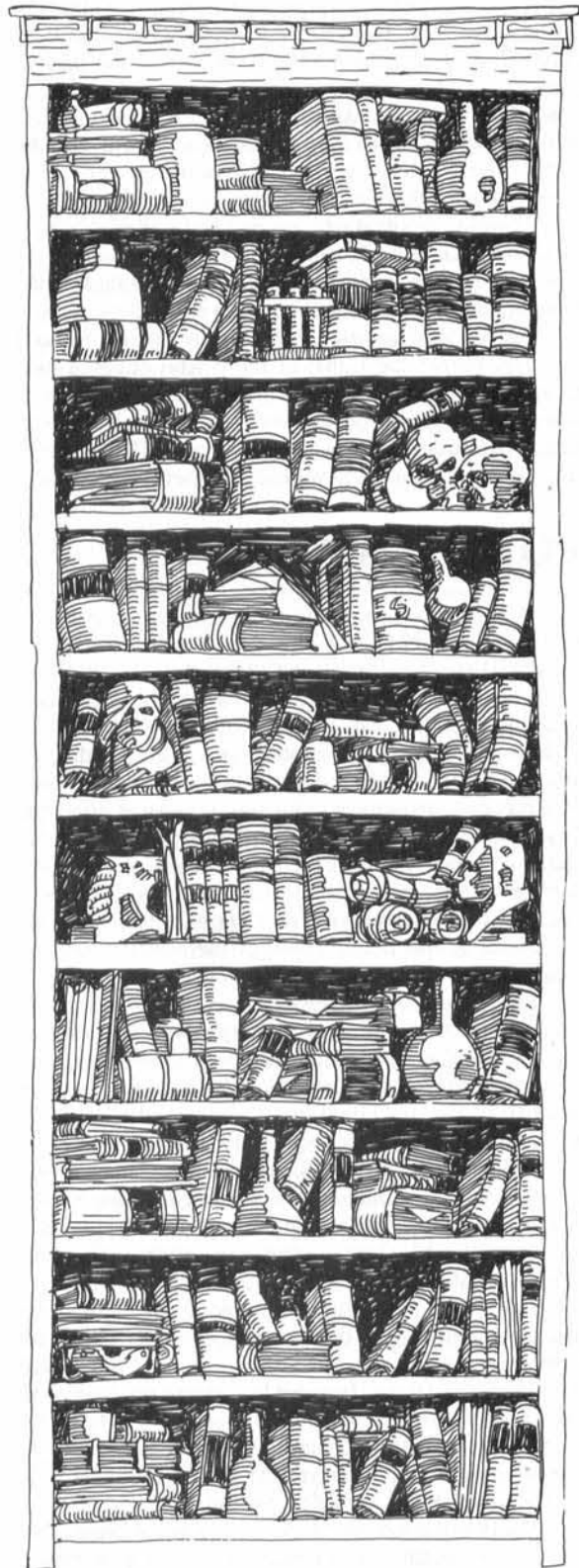
Often specific tasks may be required in return for promotion. A suitable gift or favor may be required, or a specific quest accomplished. Often unspecified favors, demandable at some future time, may be required, and may involve acting against a more powerful enemy of the Grand Master. Such activities may later be used to blackmail the perpetrator, and if anything goes wrong the Grand Master will deny all knowledge.

Finally, promotions may occasionally be secured through the aid of a powerful demon. In return for some service, a demon might agree to assist a thaumaturgist in gaining a promotion. By intrigue, blackmail, or bribery, it then encourages the Grand Master to elevate the thaumaturgist.

In practice, few promotions are made for just one of these reasons. Ambitious thaumaturgists plot for years to receive their desired promotions, and usually do so because of numerous factors. Most have powerful allies, lesser supporters, or even demonic aid.

ELECTING A NEW GRAND MASTER

When a Grand Master dies (by whatever cause), a successor must be chosen. In theory, the five Masters of the Rod, Staff, Sword, Light and Word meet together, argue the matter through, and eventually vote one of their number to be Grand Master.



In practice, the replacement of a Grand Master usually coincides with a coup of some kind within the Cabal. Other Masters may be assassinated or kidnapped at the same time. Caer Kof'Arendur may be seized by force. The Greater Library may be stolen and held to ransom, to be returned only if a certain candidate is elected; as may the treasury or store of magical artifacts. In one instance, during the Schism, the Caer Kof'Arendur and all five Masters were seized by a troupe of demons, who demanded that a certain Master be elected.

Objective debate is typically replaced by threat, bribery, bluff and blackmail. Masters sell their votes for promises of power or privilege. Junior members may form military units, with mercenaries and demons, to cajole the Masters.

Following his election, a new Grand Master typically purges the Cabal of those who opposed him. Loyal Apprentice Masters are promoted to fill important roles as Masters, and money and magical artifacts vanish from the Cabal's stores, to pay off those who fought or voted for the new Grand Master.

POLITICS

Within the Cabal, the most important political jostlings are between the various factions; the Traditionalists, Libertines, and so on.

The Magiocrats, who are currently dominant, constitute about one half of the Cabal's membership. They seek to consolidate their control, and to ensure that the other factions do not pursue their own divergent objectives. However, Garhan is aware that the Traditionalists and Anti-Traditionalists are powerful factions. He does not want there to be another Schism, nor does he wish these groups to assassinate him. However, this policy of appeasement is not supported by all of the Magiocrats, and many younger members would be pleased to see the Traditionalists driven from the Cabal.

The fifteen Traditionalists are the Magiocrats' greatest political opponents, although the two often find that they can work together. Many of these extremists are content to cooperate with Garhan for as long as their objectives do not conflict. Other Traditionalists, however, are not content with the Magiocrats' concessions, and actively plot a coup. Broadan Dereth is the most senior Traditionalist in the Cabal, being Master of the Rod. He is, in fact, quite moderate, but several Apprentice Masters advocate more fiercely Traditionalist values.

The Anti-Traditionalists are a small faction, numbering only half a dozen or so. The only important member of the group is Avliste, Master of the Staff, who holds her post largely because she places her loyalty to the Cabal above her personal opinions. Frustrated by Garhan's refusal to negotiate with them, but unable to mount any real opposition to the Magiocrats, these are the least motivated or confident faction in the Cabal.

There are no more than five or six A-Moralists (Libertines), without any power or influence. They act

independently but energetically to further their goals, neither expecting nor receiving the aid of the rest of the Cabal.

Finally, there are a few members who claim to be quite disinterested in the Cabal's explicit objectives, and treat the organization only as a way to gain personal power or knowledge. Ultimately, most join the cabal for selfish reasons, to further their own power. The bulk of the Cabal's petty politics, therefore, centre around individuals' attempts to gain power.

CIRCLES

Circles are groups of members who agree to cooperate with one another. In most cases, this takes the form of a mutual non-aggression pact, but some Circles have broader purposes. Thaumaturgists with similar objectives may band together to aid one another with study or summonings, or to exchange magical texts. They may cooperate to confront demons which they might be unable to control individually. Some combine to present a request to the Grand Master, or to have one of their number promoted to the rank of Apprentice Master. Some may share specific political goals, within or outside of the Cabal.

SEEKERS OF THE DAWN

A persistent rumor, recurring throughout the last decades, is that the Traditionalists' "Seekers of the Dawn" have not disbanded. It is said that the more extreme Traditionalists still meet in secret to plan their strategies, and that they still possess valuable books stolen from the Greater Library. Whether or not the rumor is true, it illustrates the suspicion with which the Traditionalists are viewed by the other factions.

If such an organization does persist, it is unclear who might lead it. Broadan Dereth, Master of the Rod, is popularly considered to be its most likely suspect, but in truth he is too moderate to hold such a post, often being accused of "selling out" to the Magiocrats. More probably, one of the more extreme Apprentice Masters would control the Seekers.

THE RETURN OF TOLAMUIRE?

As yet, there has been no solid proof that the great Tolamuire has returned. Nor is there any reason to suppose that he might do so. Still, the myth of his return plays an important part in the Cabal's politics. The rumors have led to a sense of anticipation. Many members watch the Cabal's politics with keen interest, but are unwilling to commit themselves to any grand schemes, preferring to wait until the rumors of Tolamuire's return are proved or disproved.

Certain individuals are suspected to be somehow linked with Tolamuire's return, notably Ersanil, Master of the Light, and the more credulous treat them with a degree of deference. Certainly, those supposed to be linked with the founder are rarely attacked or harassed by casual enemies.



CAER KOF'ARENDUR

The headquarters of the Cabal, Caer Kof'Arendur, was established after the Scourging by the Grand Master Dremiaer. It is hidden within a desolate mountain range on the end of a ridge, a monolithic carbuncle of dark stone.

Built without concern for aesthetics or architecture, the castle seems to squat upon the mountain. Its walls are forty feet tall and thirty feet thick, stone houses are built upon the ramparts and in the courtyard, with further chambers dug down into the stone, and a low, fat tower skulks in the centre.

Here, the Masters of the Cabal have private rooms, and other members may come to study in the library or hide from their enemies. Here the Masters gather to elect each successive Grand Master, who then resides beneath the central tower.

No other mortals live here, but undead guards stand unmoving on the walls, and minions, summoned from the Infernus, perform menial tasks. Should the castle ever be attacked, innumerable demons have pledged to aid the Cabal or individual residents, and these may be called to drive away the attackers. Some even say that duke Sabnock has pledged his own strength to the defense of the castle.

The Cabal's libraries are stored in the central tower. Here the Lesser Library contains scrolls concerning all the basic (Skill Two) spells of the Infernal school of magic. Here the Archives preserve two hundred years of documents, and the Greater Library contains unknown (if exaggerated) secrets.

Other treasures include a score of magical objects and weapons, held by the Grand Master, a permanent Passing Gate, and any other artifacts which a GM wishes the Cabal to possess.

The lands for twenty miles have no human habitation, the local farmers having been enslaved and worked to death building the stronghold, and their skulls and bones may still be seen strewn across the mountain side. The surrounding lands are severely tainted. No animals live nearby, except for a few flocks of crows, packs of rats and lone hyenas. The barren mountains are cold and windswept, often surrounded by violent thunderstorms and attracting fierce blizzards in winter. Travellers instinctively shun the area. The gods seem to have forgotten it.

OTHER STRONGHOLDS

Besides Caer Kof'Arendur, there are other, smaller strongholds belonging to the Cabal or its members. Some are places of unutterable horror, others have a gothic perversity, while many appear natural and even welcoming.

The powerful thaumaturgists (including most of the Masters) have each established a stronghold of their own. Others have inherited towers from deceased thaumaturgists, or wrested cavern complexes from magical creatures. It is also said that the "Seekers of the Dawn" maintain their own secret stronghold, first established during the Schism.

The details of these strongholds are left for GMs to establish, to suit their own Campaigns.

SANCTUARIES

Sanctuaries are the main benefit provided for all of the members by the Masters. These are "safe havens", where wizards, their servants and possessions may, theoretically, be hidden in complete safety. A Sanctuary may be a hidden cellar beneath a tavern, an isolated mountain shack, the hold of a ship, or any similar space. The only requirement is secrecy. The Sanctuary must not be easily discoverable by outsiders, and members must not tell of its existence.

Sanctuaries are run by the agents of the Masters of the Word and the Light, who see these places as excellent sources of information. By monitoring the comings and goings of travelling members, noting who stays in which Sanctuaries and what their avowed intentions are, the Masters gain a valuable insight into their underlings' activities.

Sanctuaries are frequently established and disbanded, most being used for no more than a few years. News of current Sanctuaries are carried by the Cabal's messengers, directed by the Master of the Word. There are no secret signs or symbols used to mark Sanctuaries, and there are no clues to their existences that might alert the Cabal's enemies.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Innumerable adventures may arise around the Cabal, based upon the testing of new candidates, its internal politics, or protecting it from external threats. The following adventure outlines presume that the player characters are not aware of the Cabal. These plots should provide clues to the organization's existence, and introduce the characters to its lethal politicking.

THE SANCTUARY

"In which a nest of bandits conceals a greater evil, and the player characters are asked to remove the menace."

A mayor or chieftain offers the player characters employment. A group of ruffians have taken over a ruined tower in the forest, and may be responsible for the recent increase in brigandage. The characters must ascertain what these people are doing in the tower and if they are guilty of any crimes. If they are a danger to the people of the area, they must be captured, killed or driven away.

The cut-throats in the tower are, indeed, indulging in a little banditry, as well as extensive hunting. Less frequently, they provide hospitality for several suspicious travellers (Cabal members), at least one of which resembles a wizard, perhaps a necromancer.

Scouting around the tower, the player characters find no obvious trace of the visitors. The travellers



remain hidden in a concealed chamber, defending themselves, but not their bandit guards against attack. If the Sanctuary's secrecy seems to be compromised, it will be disbanded immediately, and player characters might succeed in driving the bandits away without bloodshed. Should a fight erupt while a thaumaturgist shelters in the hidden chamber, characters could find themselves fighting demons as well as brigands.

THE FALSE SHIPMENT

"In which a precious cargo is entrusted to the characters, in order that it might be stolen from them."

The player characters are hired by a mercenary, who explains that she has a quantity of valuable booty which must be transported to her family in another city. The characters must take a heavy chest, enduring a difficult four-day journey, and delivering the money safely. Ten thousand golden coins (gold diluted with lead, so it is worth only 4,000 gp) are contained in the chest.

Unfortunately for the PC, they are being set up. The "mercenary" works for the Master of the Word, and information of the shipment has been leaked to agents of the Master of the Rod. The whole escapade is a test, designed by the Grand Master to test the loyalty of the Master of the Rod.

During the journey, the Master of the Rod's thieves and mercenaries will make several attempts to seize the coinage. The "mercenary" expects the characters to lose the money, but pays them as agreed if they succeed in their pointless task.

THE LOST LIBRARY

"In which a number of precious books are located and recovered. And, following this, the characters are questioned most harshly."

During the Schisms a number of tomes were taken by Traditionalists, who then set up the "Seekers of the Dawn". Although believed lost, these books are hidden away in a cave, tomb or ruined castle, guarded by undead and demonic magics.

The player characters are approached by a wizard (actually an Apprentice Master of the Cabal, serving the Master of the Staff) who would hire them to retrieve this cache, if it can be located. The wizard has discovered the identity of the last person to possess the books, and has discovered where she was captured and slain by the inquisitors. The characters may begin their investigations there, searching civic records of the trial and following up local rumors, eventually locating and retrieving the texts.

Although their patron claims to be an enemy of demonkind, the characters may decide to dispose of the books themselves. If the tomes are sold openly, the inquisitors will hear of the sale and apprehend the characters as dealers with demons. If handed over to a good priest or inquisitor, the Apprentice Master seeks them out, demanding to know where the books have gone, and how the characters propose to make amends for their treachery. If the books find their way to the Cabal's library, the Traditionalists hunt down the player characters. The Traditionalists hope to capture and interrogate them, to discover how much they know of the Cabal, what books they might still have, and so on.

THE EXILE

"In which the player characters must defend a thaumaturgist from his comrades in evil."

A competent member of the Cabal has been declared Traitor, and is fleeing for his life. He hires the player characters to protect him, saying that he has angered a group of evil wizards whom he fears might be out to kill him.

In fact, this thaumaturgist has seriously annoyed the Master of the Sword (plotting his assassination) and so several half-demons assail the Traitor during his flight, plus a couple of minor demons summoned by lesser opportunists. For added complication, the Master of the Rod has sent a group to capture the man, alive, hoping to ransom him to his allies.

THE INQUISITOR'S PRIZE

"In which the player characters are employed to frustrate the righteous business of an inquisitor."

It is a great fear of the Master of the Word that one of his agents might be captured by the Cabal's enemies. These messengers know the identities of many members of the Cabal, and the locations of its current Sanctuaries and Strongholds. And so, when a messenger is captured by an inquisitor, one of his comrades immediately contacts a group of adventurers or mercenaries.

The player characters' patron claims to be the brother of a man recently arrested as a diabolist. The charges are false, he claims, trumped up by a corrupt inquisitor who has demanded a large sum of money for the charges to be dropped. Rather than pay the ransom, the "brother" claims to prefer to fund a rescue attempt.

By asking a few questions about their employer, player characters should come to suspect that he is lying to them. They then have to decide whether to betray him to the inquisitor (who would ask that they capture the man), or whether to rescue the prisoner regardless.

THE SOILED

SEED

• Chapter Seven •

HALF-DEMONS

Half-demons are the cursed offspring of demonic and human mating. They combine mortal and demonic lineages, and represent an image of humanity corrupted by demonic essence. Many gain great advantages from their demonic parentage; such as great strength or intelligence, or supernatural powers; but they also suffer from physical and mental malformations, and can expect little but persecution from normal folk.

THE ORIGINS OF HALF-DEMONS

It is often thought that the demonic parent is inevitably male, and the human parent female. Such myths are spread in the sermons of moralistic (male) priests, storytellers' epics and old wives' tales, but are not strictly accurate. Many half-demons are born of human fathers and demonic mothers, but the demon returns to the Infernus, and the foetus usually gestates and is born there. Such half-demons grow to resemble full demons in all ways, and often serve as petty Warriors or Seducers for the demon lords. A surprising number of lower Canto demons may have a measure of mortal blood in their veins.

If the child of a demonic mother is to grow as a half-demon on the prime plane, the parent must return to give birth to it and find mortal parents to adopt it. Alternatively, the foetus must be placed in a mortal's womb, to gestate and be born normally. cult members are often used as surrogate parents.

It is also widely believed that almost all half-demons are born of lust or adultery, and thus from demons of the Order of the Flesh or Heart. However, many are born of the other Orders, too,

as many powerful demons are delighted to have their own offspring walking the prime plane. Although many half-demons may be born accidentally, as a side effect of a mortal's Seduction, some are deliberately created to serve the long-term interests of the Infernus, or for the warped amusement of its rulers.

NATURAL BIRTHS

The birth of a half-demon is often accompanied by signs and omens, suggestive of a demonic taint. Storms and thunder often accompany births; dogs howl, babies cry, milk curdles, and horses chaff at the bit. Sometimes the sun set early, the moon turns red, or the wind smells of burnt meat. Ancient trees are struck by lightning, statues topple in nearby shrines, and gravestones crack. All such occurrences, however, may well be natural or coincidental, and after the safe delivery of a child, parents are usually too overjoyed to worry over unpleasant "coincidences".

The births are usually particularly painful for the mortal mother, too, and it is not uncommon for such women to die in child-birth.

UNNATURAL BIRTHS

Not all half-demons are conceived or born in the normal way. Demons of the Blood are notoriously unable to understand mortal sexual habits, and so they (another demons) have developed abnormal methods of begetting progeny. Innumerable stories circulate of demonic children, and GMs must decide which of the following examples are true and which are fictitious in their campaigns.

-It is said that the half-mortal offspring of Gusion are normal children, born of women who lose

their souls through acts of homicide. Perhaps both biological parents were human, but Gusion becomes the "father" by the woman's sin. Or perhaps these are "immaculate" conceptions.

-Similarly, Botis's children may be those whose fathers commit suicide before they are born, and Sabnock's offspring are supposed to be born of the cruelest and most depraved women. Runstibble's mortal descendants may likewise be the children of false prophets, Eligos's being born of lunatics and Orobas's of prostitutes.

-Magical creations and inceptions are also spoken of. A mixture of hemlock, demons' blood and sulphur is sometimes said to turn a new-born babe into a half-demon if drunk before its mother's milk. Other tales tell of demons sculpting children from the flesh of sinners, and of cultists hatching babies from the eggs of evil serpents.

BIRTH AND CONCEPTION

For every occasion upon which the mother is the victim or perpetrator of an obvious and substantial sin, there is a 5% chance that the child born will be a half-demon. For example, if the woman boasts unreasonably of her pregnancy on three occasions, there is a 15% chance that the child will be born with the taint of Furfur. If the wife is beaten by her husband three times, then similarly there is a 15% chance that the baby will be of Sabnock.

If a woman is constantly the perpetrator or victim of a sin, then there is a simple 60% chance of the child being born a half-demon. Similarly, if one single but particularly major sin is committed, there is this 60% chance of the child being demonic. For example, if the woman murderer's the child's real father, Gusion (Duke of Murder) may become the father. Likewise, if the woman conceived the child after sleeping with a disguised demon, there is a 60% chance of it being demonic. There is never more than a 60% chance that any child will be a half-demon, so that it is never possible to predict with certainty that such a creature will be born.

The half-demon's mortal mother always finds the birth extremely painful: She must also make a Stamina check or suffer 1d4 HTK damage from internal bleeding.

When the child is actually born, 1-3 omens or "unnatural events" precede the birth. To determine the nature of these, GMs may roll on the Taints charts in Chapter 3, or simply determine omens suitable to the situation. To determine if any of these occurrences signifies a demonic event, a successful Demon-lore ability check must be made.

Obviously, the character making the check must be in a position to witness the event, or at least hear accurate tales of it afterwards.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Often, half demons are born without any obvious aberrations. Those who will in later life be grossly misshapen or deformed may simply have unusual features (long fingers, which will one day become talons, and so on). If all half-demons were born with obvious demonic taints, zealous slayers and inquisitors would have little difficulty in killing them while they remained helpless, and many societies would willingly leave such children in the wild to die of exposure.

Demonic parents who are particularly interested in the survival of their offspring may arrange for the adoptive parent's "accidental" death, so that he or she cannot ever tell the world how the creature came to be. Particularly concerned demons might even arrange for the child to be abducted by a cult or adult half-demon.

As children, half-demons may be particularly cruel and abnormally ugly. Prone to bullying, theft, and sometimes more advanced forms of sin, such children may be suspected of demonic taint, but once the mother or adoptive parents have grown to love the child, they are unlikely to allow it to be killed. Those creatures born with clear aberrations rarely survive long, unless fostered by a half-demon, thaumaturgist or cult.

For most, the physical changes occur at puberty, in the early to mid teens. The changes are likely to be particularly painful; wings sprouting from the back, growths blistering from the skin, and so forth, often taking months, during which time the child may be incapacitated by pain. This is a crucial stage in the half-demon's development, and the assistance of a grown half-demon, cult or demon is often necessary to protect it from outraged neighbors, shocked adoptive parents, slayers and inquisitors. After this painful transformation, half-demons will be outcasts from society, if they were not before, and a childhood of pain and rejection is likely to have made them bitter, angry, untrusting or vindictive. Moreover, they may feel a debt or sense of loyalty to the demonic parents, older half-demons, thaumaturgists and cults who have ensured their survival this far in life. At the very least, such guardians will usually expect a favor in return from the half-demon in the future.

Half-demons forgotten by their demonic parents, without clear aberrations or with particularly understanding human parents, are unusually fortunate individuals. It is usually these half-demons who are of lawful, neutral or good alignments, and their less tortured upbringings may equip them for happier lives.



ABERRATIONS

Most half-demons have one or more aberrations; mutations and abnormalities, as a result of their demonic ancestry. For each basic Attribute rated 16, 17 or 18 a half-demon develops a lesser aberration, and for each Attribute scoring 19 or 20, a greater aberration. As half-demons roll their attributes on 2d10, over 60% have at least one visible abnormality. These aberrations are disadvantages for the half-demon, marking him as inhuman and potentially evil. None of these abnormalities are of any practical use unless combined with a suitable power, explained below.

The following list provides numerous possible aberrations, but players and GMs may devise others for their characters.

ABNORMAL WOUNDS: When wounded, the character's body reacts strangely. Lesser aberrations might be wounds which ooze puss instead of bleeding, hiss or shriek for their first round, or always heal to leave heavy purple-black scars. A greater aberration might involve wounds which sprout long, useless tendrils.

ANIMAL COMPANIONS: Such a half-demon is constantly accompanied by certain animals. The character cannot communicate with or direct them. They are simply drawn to him. These creatures are usually a pest or danger to those around the half-demon. Several flies might linger about constantly (for a lesser aberration) or a cloud of thousands of the pests might buzz around him (greater aberration); a lone wolf might follow the character and terrorize the vicinity (lesser); a few carrion birds may nest or perch nearby, or a flock of ten thousand crows could travel with him, perhaps even enough to block out the sun (greater).

ANIMAL FEATURES: Such a half-demon has physical features which seem more animal than human. The features of rats, insects, snakes, lizards, bats, dogs and wolves are all typical of demonic taints. A serpent's forked tongue, an insectoid eye, and a rat's mouth are all examples of lesser aberrations. Greater aberrations might involve having a serpent as a tongue, exoskeletal articulations, or a rat-like head. Such features may also affect the character's speech, such as a serpent's tongue making his voice a rasp or hiss, or a dog-like head causing the character to bark or growl instinctively.

AURA: The character has a strong sense of the Infernus about him. A lesser aberration would involve animals being disturbed by his presence; dogs growling, horses shying, rodents fleeing; and young or sensitive children being frightened (babies crying as he passes, etc.). A strong aura, constituting a greater aberration, causes milk to curdle, mothers to miscarry, animals to flee in terror and brave warriors to reach instinctively for their swords. When such a character enters a room, all fall silent, crowds pass to let them through and everyone listens when they speak, but few react well to their words, none offer their friendship or affection, and allies remain loyal only out of fear.

DEMONIC SKIN: Such a half-demon may have clearly inhuman skin (reptilian, mottled or reddened, as lesser aberrations), or may have flesh which acts strangely under certain fairly common situations (such as rippling or exuding sulphurous gasses when the character is angered or pained). Greater aberrations may include transparent skin, or flesh which constantly crawls and ripples of its own will.

DIABOLICAL TOUCH: The character's touch has

certain magical effects, which are unlikely to be helpful. Lesser aberrations might be a touch which seems abnormally hot, causes discomfort to animals, stunts plant growth for a month, or tarnishes metal. Examples of greater aberrations include a touch which is painfully hot (causing damage if combined with an ability), makes animals infertile, withers small plants and shrivels fruit, or corrodes metal.

DISEASE CARRIER: Such characters are clearly suffering from some type of disease, although it has no adverse affects upon them, Not only will they be shunned by healthy folk, but the disease is contagious, and those contracting the disease will all the usual ill effects. A lesser aberration involves the character carrying a relatively minor disease (a severe cold, mild influenza), while greater aberrations involve severe or fatal diseases (leprosy, plague). Such half-demons may be responsible for causing innumerable epidemics wherever they go, but cannot control who falls victim to their disease, unless taken in conjunction with a greater or lesser ability. Most unfortunately, slayers and others are likely to take a particularly keen interest in the destruction of such a dangerous creature.

DISTORTED REFLECTION: These half-demons' reflections betray their demonic lineage far more clearly than their normal appearances do. Those with lesser aberrations may cast reflections in which they have red eyes, are stained in blood, or have their other aberrations exaggerated. As a greater aberration, the character's reflection may show his demonic parent's image.

EXTRA EYE: As a lesser aberration an extra eye might be placed on the half-demon's fore-head, in the palm of the hand, or somewhere else on the body. Note that having a soft, sensitive eyeball in one's palm severely curtails the use of that hand - it certainly cannot be used to wield weapons. Greater aberrations could include eyes growing on stalks, or a cluster in the place of the usual pair.

EXTRA TEETH: This might simply involve having a mouth crammed with teeth (probably sharp or curled), extra fangs, or a second row of incisors for a lesser aberration, or large tusks, several extra rows of teeth, or an extra unusually situated mouth for a major aberration. Such extra mouths might be found in the stomach, or in the palm of a hand, as examples, but cannot do any damage unless taken in conjunction with a lesser ability.

GROWTHS: Some sort of inhuman projection sprout from the half-demon's body. Lesser aberrations may include short horns, small spikes

along the spine, worm-like nodules writhing on the scalp and bone hooks along the forearm. Greater aberrations might include large, useless wings or a lifeless second head. In conjunction with a greater ability, these growths might be of some use, such as wings with which the character can fly, or an extra pair of hands or arms.

HOST: The half-demon is effectively the "womb" for some sort of creature. Some may simply be walking breeding-grounds for maggots, which occasionally fall from their mouths or ears, while others may spawn larger creatures. Small poisonous snakes or toads may infrequently break out of ulcers beneath the skin or may be vomited up. Greater aberrations include occasionally giving birth to ravens, red-eyed wolves or vultures, (which claw their way agonizingly from within the half-demon's stomach, incapacitating the character for days or weeks while they do so) or hatching innumerable flies, beetles and spiders which crawl around visibly beneath the skin before gnawing their way out, so that the character's skin is scabby and constantly moving.

INHUMAN JOINTS: Some of the character's joints bend backwards as well as forwards (such as finger or knee joints), or the character has extra joints (such as a second set of knees). This provides no inherent benefit, but might easily be combined with lesser or greater abilities, to provide innumerable benefits for thieves in particular. Such mutations are always lesser aberrations, unless the joints notably lengthen limbs or grossly distort the character's posture.

MISSHAPEN: Something about the character is warped and clearly demonic. Perhaps the fingers are elongated like claws, the face is drawn into a snout, the feet are cloven hooves, or the posture is bent or twisted. These lesser aberrations may conceivably be natural, or may perhaps be covered up, but greater aberrations are far more dramatic: hands resemble black eagles' talons, the head is bony and dragon-like, or the posture grossly warped.

PARENT'S EYE: Such characters are their parents' "eyes" in some way, and through them the parents may spy upon the prime plane. Lesser aberrations might involve having a black diamond in place of an eye (which the unscrupulous might covet for its financial value) or a single bat's ear. A greater aberration might involve a grotesque red eye in the center of the fore-head, or a large crystal covering half of the face (in which careful observers might catch glimpses of the Infernus). In either case, the physical inconvenience is relatively

insignificant, considering that the demonic parent is bound to take a special interest in this most useful child, perhaps "suggesting" where he or she should go and whom he or she should watch. The half-demon, of course, can rarely keep anything secret from its demonic parent.

UNNATURAL HAIR: As a lesser aberration this might involve hair which is an unnatural colour (such as blood red), which smoulders or is flecked with sulphur, or it might involve hair which grows copiously on unusual parts of the body: The shoulders and upper arms, thighs, and back are all plausible. A greater aberration might involve having hair which writhes like or resembles snakes.

UNSETTLING SCENT: Such a half-demon has a faint scent which people find unpleasant, frightening or unnerving. This might be a whiff of sulphur or a smell like decaying meat. As a greater aberration, not only is the smell unmissable, but is accompanied by physical symptoms, such as yellow-flecked skin or smoke curling from the half-demon's nostrils, or perhaps his flesh is in a state of perpetual decay (if it is a scent of rotting flesh).

WARP NATURE: The presence of such a demon has an immediate effect on the weather or natural cycles of any area he or she enters, unless this effect is countered by the spell of a higher level wizard or priest. Lesser aberrations include a cold wind always blowing from the direction the character has come, local predatory carnivores becoming bolder, or scavenging creatures starting to dig at human graves. Greater aberrations might include fierce storms raging in the vicinity of the character, the temperature dropping by ten degrees within ten miles, or nearby crops becoming mildewed.

DERANGEMENTS

Derangements represent the mental affects of the character's demonic ancestry, mental aberrations in a sense. Every half-demon has some derangement. Sometimes these affects are quite straightforward, as the half-demon has inherited a part or a diminished version of the parent's personality. For other individuals, the effects are more subtle, as their minds buckle and break under the pressure of infernal desires, or as they struggle to come to terms with their natures.

Once again, the following list is not exclusive, and GMs may use their own imaginations to create further derangements.

BLOOD LUST: The character is roused by the sight

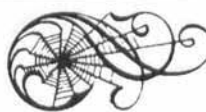
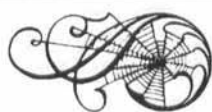
of flowing blood, and is then overcome by a desire to shed yet more blood unless he or she can save vs. spells. Different characters react in different ways to their lust, some simply desiring to kill any wounded victim, some wishing to kill the unfortunate and then drink the blood or bathe in it, or eat parts of the corpse. Only when they are left alone for several rounds, without fresh victims to inspire their lust, does the madness pass. Half-demons cursed by this derangement are likely to be loners, shunning any sort of companionship and possibly wallowing in their own guilt. They are a danger to friends and enemies alike, and may be roused by their lust to kill defenseless children, life-long friends or vital pack animals indiscriminately. Anyone who is injured and bleeding is a potential target. GMs may permit such characters to make an additional ability check against Intelligence to avoid attacking injured creatures which they have no realistic chance of defeating.

FOLLOWER: This derangement signifies a character's refusal to make his own decisions. Such characters may feel that they cannot trust themselves (perhaps because of their demonic taints), or they may be too confused, stupid or frightened to take responsibility for their own actions. Some are fickle, attaching themselves to the nearest available charismatic or arrogant leader, trading masters perhaps daily. Others fanatically follow one particular leader, whom they obey with fanatical adoration for years, until their idol inevitably disappoints them, when they may become suicidal, depressed, lethargic or furious.

IMPOTENT: The character either has no sexual organs (a minor aberration), is unable to use them, or at least, like many hybrids, is infertile. These frustrated sexual or maternal desires are likely to find other less natural outlets (such as a lust for power or wealth or murder) or may spawn a hatred of those who have families and a desire to destroy them.

MOODY: Not merely erratic, such characters suffer from super-humanly massive mood swings. They may become depressed, lethargic, suicidal, angry, or hysterical, often appearing to be catatonic or simply insane for days on end. In some characters these mood swings result from external stimuli, such as being humiliated or insulted, but in others they result from regular cycles, occurring for one day a week or several days in each month. Generally those who are subject to regular mood swings suffer for longer, but can at least plan their lives around their afflictions.

OBSESSION: Commonly, half-demons are totally overcome by a desire to encourage and nurture a



certain way of thinking in others. Those of clearly evil temperament may be quite clear about what their priorities are: to encourage lust, revenge, dishonesty, or whatever, depending upon their demonic parent's sphere. But those who claim to be good or neutral may succeed in convincing themselves that these are not sins but virtues which they encourage, calling lust "romance", revenge "justice" and dishonesty "tact" or "practicality".

SELF-DELUDING: Such a half-demons refuse to accept that they have demonic ancestry. In their hearts, perhaps, they cannot escape the truth, but to all outward appearances seem either unaware of their tainted blood or obsessed with disproving it, even if it is obvious to everyone else. They may react with mockery, hurt or murderous anger if accused of having demonic parents and are very sensitive to jokes and insinuations, often seeing slurs where none were intended. Those who do not immediately lash out at their accusers, but bottle up their hurt and anger, bear grudges and enmities for many years.

SPLIT PERSONALITY: Such a half-demon has two or more distinct personalities. Sometimes each is well developed, so that the character is in effect two or more people in the same body. These personalities may have different alignments, allies, memories, priorities and attitudes, perhaps even competing with one another. In most cases, however, the multiple aspects are simply variations on the same basic personality, characterized by opposing temperament. As examples, one may be timid, one aggressive and one normal; one sensitive, one malicious and another crass; one selfish the other self-sacrificing; etc. In some half-demons the personalities switch regularly and predictably, changing between day and night, or from month to month, but others may have personalities which replace one another unpredictably and perhaps vary from minute to minute, or even second to second.

VISIONS: The character sees visions, phantoms and images of things which simply are not there. These self-induced illusions reflect the demonic parent's sphere. Thus, the offspring of a demon associated with murder or revenge will glimpse assassins behind curtains, bloodstains on the floor, and hear whispered plots in shadowed chambers. If the parent were associated with lust or adultery, as another example, then adulterers walking in the moonlight, swallowed groans from bedchambers and unlawful love-letters may be noticed. Very occasionally, these visions might actually offer some valuable clue or insight (such as an unsolved murder being seen one year after it occurred), but usually they are

purely fictitious, and the character can never tell the true from the false.

VOICES: Some half-demons here voices in their heads, which insult, cajole and encourage them. These voices are thoroughly demonic, urging the character into sin (particularly of the parent's sphere), and mocking him for virtuous or lawful actions. No one else can here these voices, and such half-demons often appear to be insane if they argue audibly with their tempters. Sometimes the voices abate for days, weeks or even months, only to return at times of high tension. A less fortunate half-demon may have to endure a multitude of voices constantly talking amongst themselves inside his head.

WEAKNESS: There is a certain sin which always successfully tempts the character, unless he or she can save vs. spells. Depending upon the parent's sphere, this could variously be the sin of murder, gluttony, theft, adultery, or what ever is appropriate. This is probably the most common derangement for a half-demon.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Every half-demon possesses two lesser and one greater ability. Ten categories of abilities are given below. A character may have all three abilities from the same category, or from three separate categories. Many of the abilities suggested below require an obvious physical abnormality or aberration, such as talons which inflict damage. Special abilities should be carefully chosen to compliment the character's abnormalities, both mental and physical, and examples are given of aberrations which tie in with each ability.

ARMOR: Some half-demons have supernatural methods of defending or protecting themselves, particularly those whose demonic parents were violence oriented. Obvious examples include toughened skins, hard growths and exoskeletal sections which provide natural armor (Armor Class 7 as a lesser and Armor Class 4 as a greater ability): The Aberrations, Demonic Skin, Animal Features and Growths may be linked to such abilities. Another defense might involve the half-demon exuding noxious fumes, which cause anyone within three paces to writhe, cough and vomit every round after breathing the gasses until they successfully save vs. poison. As a greater ability the demon might exhale these fumes at will, while as a lesser ability such vapors might rise from fresh wounds (with the Abnormal Wounds aberration). Other defenses may involve driving away wild animals (perhaps involving

Unsettling Scent), corroding any weapons which strike the character (Abnormal Wounds or Diabolical Touch), or a buffeting wind which howls around him (Warp Nature).

DAMAGE: Some demons have special abilities which allow them to inflict damage. Typically, claws, sharp finger-nails and teeth rip at opponents, presumably linked with an aberration such as Misshapen, Animal Features, or Extra Teeth. A few half-demons may inflict damage with poisoned breath (allowing the opponent to save vs. poison), a burning touch (linked with the Demonic Touch aberration), or even by staring concertedly at the target (Extra Eye). As a general rule, lesser abilities inflict 1-4 points of damage, and greater abilities 1-10 points, though attacks which cause damage at a range should be less potent.

LETHAL ABILITIES: A few half-demons possess greater abilities by which they may bring about the death of any target which fails to save vs. death magic, although in all cases there are considerable difficulties involved. For example, one greater ability might involve "sucking" the life from a person, leaving only the withered husk of his body, by kissing or embracing him. Another ability might require the half-demon to destroy the person or object most valued by the target, who then pines away and dies of a broken heart. Alternatively, the half-demon's blood might be so poisonous that if the target drank a single mouthful it could kill him.

MENTAL ABILITIES: Some demons have powerful mental capabilities (often accompanied by high Intelligence ratings), which permit them to perform super-human feats or protect them from magics. Through infernal cunning, or sheer force of will, half-demons may possess lesser abilities such as a +2 bonus to save against mind affecting magics and illusions, or the ability to sense if any nearby person is motivated by the sins associated with the half-demon's parent. Possible greater abilities include the ability to see through illusions, to send dreams (once per night, up to one mile), and to instinctively guess a person's deepest fear (requiring a brief conversation, once per day only). More complex greater abilities are also possible: For example, a greater ability might permit a half-demon to haunt a person, so that the target has dreams or nightmares about the half-demon, irrationally believes that the demon is watching him, etc., the exact details being dependent upon the sphere of the half-demon's parent.

MOVEMENT: Some half-demons may travel faster, longer, or differently from normal characters (ideally combined with the Inhuman Joints or

Misshapen aberrations). Some may have increased movement rates (13 as a lesser ability, 15 as a greater ability). Others may be able to sprint at exceptional speeds (four times normal movement rate as a lesser ability, or six times as a greater ability), though such characters must make a Constitution check each round while sprinting or collapse exhausted for 1-3 rounds. Other examples of lesser abilities include the ability to jog for an extra three rounds, doubled normal swimming speed, and the ability to leap an extra two meters horizontally. Half-demons with suitable wings (as greater aberrations) may also be able to fly for a number of rounds equal to their Stamina, or, alternatively, may glide indefinitely.

PERCEPTION: Improved eyesight or hearing, acute sense of smell, and abnormal senses may be taken as abilities. A greater ability might confer 120' infravision, while a lesser ability might involve improved night sight (halving all penalties from poor light). A bloodhound's sense of smell would be a greater ability, as would bat-like sonar. A half-demon's lesser abilities might include the ability to sniff out any spilt blood within fifty feet, or to "see" its demonic parent's sin as a tangible aura clinging to its perpetrators. To see all sins as auras, or to sense when the specific sin were committed in a place, would be a greater ability.

PREMONITIONS: Occasionally, half-demons have abilities which give them an insight into the future. They can never know with certainty what will happen, but only what is likely to happen. Sometimes these visions appear in dreams, or as ghostly phantoms, or as vivid hallucinations. In many cases, this ability is as much a curse as a blessing, as these visions may be so lifelike that they cannot be distinguished from present reality. Lesser abilities would involve occasional, blurred dreams, half-forgotten in the morning and giving only the vaguest hints and warnings. A half-demon with a greater ability might sense the world to be full of chattering figures, the past, present, future and fictitious all at once. Another version of a major ability would be to have hallucinations, caused by the desires, hopes or fears of nearby people, which seem completely real. As a lesser version of this ability, the character only gets hallucinations caused by the emotions of its parent's sphere.

SENSE THE INFERNUS: Such a character has an intuitive insight into the Infernus and its agents. As lesser abilities, the half-demon may be able to sense the presence of demons or Gates (with a successful Intelligence check), or may have a constant awareness of its parent's plots or location. As a



greater ability, the character may be able to sense the presence of demonic taints, artifacts and magic, as well as demons and Gates.

SPELL-LIKE POWERS: As a minor ability, half-demons may cast a single spell of Skill Level One, once per day. More usually, spell-like powers are greater abilities, enabling the character to cast more powerful spells several times a day. As a general rule, a Skill Level One spell may be cast once per day per Skill Level (i.e. a fifth level character may cast the spell five times each day), while a Skill Level Two spell may be cast once per day per two Skill Levels. Spells which half-demons may plausibly mimic include *cantrip*, *charm person*, *domination*, *mind blank*, *misdirection*, *non-detection* (on self only), *pass without trace*, *protection from good*, *shocking grasp*, *sleep*, *scare*, *spook*, *vampiric touch*, and *wraithform*.

STEALTH: The offspring of more cunning demons may be able to move with outstanding stealth. Lesser abilities include a +10% Hide in Shadows bonus, or +20% Climb Walls (with suitable physical aberrations, such as clawed feet or extra hands). As examples of greater abilities, a half-demon may be able to become invisible for as long as he or she does not move (up to three times each day), may be naturally invisible to particular types of animal, may completely change his appearance for one hour per day, or may be able to move without making any noise.

TEMPERAMENTS

Because of their unique ancestries, half-demons display a vast range of temperaments and attitudes, not all of them are violent. Most half-demons are often unhinged and often feel more extreme emotions than normal humans. The following examples include many of the more and less obvious temperaments exhibited by half-demons.

GUILTY

"It wasn't me - I didn't do it... The horse? Oh, that horse, yes, yes I'm sure I've looked after her well. I mean, I think I have. And I didn't mean to poison her or cut her... Oh, she does look well to you? Yes well, I'm sure she is, but sometimes I do things that, well - and I was worried that I might have, well - I knew I hadn't."

Knowing that they have demonic blood in their veins, or at least being aware that they have performed appalling deeds, such half-demons are constantly afraid that they have unwittingly performed some new sin, or that past crimes have been discovered.

AGGRESSIVE

"Your horse! To the abyss with your horse! You'll find her where you left her, toadface... Yeah, she might have been stolen... Yeah, it was my job. You got a problem with that?"

Such half-demons have usually inherited belligerent personalities from their demonic parents. Others are aggressive because they are extremely angry; with their parents for creating them, with the world for persecuting them, or just with fate for making them miserable. Still others are very defensive, and knowing how imperfect they are, become unreasonable if they think that they have made yet another mistake.

ENIGMATIC

"Which horse...? I did what was needed. But do you know what that was? A horse is simply a speck of sulphur on the breath of the furnace. Your body, and mine, are blown in the same manner, and all that endures is the soul... I will take you to her, of course. But first tell me, or tell yourself, what is the Bellows that heats the fire and drives the smoke?"

Afflicted by thoughts more suited to the Infernus than the prime plane, some half-demons have decided that normal speech and language cannot really express what they know, and so turn to proverbs, metaphors and gibberish to convey their inhuman insights. Some are vastly intelligent, visionaries, philosophers or prophets. Some are simply insane.

CONFUSED

"The horse! Oh Mother, Oh Mother, the horse! Umm, what horse...? Dealt with the horse - dealt with it! Oh, I'm so sorry, so so sorry - it's still alive...! Oh, that's good is it? You don't mind that it's alive...?"

The human aspects their minds urging one course of action, the demonic half urging another, these half-demons are incapable of making sensible judgements. Unable to balance their thoughts, they are left bewildered and often helpless.

MONSTROUS

"Hoss...? Herch...? Ahh, scrunchy mush! He-he-he. You next come to be Hertz - you come next be chomp-in-me!"

Either inherently stupid, driven mad by their confused minds, or possessed by powerful urges, these creatures act purely according to their base instincts, usually the instincts to hunt and feed, and to commit whatever sin their demonic parent was associated with. Although often savage, those with higher Intelligence ratings may actually be extremely cunning.

PARANOID

"The horse - I drove the horse away - it was evil! I put it in the stall and there - there was the hay and the straw all the colour of sulphur and the manure

like year-old corpse-flesh and I knew - I knew - it had come for me! I looked into its eyes and saw that it had come to take me to my father - and I drove the evil beast away!"

Because they are so terrified of their demonic parents, or so ashamed or awed by them, many half-demons are obsessed by the possibility of their parents summoning or contacting them. Many over-react to quite common situations.

MALEVOLENT

"I cared for your horse myself, sir, and she is as well as can be expected... . No, no, sir, we have not made the problem worse... . You were not aware of the problem! No doubt it was reflected in the price you paid... . But who would have charged you so dearly... ? No, no, I must be mistaken - if that is indeed what you paid. Thomaso is a noted trader, and there have been no rumors recently... ."

Possessed of super-human talents and a vindictive temperament, such half-demons delight in encouraging sin, destruction and hostility. Most particularly relish one particular sort of sin or conflict (such as pride or revenge), depending upon each demonic parent's sphere, but are often happy to stir up trouble in any way they can.

PLOTTING

"Of course, sir, the horse is quite well. But I must warn you: Last night several mounts escaped from the stable (the groom has been whipped). I ensured that no damage had come to your horse, sir, and it was the first that I sought to retrieve, being so clearly of value. But in view of the incident in the town last night, I felt I should warn you. The militia might delay your departure if they thought your horse may have been involved... . I'm sure that it wasn't, sir... . Thank-you sir, you are very generous."

Such half-demons delight in constructing and executing complex and devious plots, designed to promote a particular sin, avenge themselves on society, or simply to earn a living. They may enjoy the challenge of outwitting others, or the adrenaline of playing "games" with their lives on the line, or they may hate all the people around them so deeply that they enjoy destroying or defeating them. Some are convinced that their demonic ancestry makes them more intelligent or cunning than mere humans, and may simply weave plots in order to prove this to themselves.

FRIGHTENED

"Your horse, Oh by the gods I hope she's alright. I locked her in the stables and then rushed back to the fire. I sat here all night I did, by the fire, not moving, by the fire. I hope that your horse is alright."

Fear dominates some half-demons. They may be afraid of what their demonic blood might lead them to do, either because of past crimes, or

because they have been warned so often by those they respect. Or they may fear what their demonic parents might do to them, incriminating them to ensure their allegiance and so on. Some may especially fear other half-demons, assuming them to be messengers from their parents, or the epitome of all that they fear in themselves.

CRAWLING

"Oh yes master, yes master. The horse is very well, very well indeed. I spent all of the evening picking fleas from its flanks, and then I brushed it ever so thoroughly, and then... ."

Deeply insecure, these creatures require the approval of others to assure them that they are not the evil fiends that many claim. Often, they are quite uncertain who they are or what they should do, and have chosen to deal with their sinful urges by ignoring them. But however annoying they may be, if their favors are spurned they may smolder with resentment, give up the resistance and surrender to their urges.

UNCLEAN

"I led the horse to its stall, but it brushed against me! I had touched it - I'm so sorry. I had infected it! So I took a brush and rubbed at its flank where I had touched it, but it didn't help! It was still all bad. So I took the wire brush from the kitchen, and rubbed as hard as I could until it bled - but the blood touched my hand! So I scrubbed and scrubbed at the bad blood but more and more came out and in the end, in the end only oil and fire could cleanse it."

These demons either know instinctively that they are somehow unclean, or have been taught since birth that they are vile and corrupt. They are deeply ashamed of themselves, and often consider their corruption to be tangible. Refusing to speak with or even look at "good" people, they may refuse to touch or be touched by anything which is "clean". They may destroy the things which they "pollute", and many mutilate themselves appallingly in an attempt to scrub, cut or burn away their impurity. Most commit suicide eventually.

RANDOM GENERATION TABLES

GMs may wish to use the following tables to rapidly generate NPC half-demons, or to provide inspiration when creating more fully fleshed-out characters.

Aberration and Ability tables are given for each attribute: one each for Strength, Intelligence, Insight, etc. The aberration and the ability should reflect one another and the character's attributes. A ten sided die should be rolled for each

exceptional attribute (16+), the indicated section of the text consulted, and the exact nature of the aberration decided.

If the character has more than or less than three attributes above 15, he or she still receives three abilities (two lesser and one greater). Additional abilities should be rolled against other high attribute scores, but no aberration results from these rolls.

A single derangement should also be chosen for each half-demon. A simple table is given below, though GMs may assign a derangement which reflects an exceptional attribute or ability (and recommended examples are given for these).

Of course, these combinations of abilities, derangements, etc. are merely suggestions, examples of combinations which may work well together, creating a coherent and interesting character. It is not only possible that GMs may use other combinations, but it is recommended that you design quite different half-demons to suit your own style of play.

USING THE TABLES: AN EXAMPLE

When a GM wishes to quickly design a half-demon NPC for an adventure, someone with whom the player characters can role-play, he follows this procedure:

He rolls the creature's basic attributes. For the sake of example we assume the rolls are:

Strength: 8
Intelligence: 12
Insight: 17
Dexterity: 16
Stamina: 6
Appeal: 7

To determine its abilities and aberrations, he rolls on the Insight and Dexterity charts above. In our example he rolls a seven on the Insight table (Distorted Reflection and Mental Ability) and a two on the Dexterity table (Animal Features and Spell-like Power).

He chooses to make the Mental Ability the half-demon's major ability, and decides that it is the ability to guess a person's heartfelt desires. For the half-demon's Spell-like power he decides that it can *Detect Magic* once per day.

The aberrations (Distorted Reflection and Animal Features) are both minor, as the attributes are above 15, but under 19. The GM decides that the creature's eyes should normally appear to be very pale, but its reflection reveals them to be serpent's eyes.

Requiring one last lesser ability, the GM looks back at the attributes. Noting that the Intelligence score is quite reasonable, he consults the Intelligence chart above rolls a three, indicating a "Perception" ability.

He decides that this will be an ability to see one particular sin (greed).

He still requires a derangement and Temperament for the half-demon NPC. Looking at the relevant charts, he decides that the Crawling Temperament, recommended for half-demons with high Dexterity, would be appropriate. In fact, given the NPC's high Dexterity and serpentine eyes, it would seem apt that it actually creeps or "slithers" about as it speaks with the party.

The Obsession derangement, suggested for those with Mental Abilities, also seems apt. If the creature is obsessed with the sin of greed, which it can "see" like a stain around the auras of mortals.

Rolling 1d4 for the half-demon's HTK points and selecting an Alignment which is suited to the NPC in the campaign setting, the GM has finally created the following character:

Half-Demon
Skill Level: 0

Strength: 8
Intelligence: 12
Insight: 17
Dexterity: 16
Stamina: 6
Appeal: 7
HTK: 3
Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Special Abilities: can *Detect Magic* once per day; Can "see" the sin of greed committed within the past day, as a stain clinging to the perpetrator; can discern a person's desires.

Temperament: Crawling

Notes: The NPC is obsessed with spreading greed. He has a crawling or slithering movement, and has pale eyes, appearing serpentine in reflection.

THE DEMONIC PARENT

The most important single factor in a half-demon's life is the attitude of its demonic parent. If the demon is disinterested in its offspring, the half-demon need contend only with the prejudice of mortal society and its own aberrations and derangements. But these are the lucky few, as most half-demons must live with the meddling and manipulating of their demonic creators.

Many demons sire offspring simply in order to spread sin. Firstly, the half-demon is likely to live a sinful life, and may be particularly prone to perpetrating its parent's sin. Thus, the demon may expect to gain much of the soul of its half-mortal child.

Secondly, demons may wish their offspring to

actively encourage sin throughout the mortal plane. Should a half-demon lead a virtuous or isolated life, the parent may feel bound to intervene and provide some "encouragement" to its child or even destroy it. Some demons take a regular and active interest in their progeny's lifestyle, encouraging, persecuting or punishing them regularly.

Even less fortunate half-demons may be expected to act as pawns in their parents' schemes. They may be expected to attack their parents' mortal enemies, aid seducers, and serve cults or evil thaumaturgists. Often, half-demons are created explicitly to serve a demonic cult.

LIVING AS A HALF-DEMON

Living within mortal society, most half-demons must face fear and hatred every day. Walking through a city's streets, they will be stared at, scowled or frowned upon, avoided, jeered and spat at. Taverns and shops may refuse to serve them. Inns will not let them sleep under the same roof as the other guests. Few jobs are open to them.

Most mortals believe, with some justification, that all half-demons are evil, sinful and criminal. They expect half-demons to be prone to murder, depravity and theft, and often suspect them of being ill-disguised demons. Only those who can disguise their deformities, who do not obviously have demonic blood, are accepted by normal society.

Often, the half-demon's own warped personality causes as much difficulty as an intolerant society. The mental derangements from which all half-demons suffer may lead them to behave abhorrently or anti-socially, losing them the acceptance of their society or even leading to their exile.

Many half-demons, therefore, tend to travel or wander constantly. They may try to settle in one

community from time to time, but their appearance or temperament always forces them to move on. Others accept this rootless lifestyle, others long to be able to live normal lives.

Isolation has an appeal for many half-demons. Living alone, they do not face constant persecution, and need not be concerned that their derangements will harm others.

The discipline and rigor of a religious community also appeals to a few, providing them with a method of controlling their instabilities. Some spend their entire lives cloistered in such communities, where a few have themselves walled up in their cells, food and water being passed through a small opening, so that they can never again get out to cause harm or sin. Others stay in a community only for a while, eventually proving unable to live according to the order's rules.

Other half-demons persist in trying to fit into normal society, perhaps envying the "normal" people around them, or trying to recapture the innocence of their youths, before adulthood brought painful desires and aberrations. Many more are forced into menial occupations, often working as grave diggers and executioners. A large number follow brief and bloody careers as mercenaries, often being placed in the most dangerous spearheads of assaults by generals who are glad to see them slaughtered.

SECRET SOCIETIES

In order to survive life within a hostile world, half-demons often band together to form cooperative societies and associations. These are inevitably secret organizations, hiding from the society which persecutes them. Normal mortals often react to these organizations with fear or hostility, seeing them as covens of demons, or conspiracies for the propagation



of evil. Half-demons' secret societies are routinely suppressed by the authorities, their membership declared illegal, and their leaders hunted down.

Some secret societies, of course, are dedicated to spreading sins and evil, or bringing down the society which persecutes them. Others, however, exist for more laudable reasons, for mutual aid or protection, or to fight against the injustices which befall them. Nonetheless, as half-demons are inevitably deranged and often evil, these associations are rarely gentle, caring or even moral organizations.

EXAMPLE HALF-DEMON SECRET SOCIETIES

As mentioned earlier, half-demons sometimes ally in various secret societies for the purposes of support and self-preservation. Some examples of these organizations are listed below.

THE CHILDER

The Childer is a young society, with less than a dozen members, formed in response to a new wave of victimization. Bound together by a common enemy, the members willingly help to protect one another from danger, providing shelter and refuge, transport and sustenance, and sometimes even fighting together against mortal persecutors.

Unfortunately, not all of the Childer are innocents misunderstood by society. Some actively serve their demonic parents and may deserve to be hunted. The benign members of the Childer, who, with good intentions, help these corrupters, thus serving the Infernus, too.

THE ANDENBOURG CIRCLE

Centered around the town of Andenbourg (or another large town in your own Campaign), this Secret Society was established two decades ago. The local authorities know of its existence, and attempt to suppress it, but are unable to eradicate the group. The Circle was started by five half-demons, to inspire mutual cooperation and to defend its members from persecution. It worked well, and attracted new members, but less benign half-demons began to subvert the society to serve their own ends.

Now, a group of merciless half-demons run the circle, living a life of leisure (if not luxury) at the expense of their members. Every half-demon in the town and surrounding area is known to the leaders (as one of them can identify demonic blood through a Sense the Infernus ability), and they are all automatically presumed to be members. Those with

incomes must give one tenth of their earnings to the leaders, and those without money must provide information on the half-demons' persecutors. Anyone refusing to pay as the leaders request are first threatened, and then beaten, and then killed or betrayed to the authorities.

Although essentially an extortion racket, serving only the leaders, the Circle does continue to provide a service to its members. Rumors of slayers, inquisitors another threats are gathered and recounted to members, and those captured are often sprung from prison. Nonetheless, those arrested are rescued primarily to protect the leaders, whose identities might be revealed if prisoners were tortured. They are told that they must perform a service for the leaders in payment for their freedoms. Often these favors serve the interests of the leaders' demonic parents.

THE HOSTEL OF THE SEVEN HOLY MARTYRS

The Hostel is not a society run by half-demons for their own benefit. Rather, it is organized by a community of priests, who wish to save half-demons from the world, from their demonic parents and from themselves. The Hostel is actually a set of secret rooms, hidden below the cellar of a leper colony. These chambers are dank and squalid, but are at least hidden from the mortals, and the priests give sanctuary to all, asking only that weapons be left with them for safekeeping.

The holy men are not, however, completely naive. They have dealt with many half-demons, including several who were thoroughly evil, and they have ways to deal with trouble-makers. Poisons and spells may be used on the disruptive or violent, incapacitating but not killing them, and truly dangerous half-demons have been locked or walled up in their rooms, until hunger weakens them or they surrender to the priests.

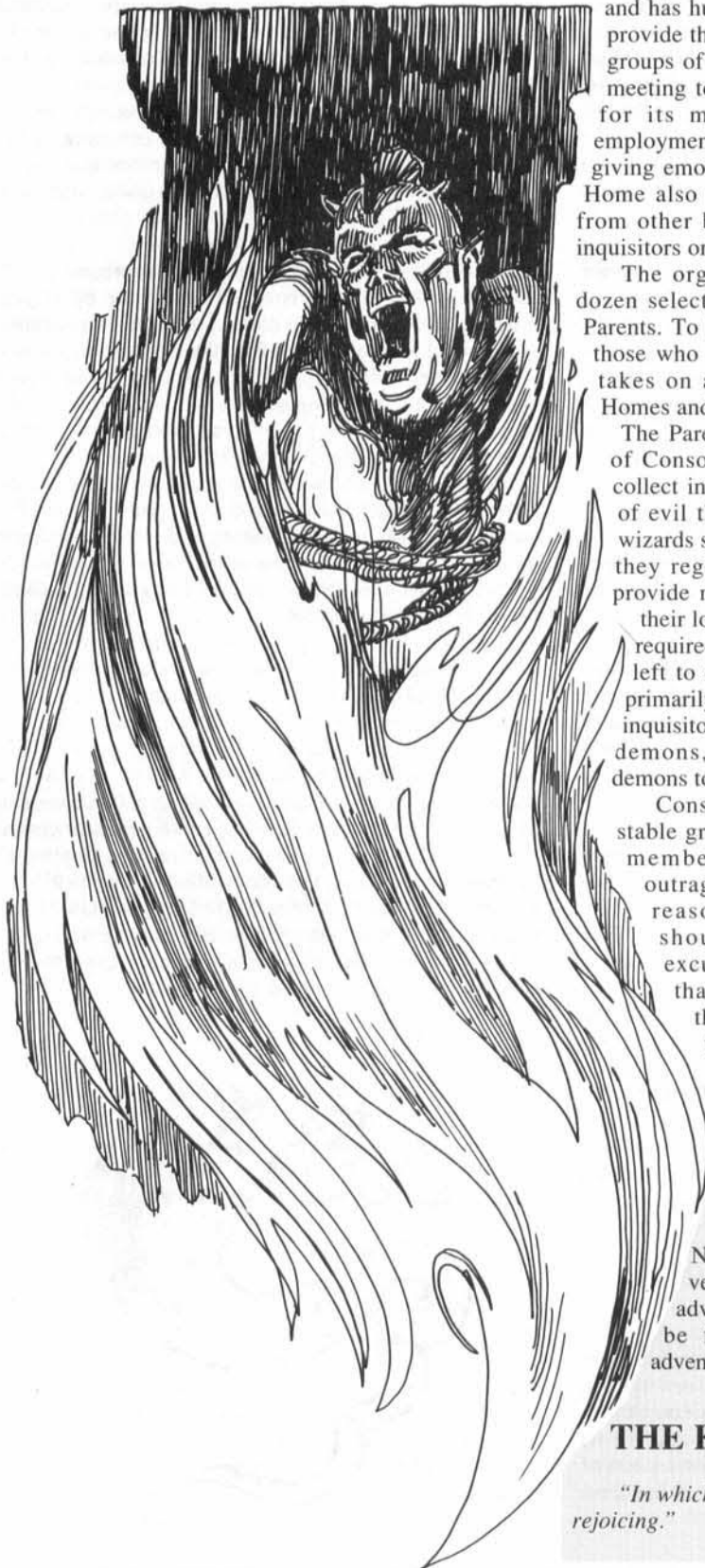
Some of the older half-demons who seek sanctuary here are aware of the fates of these troublemakers, but do not say anything to worry new arrivals. They are sold into slavery to pay for the upkeep of the Hostel, or occasionally killed.

The priests, as well as profiting from enslaving evil half-demons, use the Hostel to spread their faith. Of course, no half-demons are forced or even actively encouraged to follow their religion. But priests are always available to council those in need, and everyone is reminded which god's tender mercy is sheltering them from the world.

CONSOLATION

Consolation is a misleadingly named secret





society, which operates throughout many countries and has hundreds of members. Individual "Homes" provide the basis of Consolation, close-knit cells or groups of half-demons living in the same area and meeting together. Each Home provides mutual aid for its members, endeavoring to find them employment, sheltering them from persecution, and giving emotional support, among other things. Each Home also provides shelter to members travelling from other branches, and watches for any sign of inquisitors or hunts.

The organization is controlled, loosely, by a dozen select individuals, who call themselves The Parents. To become a Parent one must be invited by those who already hold that rank, and one thereby takes on a responsibility for safeguarding the Homes and channeling information between them.

The Parents, themselves, are not the real leaders of Consolation, however. The society exists to collect information and occasional aid for a group of evil thaumaturgists (perhaps the Cabal). The wizards sometimes protect the half-demons (whom they regard as a useful asset), and more often provide minor services for the Parents to ensure their loyalty. Occasionally a return favor may be required of the Parents, but usually the society is left to do as it pleases. The thaumaturgists are primarily concerned that they receive warnings of inquisitors activities another hunts from the half-demons, being quite capable of summoning demons to do their dirty work.

Consolation is, however, a successful and stable group, which offers real advantages to its members without exploiting them outrageously. Its sole policy, and the main reason for its success, is that members should not give mortals any reason or excuse to persecute them, and this means that those creatures who blatantly serve their demonic parents are excluded from the group.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Aside from making fine regular NPCs or adversaries, half-demons, by their very nature, can often be the inspiration for adventures. Here are some ideas which can be fleshed out by GMs into complete adventures.

THE KIDNAPPING

"In which a kidnapped innocent is returned without rejoicing."

The player characters are approached by a petty noble, distraught by the kidnap of his daughter. Armed men burst into his manor, seemingly uninterested in thievery or murder, seized the infant and fled. Since his wife died, the babe is all that he has cared for, and he offers a generous reward for her return.

The player characters commence a desperate chase, eventually catching up with the kidnapers. But these villains, it is discovered, are not mere bandits. In fact they work for a demon cult, or a powerful magnate who has is in league with a demon. The kidnapers are seizing the girl on the orders of this cult or magnate.

The girl is, in fact, a half-demon, although there is, as yet, no sign of her Infernal blood. If she stays with her father, her nature will become clearer as she grows and she may be killed. If the kidnapers keep her, she will be brought up to serve an evil cause.

THE SHEEP KILLER

"In which a petty crime is blamed upon a half-demon, and the player characters may be tricked into sin by a Seducer."

A shepherd has lost several sheep to a wild animal, apparently a wolf, which has killed several animals and dragged them off in the night. The culprit is actually either a poacher or a werewolf, but either way he will try to blame the attacks on a half-demon who is trying to settle into the community.

A Seducer enters the community, and incites the locals to hunt the half-demon down and slay it. Perhaps more animals and even a human are killed (by the Seducer or those tempted by it) and these crimes, too, are blamed on the half-demon. Their scapegoat flees into the woods, or into a set of haunted caves, "confirming" his guilt in the eyes of the community.

The player characters are hired to track down the "fiend" and kill it. When they eventually catch it, it pleads its innocence, and perhaps identifies the true culprit. The player characters may ignore its pleas (prematurely ending the scenario and, perhaps, committing the sin of murder), or they may investigate its claims. The remainder of the adventure involves an attempt to catch the true culprit, and the discovery of the Seducer.

INCIDENTAL ENCOUNTERS

Half-demons may also be used effectively as the foci of single incidents - not full adventures, but brief encounters ideal for plugging a gap between setting or at the end of a scenario. These encounters may constitute a brief fable or parable, or focus upon a particular theme which draws the players' attentions to certain aspects of the ongoing adventure. Examples of such brief incidents are given below:

- Thirteen years ago, a poor woman was seduced by a demon, and became pregnant. Now that the child has reached puberty, it is behaving increasingly erratically and developing physical abnormalities: The woman's husband has realized that he was cuckolded, and the locals want to butcher the "creature", but the woman remains deeply attached to her offspring. If the mother were related to one of the player characters, they might be forced to take a stand on the issue. But what would they do?

- A priest or wizard in the party, someone with a reputation for wisdom, is asked for advice by a rural judge. There is a delicate case upon which he requires guidance: A vagrant moved into the area two years ago, a man with a vile body odor (the Unsettling Scent aberration) but a driving sense of love and virtue. The vagrant helped build a local church, is always willing to help a neighbor, and has become a valuable worker. However, two weeks ago the man went apparently insane at the sight of an injured child, nearly killing her (see the Blood Lust derangement), and the deaths of two beggars have been attributed to him. Many locals clamor to have the man executed for attacking the child. What should the judge do?

- The player characters meet a grotesquely deformed hermit (actually a half-demon) who has mystical Visions (as in the ability), simultaneously seeing each of the characters as they are, were, might have been, and may become. The hermit may draw a character's attention to important but forgotten events in his past, or may warn of the dangers of a present course of action. What does the hermit want as payment? Perhaps to be shielded from mortal persecution? Perhaps it wishes to be deprived of its power, which it regards as a curse? Or perhaps the creature serves its demonic parent, and asks that the characters perform a small favor for it...



CLEANSING THE

INFECTED

• Chapter Eight •

The rumor of demons prowling their region strikes terror into the hearts of all upright people, and many people will take drastic action to defend themselves and their loved ones.

The danger of demonic corruption spawns a range of professional and part-time demon-hunters, who work to seek out and destroy the agents of the Infernus. Often, these are amateurs; magistrates or priests, mercenaries, adventurers or even peasants, who find themselves confronting these creatures only once or twice in their lives.

The powers and wiles of demonic creatures however, is such that some folk dedicate their lives to destroying their evil. Most specialized of all, the Slayers track demons down and put them to the sword, while Inquisitors seek to thwart these creatures and their agents through deduction and investigation.

THE HUNTS

Across the mortal world, the frightened and inspired launch sporadic crusades to purge the demonic evil from their midst. Sometimes these are controlled and sensible campaigns, which methodically root out demons and their mortal servants. Others are political vendettas, in which the local religious or political leaders use a demon-hunt as an excuse to victimize unbelievers or opponents. Sometimes these hunts escalate into frenzied massacres, claiming thousands of innocent lives and decimating entire regions.

CAUSES OF THE HUNTS

Most demon-hunts are small, local enquiries, where a single rumor or piece of evidence prompts a local authority to instigate an inquiry. Local nobles, priests or merchants may inquire into these matters themselves, or hire an outside "expert" to investigate.

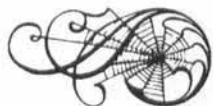
Many demon-hunts stem from the justified concerns of those whose communities are afflicted by demonic corruption. The citizens of the area may instigate a hunt, often prompted by the discovery of a disturbing demonic presence or cult. In such cases, local magistrates, nobles or priests may be appointed, or appoint themselves, to root out the threat. Frequently, inquisitors or slayers are asked to oversee, aid or advise in these proceedings.

Other, less laudable hunts, grow from social or political crises, or religious conflict. Societies which are corrupt or divided by internal conflict may become united behind a common enemy: the agents of the Infernus. In this instance, the society may come to depend upon the demon-hunt for its sense of purpose or unity. The hunt might therefore continue long after all real demons and their agents have been slaughtered, unscrupulous priests or politicians turning the hunt against their own opponents.

Some of the largest investigations are caused by popular feeling. Faced by prophecies of a final cataclysm, or by a great catastrophe (such as famine, plague, or war), the common folk may blame their misfortune upon the "wrath of the gods", or demons conspiring to destroy them. At such times, the people can easily demand or initiate a hunt against the "obviously" guilty parties who are supposedly soiling their communities. Occasionally these paranoid vendettas destroy many agents of the Infernus, and deal a great blow to the aspirations of the demon lords. But too often they claim more innocent than guilty victims, and the demon dukes of murder and false crusades rejoice in the sins of the people.

THE HUNTERS

The men and women who seek out demons are a diverse but unusual group. Although driven by widely differing motives, they possess a courage and



determination unknown in normal mortals. Their task is to confront and destroy the embodiments of evil and their depraved allies, which often endangers their souls as well as their bodies.

Many are driven by personal tragedy. A close friend or family member may have been murdered or corrupted by demons or cult members. Perhaps the hunter was once involved with a cult, or was tempted by a demon. Others are driven by religious zeal, and the desire to serve the gods by protecting their mortal handiwork. A few may simply relish the challenge of defeating such monstrous beings, while others might find themselves unwittingly drawn into the battle against evil.

During prolonged or widespread hunts, less wholesome motives may inspire many demon-hunters. Fame may lure some, or the chance to make a fortune by charging huge fees or taking bribes. Others may see the hunt as an opportunity for political advancement, impressing superiors with their zeal, or as excuses to victimize enemies and settle old scores.

The types of demons sought out by individual hunters depend upon their backgrounds. While some hardened professionals may pursue all types with equal vigour, most concentrate upon those against whom they bear grudges or of whose sins they are most frightened. For example, a demon-hunter whose parents killed themselves might concentrate upon pursuing demons of despair, suicide, and so on. Conversely, a warrior who has seen many deaths and battles, is unlikely to be as concerned about demons which provoke homicide.

PUNISHMENTS

In the course of these hunts, many human and half-demons are convicted of diverse crimes. Obviously demons are banished or slain, but the hunters and local authorities who sit as judges must decide how to punish their mortal accomplices.

Sometimes the demons' dupes and servants have committed criminal acts such as theft, murder, etc., and can be sentenced as any other criminal, according to their crimes. However, there are often special circumstances, which might make alternative punishments suitable (it may be unreasonable, for example, to execute a man for crimes committed while possessed). Equally, special crimes; worshipping demons, offering animals in sacrifice, tempting another to sin, etc., require special sentences.

Firstly, suspects may be acquitted, if there is no solid evidence against them, or if their crimes were particularly minor and the hunters inclined to be lenient. Having influential friends, or offering to give (or invent) evidence against others, might also secure acquittal.

Atonement is the lightest punishment given by the hunters, to those who have committed minor crimes unwillingly or suffered a forced alignment change. This rare decision requires unusually reasonable judges, and an Atonement spell must be cast by an appropriate priest.

Penance is a public act of reparation, by which the guilty publicly express their remorse and try to make amends for their actions. Undertaking a long journey to a holy land, mutilating oneself, living on a deserted island for a year, retiring to live forever in a religious community, and giving one's wealth to the poor are all examples. The exact penance depends upon the culture and crime. A prolonged fast, for example, might be suitable penance for crimes inspired by the sin of gluttony.

Banishment and branding are favored by many judges for lesser offenses. Unwittingly worshipping demons, assisting evil thaumaturgists, sheltering half-demons, and withholding evidence, as examples. Such people may be banished from the village, region, or country, usually forfeiting their property.

Exiles may also be branded (or mutilated), so that those they meet in later life will know of their crimes and not trust them. Sometimes, in larger communities, the guilty may be branded but allowed to remain. The brand's location varies from place to place, the hand, face or forehead commonly being marked by hot iron, with a letter (e.g. "D" for demon), a cross, a circle, or the sign of the judge issuing the sentence. In some cultures a tattoo may be used instead, allowing for greater detail, a list of the person's crimes or the judge's name perhaps being inscribed.

Mutilation is used by many cultures to punish common criminals, thieves and liars for example. Demon-hunters, too, may impose such penalties. A man who acted as a spy for a demonic cult might have his eyes pulled out. One who stole on their behalf might lose a hand. A woman who gave false evidence or opposed the hunt could have her tongue cut out.

Imprisonment, though more humane, is an expensive way of dealing with criminals, supportable only by the more advanced economies. Backwards regions and quasi-medieval societies simply won't send people to prison as punishments. In more advanced societies, prison conditions may be so foul that a five year sentence would be unsurvivable, and even a single year would leave an inmate sickly, or dead. Where prisons exist, brief sentences might be given instead of banishment or mutilation. (Perhaps a Stamina check is required to survive each year.)

Financial penalties may be imposed, particularly upon wealthy folk who have committed minor offenses. A fine or the confiscation of property are particularly


likely if the judges are locals who might profit from the suspect's misfortune.

Execution could be the fate of those convicted by judges who are particularly frightened, shocked or vindictive. Some also kill suspects who are not actually proven to be guilty, just to make sure they don't miss anyone. Death is certainly the most common penalty, almost always inflicted upon those who sold their souls, knowingly worshiped a demon, or conspired to murder others by demonic means. Those committing lesser crimes, even unknowingly, may share their fate.

Methods of execution are often devised to fit the culprit's crime, but also depend upon local tradition, and upon the judge's temperament. Examples include burning, hanging, drowning, boiling, being torn apart by animals, being staked out naked in the desert sun, and being left tied on a beach for the rising tide and crabs. Too often, a frightened populace are satisfied with nothing short of death for a suspect. If notorious suspects are acquitted or given only minor punishments, then impromptu riots or organized gangs might see that they are "properly" punished.

CONDUCT

The conduct of a demon-hunt depends upon its causes, and particularly upon the individuals who control the investigations. In general, the more frightened the people are, the bloodier and more frenzied the hunt becomes. And if the populace is skeptical or apathetic, little may be accomplished. Inquiries conducted by lawful characters tend to be formal and controlled, so concerned with respecting local customs and authority that many demonic plots may go undiscovered. Those controlled by



chaotic characters may be more frenzied and informal, trampling on the rights, dignities and even lives of many innocent people.

The actual aims of a hunt also vary. Some are concerned only with expelling demons from the world. Others accept that demons may always return to the plane, and strive primarily to root out their mortal thralls and allies. Some hunts extend to the punishment of any who promote or indulge in sin, those who shield demons' servants, and any who obstruct the hunt. Those who defend innocent suspects or appear as witnesses in their defense are often convicted as collaborators or servants of demons.

Inquiries sponsored by local rulers tend to be efficient, legal trials, conducted by nobles, magistrates, priests, or professional demon-hunters. Unfortunately, the rulers may sometimes try to steer the hunt to serve their political goals, with cover-ups, bribery and corruption often confound the proceedings.

Popular hunts, stirred up by demagogues and rabble-rousers or erupting spontaneously amongst a frightened people, typically involve riots, lynchings, arson and assaults against those suspected of being demons or demons' servants. If the hunt grows, the rulers who opposed it may come to be accused of collaborating to protect the demons' interests, while kangaroo-courts convict and kill all who come before them. When priests conduct these hunts, they frequently focus upon the sins which their religion particularly condemns. Followers of gods of justice may treat criminals as harshly as demon-worshippers. Priests of

the god of death might be lenient to those encouraging the sins of homicide and suicide. Healing priests, conversely, typically persecute those physically harming mortals above all others. Sometimes religiously sponsored hunts may become excuses to victimize, banish or massacre members of religious minorities.

When professional demon-hunters preside, efficiency, thoroughness and detachment characterize the proceedings. Slayers usually act independently to destroy the demons themselves, unconcerned with the attitude of the locals. Inquisitors establish formal courts or begin methodical investigations, generally with the compliance or assistance of the local authorities.

POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS

Legends and old-wives tales provide numerous methods by which demons may supposedly be identified. Many of these are false or inaccurate, and lead to the false accusation and execution of many innocents. The insane are often accused of being possessed, and notable strangers labeled temptors. Such accusations are most common in backwards, isolated areas, where the abnormal and foreign are inevitably treated with greater suspicion.

The following list contains many typical superstitions, although beliefs differ from place to place, and according to the dominant religion. Even if player characters are too broad-minded to believe these folk-tales, many NPCs probably accept them. It is up to each GM to determine which of these superstitions are true, which are inaccurate, and which are nonsense in his campaign.

(CONCERNING DEMONS)

-No demon may enter a temple or other holy place. They similarly shun the company of priests of good and law. (Therefore, the impious, heretics, and atheists may easily be accused as demons.)

-Demons often lurk around the sites of tragedies, such as battlefields, and places where sins are often committed. They feel particularly at home around money-changers, slave-markets, brothels, and gladiatorial arenas. (Those who frequent gladiatorial fights or brothels, or indulge any other appetite discouraged by the local priests, are thus often accused.)

-Demons are discomforted by contact with "pure" materials, notably crystal, silver and fresh or holy water. (Various "tests" might be derived from this belief.)

-No demon may completely disguise itself. However they appear, some demonic trait remains, such as a cloven hoof, tail, forked tongue, or extra limb. (Not only may half-demons thus be considered as demons, but even people with normal deformities or mutations may be suspected.)

-Demons are so greedy to gain souls, that they cannot bare to stay in one place but, in search of pure souls to soil, they travel around the world incessantly. (Unfortunately, gypsies, minstrels, beggars, peddlers and player characters also tend to be incorrigible wanderers.)

(CONCERNING MORTAL ACCOMPLICES)

-Demons require the worship and sacrifice of mortals. Special altars, black candles, and knives are employed by their servants, and victims are often kidnapped or tricked to be present at such rites. (Abnormal knives are often presented by demon-hunters as evidence of a mortal's corruption, and kidnapping is regarded with particular suspicion.)

-Those possessed by demons often mutter and jabber to themselves, speak to invisible or imaginary companions, or rant incoherently when angered. (But then again, so might the senile, eccentric, and insane; not forgetting prophets, foreigners and any who talk in their sleep.)

-Demonic rites usually take place in isolated spots: forests, islands, hilltops, etc., in the middle of the night. (Those who inexplicably venture from their settlements at night are immediately suspected.)

-In order to remain in the mortal world, demons often drink the blood or milk of their mortal allies and worshippers, suckling from unnatural teats. Others hide within mortal bodies, entering and leaving via scars and extra orifices in the host's skin. (Woe betide a suspect who is found with an unusual birthmark or bizarre scar.)

-Demons' servants often linger where their masters are most active, such as around the sites of great sins, bloodshed or disaster: Battlefields, drugdens, brothels, plague sufferers' houses, graveyards, execution sites, drinking-houses, moneylenders' homes, and slaughterhouses all attract such people. (Anyone from the village drunk, to a butcher, to a respected battlefield physician could thus seem suspicious.)

-The faithful servants of demons live longer than most mortals, invigorated by their masters to continue

in sinful service for as long as possible. Demons similarly save their thralls from disasters, accidents, and injuries. (Therefore, a narrow escape of any sort could be an indication of demonic favor, unless the person is a priest or wizard, when such fortune might be explained as magical or divine intervention. Equally, simple folk are often nervous of the oldest person in their community.)

INVESTIGATIONS IN PLAY

While it may sometimes be interesting to play through an investigation in detail, GMs will often wish to skim over the events of such an inquiry. For example, if one of the player characters is an inquisitor, and prone to investigating every rumor, playing sessions can become repetitive and bogged down with routine detective work.

Three methods for dealing with inquisition trials are given below, and the GM should use whichever method fits the current game situation. The first method is designed for adventures which focus upon the investigation, and requires a great deal of detective work. The second method gives a day-by-day account of a trial, so that it may be used as the backdrop to an adventure. And the final method is simply designed to determine the outcome of a whole investigation with a couple of dice rolls.

THE FULL FOCUS INVESTIGATION

Since demonic investigations, like modern criminal investigations, are complicated businesses, a complex jigsaw of clues must be assembled by the inquisitor. GMs must know who the villains are, what motives they have, their strengths and vulnerabilities, the attitude of the Infernus towards them, etc. In all respects such an investigation constitutes a detective adventure, but in order to abbreviate this process (so that it can be condensed into a single adventure), attribute checks may sometimes be used to gather information and interrogate suspects.

If a character wishes to gather rumors of sin and corruption, he may tour a town or village, speaking with artisans, merchants, and anyone else they meet. It takes one to three hours to tour a small village of one hundred people, one day to tour a small town, and a week to tour a large town. A city is simply too big to be considered as a whole, and must be investigated quarter by quarter or block by block. Have each character make a number of Appeal checks to persuade these folk to chat with them, rolling a few more checks than there are real villains in the town.

For every check that succeeds, the identity of a sinner of local notoriety is revealed. Note that a "sinner" may simply be a glutton or lay-about, and most are not involved with the Infernus. Indeed, many demons' servants live outwardly respectable lives, and local gossip will not incriminate them. Moreover, particularly vital information may only be available from specific NPCs, and such encounters should always be played through in detail.

Inquisitors may also endeavor to gather written evidence from the public. If the community is frightened by an obvious Infernal menace, or can be roused by a speech by the inquisitor (requiring a successful Appeal check), a number of people may volunteer information. 10% of the population usually come forward in such cases, but GMs should alter this figure as seems appropriate.

Scribes may be required to document this evidence, and sifting through this written matter is a lengthy process. Assume that five depositions may be given and ten read each hour. For each clue contained in such evidence, the inquisitor must make an Intelligence check. A successful check reveals the clue. GMs must decide what may be learned from such depositions, depending upon the nature of the demonic corruption. Examples of such information include the times that strange fires were seen in the woods, the regular dates when beggars seem to disappear, people seen sneaking out of town at certain times, etc. Once a piece of information has been overlooked, it cannot be rediscovered unless substantial new evidence is collected. Moreover, all manner of political conspiracies, secret religions, illicit engagements, crimes another red-herrings may be turned up by such an inquiry, and GMs should feel free to pepper the clues with misleading information.

Having arrested their suspects, inquisitors may wish to interrogate them. Since a thorough inquisitor may arrest dozens of suspects, most of them innocent, and question or torture each for hours, it is necessary to use dice rolls to deal with such matters. For each preliminary interrogation (lasting one hour), an inquisitor may make an Insight roll: A success indicates whether the suspect is quite innocent, or is hiding something, but such secrets need not be directly relevant to the investigation.

Having discarded most of the innocent suspects, further questioning should be dealt with by demanding Interrogation proficiency checks. However, key parts of interrogations may still be role-played through briefly. When a trial begins, witnesses may come forward to offer evidence for or against a suspect. If this information is false, the judges and anyone else analyzing the testimony may discern this with a successful Insight check.

If a lawyer or judge wishes to discredit a witness, regardless of the veracity of the evidence, this requires a series of Intelligence checks. The

witness and the person attempting to discredit them both make Intelligence checks, until one fails and the other succeeds; if the witness wins, the evidence seems solid, but if the other wins, the witness is discredited. If the witness is a disguised demon, or is possessed, a successful Demon-lore check will alert an observer to this deception.

The judges must always decide the fate of a suspect without recourse to dice rolls. Their guilt or innocence must be deduced from the information which has already been presented, and their sentence should be determined as seems appropriate. Player character judges should role-play through the sentencing, and GMs should indicate the reactions of the accused and the others in the court.

THE ABRIDGED METHOD

The GM must first decide how many demons' servants there are in an area (there may not be any), and how many other notable sinners there are (5% of the population is a reasonable number). Every day that the inquisitor conducts an investigation, he may identify a number of suspects; any number up to the inquisitor's Insight score. (The GM should secretly determine how many of these are demons' servants, and how many are "benign" sinners.)

The inquisitor may continue to identify fresh sinners until there are none left to suspect. Any number of these suspects may be arrested, but the inquisitor may decide to wait until all have been identified, since if a number of a cult's members are arrested, the remainder may flee. As a rule, the odds that other cultists will flee during an investigation is equal to the percentage of the cult which has been captured. The chance for a fleeing cultist to actually avoid arrest is equal to the proportion of the cult still at large: So if 30% of a cults members are arrested, there is a 30% chance that others will flee the area, and a 70% chance that those fleeing will escape capture.

Instead of finding new suspects, the inquisitor may choose to spend a day investigating six of the suspects who have already been arrested. For each, he must make a Demon-lore or Interrogation (see ahead) check (or Insight with a -5 modifier if he does not have either proficiency). A successful roll indicates whether they are guilty or innocent of being involved with the Infernus. However, if a check is failed, a second roll must be made; and if this too fails, the inquisitor has come to the wrong conclusion about a suspect, pronouncing an innocent party guilty or the guilty party innocent. In this instance, the trial is presumed to rubber-stamp the inquisitor's findings, unless the inquisitor's fellow judges have some personal reason to overturn his verdict. Then the inquisitor need only pass sentence upon the guilty.

THE THUMB-NAIL INVESTIGATION

In some cases, a GM may decide that it is no time or inclination to play out an investigation. If an inquisitor is with the party, then he is likely to conduct at least one investigation per month of game-time, and rather than ignore these completely, it may be worth quickly working out the result of each inquiry.

First the GM should decide where the investigation takes place, and roll 1d6-1. If the inquiry is in a rural area, then this die represents the number of suspects convicted; if it is in a town, then the number should be multiplied by five, and in a city multiplied by ten. These suspects are presumably punished as the inquisitor usually deals with those who deal with the Infernus (which may mean that they are executed).

The inquisitor or demon hunter then makes an Intelligence check and a Demon-lore check (or Insight check at -5 if he has no Demon-lore proficiency). If both rolls fail, then all of those condemned were actually innocent; if one roll fails then at least one was innocent but most were guilty.

NEW PROFICIENCIES

The following new non-weapon proficiencies are frequently possessed by those who hunt or deal with demons. They may be added to the Priest's proficiency group, and may be gained by all classes who usually have access to that group, plus slayers and thaumaturgists.

New Nonweapon Proficiencies

Proficiency	# of Slots Required	Relevant Ability	Check Modifier
Demon-lore	1	Insight	0
Interrogation	2	Appeal	-2

DEMON-LORE: The character has a good understanding of the stories and legends surrounding demons. This information is never, of course, entirely accurate. The character knows all current superstitions (listed above), and may have developed his own theories as well. The character is aware of the tales surrounding half-demons. For example, he might believe that half-demons' births are accompanied by storms and petty natural disasters, and that if a man commits suicide his wife may give birth to a half-demon. When making a physical examination of a suspect, true "demon-marks" may be distinguished from birthmarks if a proficiency check is made, and the smell of demonic sulphur is rarely confused with natural scents (such as rotten eggs or burnt meat).

A character with a Tracking proficiency may

distinguish demon from animal tracks if successful proficiency checks are made for each. And similarly, a character with Animal Handling may tell whether or not an animal's erratic behavior is demonically caused.

The character is familiar with many of the terms of the Compact ("Rules of the Game", outlined on ps 10-11 of the Demons booklet). Players whose characters gain this proficiency might be allowed to read the "Razor of Righteousness" (provided in this pack), and perhaps make notes, so that they actually know most of what their character knows, but should be not allowed to refer to it during play, unless their characters actually possess the work or an accurate copy of it.

Demon-lore is a highly speculative science however, and those who use it are often exposed to false information. GMs are encouraged to occasionally feed false information to the player characters, allowing the characters to prove or disprove new rumors.

INTERROGATION: The character is skilled in the use of subtle (and not so subtle) methods of extracting answers from unwilling subjects. These techniques are often used by inquisitors, for whom the term "interrogation" is often a euphemism for "torture".

In order to use this proficiency, the character must have the subject at his mercy. At the very least, the subject must not be able to escape from the character, and this proficiency cannot be used in normal conversation or during casual meetings.

For each hour of interrogation, the character must check against his Appeal, and if successful the victim must make an appropriate check or save, or blurt out some piece of information. There is a 20% chance that the subject will tell the truth plus 1% per point the check or save was failed by. Otherwise the victim will make up something which, hopefully, will satisfy the interrogator. GMs may apply bonuses to these rolls as they see fit, depending upon the importance of the information, the setting of the interrogation, and any particularly imaginative persuasions used by the character. When inflicting pain to elicit information, the torturer must also make a Dexterity check. If the check is failed, the victim takes 1-4 points of damage from the clumsy interrogation.

The most common form of interrogation is, unfortunately, torture. Extreme discomfort, irritation or simple pain may be employed, in which case the victim must make a Stamina check. Quick-fire questions may be asked, in which case the victim must make an Intelligence check to avoid letting information slip out, or may simply refuse to speak. Other techniques include prolonged sleep deprivation (Stamina check every hour after the second sleepless night), and attempts to drive the victim into a furry and blurt out telling information (Intelligence check). Note that many interrogation techniques are not allowed to

paladins (such as the torturing of good-aligned or potentially innocent persons), so GMs should be careful how such characters use interrogation.

GMs may also permit characters to use this proficiency to extract information through "pillow talk". In this instance the victim ("lover") must make an Intelligence roll to avoid being cajoled into revealing information.

INQUISITORS

The inquisitor is a new priest subclass, using eight-sided hit dice and the same saving throw, experience and spell progression charts as priests. They may use any weapons, but may not wear any armor, unless they are dual or multi-classed, in which case they adopt the minimal restrictions of that class.

OBJECTIVES

Whether their personal goals are to protect society or save individual souls, all inquisitors are dedicated to rooting out the agents of demonic corruption. Some concentrate upon uncovering disguised demons, some persecute demonic cults, and a few specialize in seeking out and slaughtering half-demons. Most, however, are ready to seek any agent of the Infernus, wherever or whoever they may be.

PREREQUISITES

Only human characters may become inquisitors. They must have minimum ability scores of Intelligence 14, Insight 12, and Appeal 12. An inquisitor's prime requisite is Intelligence. Inquisitor-Slayer, -warrior, and -wizard are acceptable dual-class and multi-class combinations: Inquisitor-Rogues and inquisitor-paladins combinations are highly unlikely (though possible with a GMs permission).

ALIGNMENT

All inquisitors must be of lawful alignment. Almost all are lawful good, although neutral and even evil inquisitors have been known. All inquisitors share the same goals, but differences of alignment may lead to disagreements, as each have different motives for pursuing the creatures.

Good inquisitors persecute their vile enemies because they spread evil, corruption and misery. Neutral inquisitors oppose demons as a threat to the stability of society, or because they have strayed from their proper plane. Evil inquisitors may have no objections to the demons' actions, but recognize them as threats to the plane or as competitors in evil.

Should an inquisitor's alignment shift from lawful to neutral, the ability to cast spells is lost. If the alignment changes to chaotic, then the special abilities are also lost. Atonement spells, heartfelt regret, and particularly zealous persecutions of demons should eventually restore a lawful alignment.

PERSONALITY

Although all inquisitors have their own personalities, quirks and obsessions, there are certain attitudes and approaches which their profession requires. Any inquisitor must be skeptical and suspicious, never trusting appearances and constantly watching for sin and corruption. Everyone must be considered suspect. In some, regrettably, this develops into paranoia, every word and action being construed as a sign of possible corruption. Many also cultivate a detached and dispassionate approach to their work, never becoming involved with or friendly to others. Emotion, they fear, may cloud their judgement, sympathy might prejudice them, and their cares could be manipulated by the agents of the Infernus.

Dedication, drive and self-motivation are important qualities. The stubborn refusal to be dissuaded by others and the passion to overcome temptation and distraction are vital in a truly great inquisitor. Clearly, a man or woman who is stubborn, detached, cold and suspicious soon becomes lonely, unpopular and unhappy. Many inquisitors are misanthropes and cynics, disliked by all who get to know them.

FOLLOWERS AND STRONGHOLD

At 9th Skill Level, an inquisitor may build a Stronghold. This is typically a fortified tower, temple or court, near to, but set apart from, a town or small city. Such Strongholds attract 5-10 Followers. All are Skill Level One, and are typically inquisitors themselves, but may sometimes be priests, slayers, thaumaturgists of good alignment, paladins or others dedicated to destroying demonic evil.

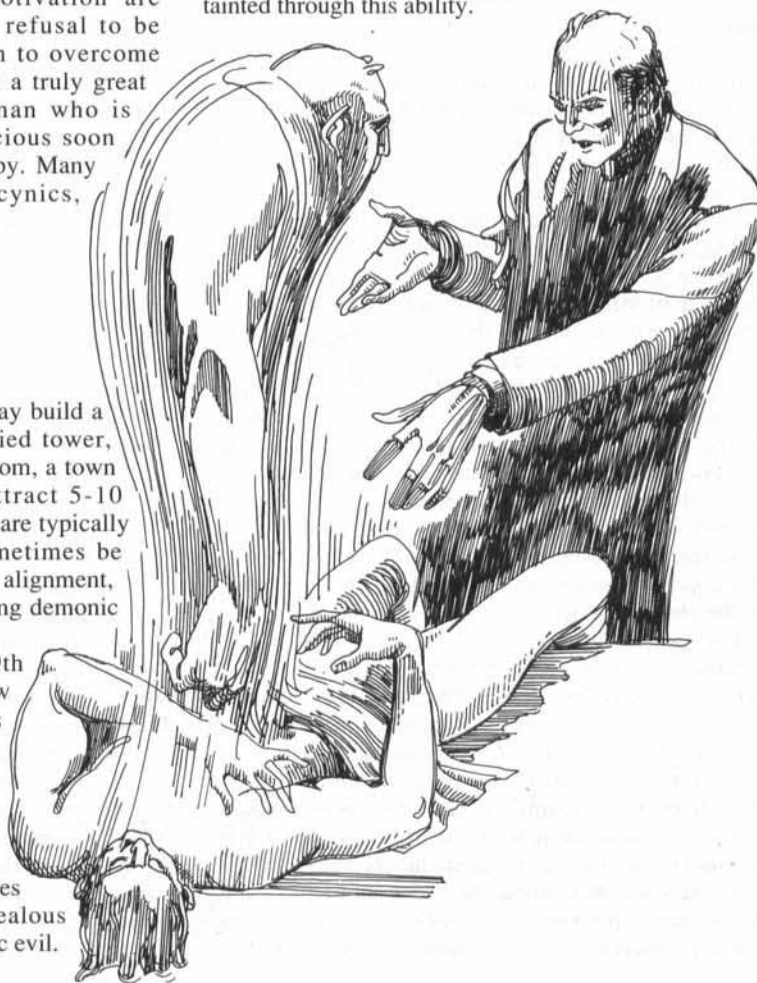
As inquisitors advance beyond 9th Skill Level their Strongholds may grow to be the centers of major Orders dedicated to purifying the mortal world.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

All inquisitors receive special abilities which serve, and arise from, their zealous determination to rid the world of demonic evil.

DETECT POSSESSION: Inquisitors may discern whether or not people are demonically Possessed by watching their behavior over a period of time. Unlike more amateur attempts to discern possession, this is moderately reliable. The subjects may be studied as they go about their daily lives (requiring a day or two of observation), or tested for an hour in a controlled environment. The inquisitor has a base 10% chance plus 10% per level (to a maximum of 90%) of detecting whether a person is actually Possessed or merely eccentric or a lunatic.

SENSE TAINT: Inquisitors can sense when they are in the presence of a demon or demonic taint. If any person, object or location within twenty feet of the inquisitor has been contaminated by, or is, a demon, the inquisitor becomes uncomfortable, agitated, and anxious. The base chance for detection of demonic taint is 100%, -10% per day after the taint has begun to fade. Half-demons, people or places touched by or involved with demons, the creatures themselves, demonic artifacts, shrines and Gates all cause equal discomfort. Inquisitors may not identify the individual person or object which is tainted through this ability.



SENSE TEMPTATION: Inquisitors may sense if any person within twelve feet is currently the target of a Seducer's temptations. The target, here, is the person tempted by the demon, not any person whom the demon thereby wishes to indirectly damage. Similarly, the inquisitor may sense if he stands in a place where a temptation has been attempted in the past day, such as the dining hall of one tempted into gluttony, or the treasury of one tempted into greed. The inquisitor may not perceive whether or not the mortal gave in to the temptation.

PERCEIVE LOST SOUL: Using this ability, an inquisitor spends ten rounds staring concentratedly at any individual he chooses. No other action may be performed during this time, and even conversation is impossible. If the individual's soul has been lost to the Infernus, the inquisitor may perceive this. A successful Insight check is required to sense the soul's loss.

TURN DEMON: An inquisitor may Turn any demon, as a normal Cleric turns undead. Demon lords must be turned on the Special entry on the chart. Minions count as 1 HTK DICE undead, and Seducers and Warriors are dealt with depending upon their Canto: First Canto demons count as 2 HTK DICE creatures, Second Canto demons as 4 HTK DICE, and so on, up to Fifth Canto demons, who are considered to be 10 HTK DICE creatures. Other demons, like Gatekeepers and Nightmares, are treated according to their Hit Dice.

INQUISITORS' SPELLS

Inquisitors use the usual priests' spell progression tables. They have access to a narrow, specialized selection of priestly magics, plus several unique spells. Those spells marked with an asterisk (*) are unique to inquisitors and are described later.

SKILL ONE: *Bless, Detect Evil, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Dispel Taint*, Intimidate*, Protection From Evil, Remove Fear.*

SKILL TWO: *Augury, Detect Charm, Discern Temptation*, Hold Person, Know Alignment, Protection From Demons*, Slow Poison, Withdraw.*

SKILL THREE: *Cure Disease, Dispel Magic, Feign Death, Torment Body*, Remove Curse.*

SKILL FOUR: *Abjure, Detect Lie, Divination, Inspect Taint*, Neutralize Poison, Spell Immunity, Tongues.*

SKILL FIVE: *Atonement, Dispel Demon*, Dispel Evil, Plane Shift, Temporary Release*, True Seeing.*

SKILL SIX: *Empathy*, Find the Path, Forbiddance, Word of Recall.*

SKILL SEVEN: *Astral Spell, Gate, Holy Word, Permanent Release*, Reveal Sin*, Succor.*

NEW INQUISITORS' SPELLS



SKILL ONE SPELLS

DISPEL TAINT (Abjuration, Protection)
 Skill Level: 1 Range: Touch
 Components: V, S, M Duration: Instantaneous
 TTC: 1 hour Area of Effect: 1 target
 Saving Throw: Neg.

The inquisitor may "cleans" a single object, person, or area of up to ten square yards, which has gained a temporary demonic taint. The spell has no effect upon demons, half-demons, Gates, or enchanted items. If cast upon a person or object which is not tainted, no harmful or beneficial results follow. Once the Taint is removed, any damage already done remains (e.g. curdled milk remains spoiled).

INTIMIDATE (Charm)
 Skill Level: 1 Range: Special
 Components: V, S Duration: 1 hour
 TTC: 1 round Area of Effect: Caster
 Saving Throw: 1/2 effect

The inquisitor becomes more menacing towards the subject of any interrogation. Anyone in the power of the caster feels frightened, hopeless and helpless. If combined with a successful Interrogation proficiency check, there is a +20% chance that the victim will divulge truthful information.

The spell may also be used to impress people in more normal situations, the inquisitor gaining a measure of dignity and an aura of cruelty.



SKILL TWO SPELLS

PROTECTION FROM DEMONS (Abjuration, Protection)
 Skill Level: 2 Range: Touch
 Components: V, S, M Duration: Special
 TTC: 1 round Area of Effect: 1 person
 Saving Throw: None

The recipient gains a +4 bonus to save against the first demonic attack launched against him. This might be a spell, a demon or half-demon's innate ability, or the

magical effect of a demonic artifact or weapon. Normal physical damage is still inflicted by demonically enchanted or unenchanted weapons.

The spell lasts for one hour for each skill level of the caster, or until the recipient is attacked by a demonic spell or weapon, (whichever comes first).

DISCERN TEMPTATION (Divination)

Skill Level: 2 Range: Touch
Components: M Duration: Instantaneous
TTC: 1 round Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: Neg.

Casting this spell, the inquisitor may discern what sins a mortal has been tempted to commit in the past week. One temptation is revealed to the inquisitor each round, the most recent first. The caster may end the spell before the whole week has been revealed, if he so wishes, and must break concentration in order to speak or perform any other action.

The temptation may have been of demon, or more normal nature. The spell does not reveal which. Nor does the spell indicate whether or not the target succumbed to these temptations.



SKILL THREE SPELLS

TORMENT BODY (Alteration)

Skill Level: 3 Range: 2 yards per skill level
Components: V, S Duration: 5 rounds
TTC: 1 hour Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell increases the amount of pain inflicted upon one target, for the period of one hour. Flames seem hotter, blades sharper, whips crueler, and so on. In order for the spell to be cast, the victim must be within the spell's range for all five rounds of the casting.

If the target sustains any damage while the spell is in effect, he must make a Stamina check or be incapacitated with pain for one round. If the unfortunate is tortured, he may do nothing but scream, howl and rant. If the interrogation lasts for the entire hour, he must make a Stamina check. If the check is failed, there is a +40% chance that the interrogator will get a truthful answer to any single question.



SKILL FOUR SPELLS

INSPECT TAINT (Divination)

Skill Level: 4 Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M Duration: Instantaneous
TTC: 1 round Area of Effect: Touch
Saving Throw: None

This spell allows an inquisitor to tell how long ago a tainted person or object was in contact with a demon (i.e. when the thaumaturgist summoned a demon, when the cultist last offered sacrifice, when the peasant was last possessed, etc.). However, the inquisitor cannot tell how the target came to be tainted. Also, the spell is only accurate to within 10% (i.e. one year per decade, six minutes per hour, etc.). If the target is not tainted, the spell reveals its purity.

If the target is a demon, half-demon, a demonically created artifact or a Gate, or is Possessed, the inquisitor realizes that it is being constantly tainted.



SKILL FIVE SPELLS

DISPEL DEMON (Abjuration, Protection)

Skill Level: 5 Range: 1 yard per skill level
Components: V, S Duration: Instantaneous
TTC: 1 round Area of Effect: 1 demon
Saving Throw: Neg.

The inquisitor faces the demon, and with bold movements and a firm voice demands that it return to its home plane. The creature must be within range for the duration of the round, and if it fails to save must depart immediately for the Infernus.

TEMPORARY RELEASE (Abjuration, Protection)

Skill Level: 5 Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M Duration: Special
TTC: 1 hour Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: Neg.

Through this spell, a possessing demon may be driven from a person's body, although it may return later. The target must be restrained and beaten with a silver rod while the inquisitor screams at the demon to flee. It is believed that the pain causes the creature to recoil from the inquisitor, and if the demon fails its saving throw, it must relinquish control of the mortal.

The victim takes 1-6 points of damage from the ordeal, but temporarily regains control over his body and mind. However, each hour thereafter, the victim must save vs. spells. If a single roll is failed, the demon may reestablish control whenever it wishes, with no further saving throw permitted to the mortal.



SKILL SIX SPELLS

EMPATHY (Divination)

Skill Level: 6 Range: Special
Components: V, S Duration: 1 round per Skill Level
TTC: 1 round Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None.

The inquisitor may only cast this spell on himself. Thereafter, for every full round spent in conversation with a single person, the inquisitor may make an Insight check. If successful, the inquisitor can determine the person's true attitude towards, and feelings about, the subject that they are discussing. GMs may wish to apply penalties to inquisitors trying to understand lunatics, small children, and unfamiliar races (orcs, dwarves, etc.).

The spell not only reveals when a person may be intentionally lying, but also when he wishes to change the subject, is embarrassed or insulted, etc., however hard the person tries to cover up their feelings. The spell also reveals when a person is trying to hide something (but not what that is), when they feel guilty, insecure or frightened, when they feel strong desires (e.g. greed, envy), and so on.

The spell requires that the inquisitor can see the facial expressions and gestures of any subject, and hear his tone of voice and intonation. Thus, darkness severely hampers the spell. Further, it provides no insights into creatures from other planes, such as demon, and may work imperfectly when used to analyze half-demons.



SKILL SEVEN SPELLS

PERMANENT RELEASE (Abjuration, Protection)

Skill Level: 7 Range: Special
Components: V, S, M Duration: Instantaneous
TTC: 2 hours Area of Effect: 1 target
Saving Throw: Neg.

The casting of this spell is very similar to the casting of *Temporary Release*, above. Instead of 1-6 points of damage, the victim takes 2-12 points from the ordeal, but regains

permanent control over his body and mind. The demon may never reestablish control, unless the mortal gives permission again. Even then, the mortal receives a +2 bonus to resist subsequent Possessions by that particular demon.

REVEAL SIN (Divination)

Skill Level: 7 Range: 1 yard per Skill Level
Components: M Duration: Special
TTC: 1 round Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: Neg.

By looking at the target of the spell and grasping the material component (a special pouch), the caster may discern what sins the target has committed in the previous week. One sin is revealed to the inquisitor each round, the most recent first, and so in the case of a deeply evil person it may take many rounds to perceive every sin. The caster may end the spell before the whole week has been revealed, if he so wishes, and must break off the spell in order to speak or perform any other action.

ORIGINS

Many inquisitors were propelled into their vocation by force of circumstance, finding themselves in a community tormented by demonic agents, and feeling compelled to take charge of the situation. Others began their work after a personal tragedy or horrific confrontation with a demon or cult. Some were apprenticed to older inquisitors by their parents, or are following in the footsteps of elder relations. A few unsavory inquisitors are interested only in money.

INQUISITORS AND SOCIETY

Inquisitors usually work with the assistance or approval of an area's rulers, often commencing their inquiries on these rulers' invitations. When they begin investigations on their own initiative, or at another's behest, they usually inform the rulers of their intentions. Ideally, they seek the ruler's approval for every single interrogation and execution which they initiate.

Interacting with normal folk, inquisitors are often aloof and attentive, watching everything around them with disconcerting intensity, but rarely becoming involved. Few have any close friends, and most prefer to settle in small communities near, but outside, major towns where they can keep an eye on their neighbors and are always aware of strangers.

Normal people treat inquisitors with respect, and are grateful for the work that they do (although most would rather not live too near to one). Some inquisitors also inspire fear, and the more bloodthirsty often provoke widespread hatred.

INQUISITORS AND HALF-DEMONS

Inquisitors disagree about how half-demons should be treated. A few say that these creatures, being at least partially human, need not be sinful nor serve the Infernus, though they are more easily corrupted than normal mortals. On the contrary, some argue, half-demons are inherently sinful. Irrevocably tied to the Infernus, these creatures are a menace to society.

Most inquisitors believe that the half-demon offspring of a demon lord is just as evil as a lower Canto Seducer. Some actually refuse to acknowledge them as "half" demons, considering them to be as corrupt as their inhuman parents. Others consider them as the servants of the Infernus, and thus the same as cultists.

At best, inquisitors are prejudiced against and hostile to these unfortunates. Typically, they hold demons to be sinful and corrupt by nature, and often execute them indiscriminately.

INQUISITORS AND SLAYERS

Poorly equipped to fight potent demons, most inquisitors recognize the need for tough henchmen to dispatch such creatures. Lone inquisitors often rely upon the local rulers to provide warriors, but many learn to distrust such troops. Some, therefore, travel with a slayer whom they have learned to trust, the two combining their deductive and confrontational specialities in their common quest to purify the world. Slayers are themselves as aloof as inquisitors, and these alliances rarely develop into friendships. Sometimes, the slayer and inquisitor then gather others around themselves (a wizard, fighters, etc.), but they are always readier to trust one another than such less zealous comrades.

INQUISITORS AND SIN

Unlike slayers, inquisitors need not strictly avoid sin. Some are terrified of losing their souls, of course, but others are prone to committing sins whenever this might aid in the greater conflict. For them, the ends justify the means. If their souls are lost to save others, then perhaps that is a price worth paying.

Most inquisitors walk a fine line between sin and laxity. Their interrogations are often harsh, and their punishments murderous, as is necessary (they claim) to catch and destroy these most evil of opponents. And it is a rare inquisitor who never needlessly tortures or mistakenly executes a suspect.

Rumor suggests that Marchosias, demon duke of vehement crusaders, has appointed a Seducer of the highest Canto specifically to provoke inquisitors into unjust excesses. Cynics mutter that many inquisitors have no need of demonic encouragement for their injustices.

ORDERS OF INQUISITORS

While some inquisitors prefer to work alone, remaining too suspicious of other folk to cooperate with anyone, others have formed associations and alliances through which they fight the agents of the Infernus.

Small associations, of perhaps half a dozen inquisitors, may be formed by mutual consent. No headquarters is necessary for such a small organization, and its members are unlikely to live together as a community. Often a local noble or priest is persuaded to provide a meeting chamber for the inquisitors, and perhaps living quarters and a library. At the least, the group's members must be able to contact one another, and so many associations employ an inn-keeper or merchant to keep messages and letters for them. These guilds or orders are often based around the Stronghold of a renowned inquisitor, who directs the juniors' actions or aids them in their trickier inquiries. When the senior inquisitor dies, the followers may stay on at the Stronghold, one amongst them taking charge, or a committee being established to coordinate activities.

Looser orders meet only to discuss their experiences, hoping to learn from each others' findings and to seek advice in difficult investigations. Others coordinate their members' activities, overseeing large demon-hunts and launching their own inquiries uninvited. Several members of such an order might form a board of judges in a large hunt, work and travel together. Being based around an elder's Stronghold, and perhaps living together, there may be excellent opportunities to discuss investigations, and learn from one and others' tribulations.

Rarely, a well organized group might maintain dungeons and a torture chamber at their base. Warriors, wizards and others may be employed as guards or assistants. A hostel may be established for wandering slayers, a library formed from the transcripts and journals of previous trials and hunts, and spies and representatives sent out to noble households and local towns.

SLAYERS

The slayer character class was introduced in the GM's book of the Demon's pack (ps 24-25). Basic details of alignment, requisites, abilities and spells are given there, and the following sections are intended to expand on that text, detailing their lifestyles and attitudes, their organizations and distinctive ceremonies.

OBJECTIVES

Slayers dedicate their lives to opposing the efforts of demons throughout the mortal plane. In theory, this commits them to fighting Seducers and Warriors alike,

cults, and any other plots to spread sin or weaken the virtuous. In practice, however, their special abilities best equip them to fight demons directly, hunting the creatures down and destroying them. The human minions of these demons present greater difficulties to slayers, and their solitary lives make them ill suited to investigate the more complex of demonic plans. In general, these characters face the more obvious and dramatic of demonic threats. The more subtle plottings of the Infernus must be dealt with by investigative demon-hunters, such as the inquisitors.

Many slayers confront any demonic threat which they can perceive. Others, however, specialize in fighting certain types of demons or Infernal plots. Some, for personal reasons, or because they have acquired special techniques artifacts, concentrate upon fighting demons of a particular Order. Others specialize in hunting down half-demons, or even rogue slayers. A few consider particular types of demonic threat to be greater or more evil than others, and so oppose these corruptions more vehemently than any other. Examples include demons plaguing defenseless innocents, plots to topple noble houses or destabilize kingdoms, threats to scholarship and learning, plots which cause bloodshed and death, etc.

ORIGINS

Few people choose to become slayers. Those who do feel a calling, almost a compulsion, which drives them to commit their bodies and souls to the battle against the Infernus. Some slayers feel this calling after a particularly traumatic incident (such as witnessing the demonic slaughter of their families or communities). Others are guided by destiny, or are driven by a sense of duty.

A period of training is necessary, under the supervision of an older slayer (of Skill Level three or above). The necessary rituals, techniques and attitudes must be mastered, spells learned and a skill at arms acquired. Often this occurs in an isolated environment, alone with a retired slayer for a year or longer. In other cases, it involves a practical apprenticeship to an active slayer.

After mastering the magics, rituals and weapons required to face the forces of the Infernus, a slayer must undergo a final test of his self-discipline. This is typically a prolonged and painful experience, such as standing naked and unmoving in the desert for three days and nights, walking twenty miles barefoot through a blizzard, or subsisting for a month on a raft in the sea with nothing to eat or drink but salt water and raw fish. These tests of stamina and self-control are unpleasant or agonizing periods, and often leave permanent scars. But slayers remember them as the most vivid and spiritually uplifting times of their lives. In the midst of the agony and with the satisfaction of its completion their destinies seem clear and their purpose undoubtable. After such experiences, no cause seems hopeless, no obstacle too great and no pain unbearable.

SLAYERS AND SOCIETY

After the rigors and fulfillment of their training, slayers find that they have little in common with the bulk of humanity. Committed to a higher purpose, they have little to say to those whose lives are mundane, and no desire to share in their empty existence.

Slayers usually live solitary lives, apart from society. They shun idle conversation, and involve themselves with normal folk only when their business demands it.

SLAYERS AND HALF-DEMONS

Most slayers have enviably simple views of the world, seeing it as a battleground between two irreconcilable camps: mortals and demons. The concept of a creature who combines the mortal and demonic is often unacceptable to them. Thus, many assert that "half-demons" are, in practice, simply demons which have disguised themselves within human bodies. All such creatures, they say, are demonic and must die.

Others claim that half-demons are either "really" mortals, or "really" demons, frequently alternating between the two during their lives. Those half-demons who are "really" mortals may be left alive, while the others must be destroyed.

A small minority of slayers accept that half-demons are equal mixes of the mortal and demonic. Those which serve the Infernus must be slain, the others should be spared. Such rare slayers may actually tolerate half-demons, but would seldom trust them.

SLAYERS AND INQUISITORS

Most slayers regard inquisitors as useful and skilled allies in the fight against the Infernus. They respect such people, and accept that they perform a function for which slayers themselves are less well-equipped. Sometimes, this respect may lead to a tentative cooperation between a slayer and an inquisitor. Such alliances are often effective in rooting out and destroying the agents of the Infernus, as their strengths complement one another excellently. Still, most slayers prefer to work alone, and often feel that inquisitors do not wholly trust them.

PERSONALITY

All slayers cultivate the virtues of control and self-discipline above all others. Betrayal, deception, delusion, lust and rage lie at the roots of all sins, they believe, and they strive to be free of such vices and weaknesses, being always reliable, forthright, perceptive, content and calm.

Further, they believe that emotions are prone either to lead them into sin, or likely distract them from their



worthy purposes. Thus, pity, love, shame, hatred and guilt are shunned as zealously as greed, anger, jealousy and fear. Still, in secret many do feel guilt, pity, and hatred. Some are also rather jealous of the common folk, who seem to lead easier lives. Their aloofness not only insulates slayers from the corruptions of society, but often blinds them to its pressures and difficulties too, making them unable to understand normal life, relationships and motivations.

ROGUE SLAYERS

A slayer who becomes chaotic, and fails to reverse their alignment shift, is a disgrace to his profession, but does not necessarily threaten or endanger anyone. By contrast, slayers who ally themselves with demons, whether freely or not, are a great threat to those who fight the Infernus. These traitors understand the powers, techniques and mentalities of slayers, and sometimes of inquisitors, and they may use this knowledge to better defend against or attack their erstwhile comrades.

In the rare event of a slayer defecting to join the forces of the Infernus, it is thus vital that he be hunted down immediately, and punished suitably. The forces of the Infernus must not have such an ally. Slayers often take it upon themselves to punish such traitors as a matter of honor, or motivated by revulsion at the betrayal. Such vendettas, however, are undertaken without enthusiasm, but only with a grim determination and a sense of pathos.

SLAYERS' CEREMONIES

Through formal rituals and mental discipline, slayers preserve their spiritual purity and protect themselves from Infernal Taints. The following are the main rituals with which their lives are punctuated and their abilities secured.

During adventures, the performance of these rituals may add to the atmosphere of the game and illustrate the slayer's discipline and commitment. In practical terms, they may also interrupt journeys and determine some of the slayer's pettier priorities, thus they might either create interesting conflict within an adventuring party or become an irritating distraction. The GM should regulate how often these rituals are played out.

THE RITUAL OF PURITY

In order to protect themselves against demonic taints (see ps 21-29), slayers must perform this ritual once per month. The ritual takes three hours to perform, and must be conducted in a calm environment such as in a garden, desert, on a mountain top, etc.

The slayer sits in quiet meditation for two hours, and then pours a gallon of clean, fresh water over

himself, by handfuls. The slayer's weapons are then passed briefly over a flame, all the while mentally intoning a ritualistic chant.

THE RITUAL OF INSIGHT

The slayer's ability to Detect Demons (Demons GM's book, p25) is dependent upon the daily performance of this ritual. This is a simple procedure, taking a single minute to complete, but it should ideally take place at dawn, in an atmosphere of serenity and calm.

The slayer simply washes his eyes with clean, fresh water, preferably in the light of the rising sun.

THE RITUAL OF DEDICATION

The slayer's other special abilities are dependent upon this brief ritual, which is performed each evening, immediately before the slayer goes to sleep. It typically takes very little time.

Sometimes surrounding himself with a ring of candles, the slayer recites a brief prayer or dedication, repeating the causes for which he fights and the principles by which he lives. Meanwhile, the slayer's weapons and hands are washed in clean water or passed over a flame.

Each slayer composes a personal prayer of dedication, which may change several times during his career. These words may take several minutes to repeat, or may be as brief as: "I stand by all, and with none; I must be master of all that I do, and do nothing for myself; These weapons serve me as my hands, and my hands are not my own; I shall not waver, nor pause, nor fail."

THE VIGIL

A Vigil is a ritual used by slayers to focus their minds and organize their thoughts. It may be performed anywhere that is quiet and isolated, at any time the slayer wishes. Woods, shrines, deserts and graveyards are popular settings. Vigils last from a few minutes to several days, but usually last the duration of one night, from dusk until dawn.

Individual slayers hold Vigils in different manners. Some simply sit quietly, without ritual or fuss. Most sit in a circle of candles or incense sticks, or stare into a fire. Some begin by performing a Ritual of Purity.

Slayers often use Vigils to focus their minds upon situations which confuse them, and particularly upon demonic plots which they do not understand. If a successful Insight check is made after a lengthy Vigil, GMs may wish to remind the character's player of the salient factors or clues upon which their conundrum hangs.

THE FAST OF CLEANSING

Should a slayer become Tainted through contact with demonic power, the above rituals become futile, and most slayers cease to perform them. In order to cleanse their taints, and reestablish their purity, slayers must perform a three week long ritual and fast, in a suitably secluded, peaceful or holy place. Most trek into the wilderness or have themselves locked up in a temple's cell to perform this fast.

The three week period begins and ends with a Ritual of Purity. During this period, slayers burn all of the clothes that they were wearing or have worn since becoming tainted, clean themselves thoroughly with water and sometimes scourge their bodies, all the while abstaining from food. Not only do they eat nothing, but they drink only water for the entire three weeks, during which time they meditate upon their failings, their purpose and their destiny.

ADAPTING THE RITUALS

The details of these rituals should be amended by each GM in accordance with the campaign's setting. Depending on the campaign, a great number of substances could be used in the place of the water and fire mentioned above. Examples include sand, earth, salt, milk, animal fat, storm winds, and blood.

Which substance is appropriate for a character may depend upon the culture or religion of a campaign setting, the slayer's alignment or personality, and the atmosphere which the GM wishes to evoke. For example, if the dominant culture or religion of your campaign believes that milk is the purest of substances, then milk should be used instead of water. Similarly, evil slayers may prefer to use blood, while those who worship deities of the earth might use sand.

SLAYERS' ORGANIZATIONS

Slayers prefer to work alone, reliant upon and answerable to no one but themselves. They also travel widely, crossing countries and Empires to search out the agents of the Infernus, and so they rarely come together in formal organizations. However, when a number of slayers work for a while in the same area, or if they find themselves facing a complex and widespread demonic plot, they may form looser networks.

While continuing to work alone, or with trusted companions, such slayers meet at regular intervals to exchange information, or leave messages for one another with trusted commoners, an inn-keeper, priest or inquisitor, perhaps.

CAREER'S END

It is a rare slayer who can retire with dignity, and die in peace of natural causes. Their own zealous mentalities, and their Infernal enemies, conspire to prevent such an ending. Most die in battle, of course, butchered by a demon or its allies. Some are grievously mutilated and forced to retire. Others are assassinated by demonic forces, or more ignominiously by mortal enemies.

Others, however, are defeated mentally before their physical bodies are overcome. The pressures of a slayer's career are crushing, the responsibility and the enormity of their task, the constant discipline, the danger and the loneliness.

Commonly, slayers give up their wanderings, and settle at a magnate's court, as a guard or instructor. Others turn to drink, or vanish into uninhabited regions. Some are simply driven insane by the pleasure of their work. Others retire, trying to live a "normal", unexciting life. Often, vengeful demons catch up with retired slayers (who may have lost their edge to age) to settle old scores.



ADVENTURE SEEDS

The following ideas may be used by GMs as the bases of adventures involving demon-hunts and inquisitors. These sketches require much fleshing out before they are ready for play, as NPCs, subplots and a rich background should be added, but with work can be turned into rewarding adventures. Reading through these sections, GMs may also begin to have further ideas of how they might involve player characters with demon-hunts.

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

"In which it may be learned that the most eloquent is not always the most virtuous."

The player characters are passing through a small town in which a trial is progressing. Several people have been arrested as demon-worshippers, and an inquisitor has been called in to interrogate them. Several minor crimes have been uncovered, but nothing scandalous has been found. The characters may be employed by the town to guard the inquisitor, court or jail, or they may be hired by the defendants' families to prove their innocence.

The trials are vigorous but fair, and while those who defend the innocent are often themselves suspected, none are convicted unfairly. After two days, there are fresh arrests. That evening a young wizard arrives in the town.

He vigorously defends all suspects and appeals against the convictions, arguing that all of the cases should be reviewed, and pointing out flaws in the inquisitor's findings. The characters are asked to investigate this stranger, following him, snooping around his lodgings, and chatting to him. He is pleasant and reasonable enough, but is not all that he seems.

In truth, while the investigations had hitherto uncovered only harmless sinners, the recent arrests included members of an active demon-worshipping cult. The "wizard" may be their leader, or even a disguised demon. The player characters must discover the wizard's identity, and deal with him, perhaps later defending the jail against a demonic attempt to release the suspects.

THE THAUMATURGIST

"In which a groundless accusation creates a panic, and the player characters must risk their lives to protect those falsely accused."

The player characters are contacted by a wandering priest, who has recently stumbled upon a set of circles and symbols near a small town. He recognized the markings as those used by "devil-

worshippers" (thaumaturgists) to summon demons, and asks that the characters help him investigate. They travel to the site, and deduce that many locals pass through or have business in the wood. But as soon as they mention demons, locals begin talking about the quiet young "herbalist" who recently arrived, and rumors of demon-worship begin to circulate.

The "herbalist" is the thaumaturgist responsible for the circles, but he is not evil, and has successfully defeated several minor demons in the past years. The player characters should not seriously suspect him. But now the rumors are reinforced by unnatural occurrences: a grey slime appearing around the "herbalist's" shop, milk curdling and ale turning to blood in the tavern. Finally, the characters receive an anonymous note telling about a local woman of ill repute selling her soul to a demon.

The tip-off, strange events and wild rumors are caused by a Seducer, who sees the opportunity to kill its old enemy, the thaumaturgist, and meanwhile spread sin. It takes to stalking the town in the evenings, disguised as a local. The townsfolk become increasingly frightened. Soon, the player characters may have to set guards on those accused by the wild rumors, and may eventually be besieged by angry townsfolk demanding that the "guilty" be burned. Then, a senile old widow is dragged in from an outlying hamlet, "obviously possessed", and a large fire is built for her in the square. If the player characters do not intervene she will be burned alive.

THE PROVIDER

"In which the player characters must convince an entire village to abandon the gods who have saved their lives."

The player characters are asked to investigate an isolated village, which has driven out its priestess. She was expelled when a mysterious plague began to strike down the locals, her magics inexplicably failing to cure their afflictions. Since then, the village has refused to communicate with the outside world.

On their arrival the characters find the locals uncommunicative, and possibly hostile. Moreover, they have abandoned their old religion, and taken to worshipping deities which the characters have never heard of. The night after the characters arrive, a fierce thunderstorm storms through the village, and the first person to cooperate with them falls victim to the plague the next day. This is the first instance of plague since the new gods were first worshiped, and the villagers see it as a sign.

In fact, the villagers are worshipping nonexistent gods, to the benefit of Runstibble, demon duke of false worship. A Gate of Influence

near to the village allows the demon to cause storms, blight crops and sicken animals. The "plague" is caused by a poison, slipped to opponents by the "priests" of the cult. The characters cannot simply bully the peasants or they will be overwhelmed. They must persuade the villagers to trust them, perhaps by destroying the Gate and curing the "plague", and to abandon their false religion. Most importantly, they must find out which villagers are privy to the fraud, and deal with them accordingly.

EXTENDED PLOTS

While small-scale, local demon-hunts may last no more than a few days, and thus make excellent adventure settings, prolonged hunts across a region or continent may last for years, decades, or even centuries. These broader movements may become very important in your campaign world, and may lead to strings of inter-related adventures.

The following are examples of such extended plots, which provide colour, numerous adventures and incidental encounters. These can easily be adapted and embellished to fit in with existing campaigns, and may be woven into existing masterplots.

POGROM

"In which the player characters give aid to a persecuted merchant, and find themselves under suspicion."

The player characters are approached by a wealthy merchant, who is a member of a mistrusted minority (a member of a suspicious religion or cult, a racial minority, or one who holds strange philosophical opinions). He has relatives in another city, who are finding themselves increasingly persecuted. He wishes to hire the characters to help them flee.

The player characters travel to this city to discover that the persecution has intensified. The persecuted minority is groundlessly accused of trying to poison the ruler, none are permitted to leave and there have been random arrests. The player characters have difficulty extricating the merchant's relatives.

A period of quiet follows. The characters become increasingly involved with the merchant and his relations, first professionally and then personally. Friendships and perhaps romances develop. The characters gain an insight into the minority's lives, and should come to understand that their sporadic persecution are unjustifiable. Then a major scandal engulfs the kingdom, as a large demon-cult is discovered. A wave of bloody hunts follow, spreading and growing in intensity. The hunt's political or religious leaders soon begin accusing the mistrusted

minority of complicity in the demon-worship.

The merchant has other relatives in other cities, who are soon arrested. The merchant asks the player characters to investigate the allegations, and help the people if they are innocent. Of course, there is no truth to the allegations, and if the characters try to defend the innocent they, too, are arrested and tried (though probably acquitted).

Soon, as the paranoia spreads, rumors circulate concerning the merchant and his family, the characters' friends. Then rival merchants, hoping to eliminate a competitor, begin to stir up the people and invite a bigoted demon-hunter to the city. The merchant and his kin are arrested. Any attempt by the characters to stand up to them may lead to their arrest, and they may not be acquitted twice.

A FALL FROM GRACE

"In which a good man is corrupted, and sends many to their undeserved deaths."

The player characters become briefly involved in a tricky investigation, which is expertly handled by a gifted inquisitor. Over the next months or years, they hear of this inquisitor's successes and achievements, and are then unexpectedly contacted by him. He has been informed of a dangerous association of evil thaumaturgists, and requests their assistance in quashing it. He proposes to deal with the investigations, if the characters can deal with direct threats and any violence.

After several skirmishes and much investigation, the thaumaturgists are crushed. They flee or are slain, and although rumors persist that their leader remains, there is no evidence of this, and so characters and the inquisitor leave. Immediately, the friends and informants they left behind are brutally murdered by demons. Several leaders, it transpires, had not been found, but were amongst the most outwardly respectable citizens of the area.

Thereafter, the inquisitor is racked by guilt at his failure, and blames himself for having not been "thorough" enough. The player characters hear different stories of his subsequent investigations. He tortures all who are suspected (and some who aren't), and orders executions without firm evidence. Having become chaotic (and possibly evil), he has lost his abilities and spells, but continues to oversee investigations, using brute force and his intellect. Eventually, he orders the destruction of an entire village for no apparent reason, and the player characters are asked to deal with him. They must defeat his unsavory bodyguards, and then decide what to do with their erstwhile colleague, all the while being harried and confused by the thralls of Agares and Sabnock, who glory in the inquisitor's sin and wish him to continue his work.

Standard terms & abbreviations:

Abilities (or attributes, characteristics, or statistics) are derived from 3D6. The lowest score for a human is 3, and the highest score is an 18/00 (see standard rule book for more information).

Ability Checks against a Character's abilities work much like saving throws.

For example, when a character makes an ability check against his STR, the player rolls 1D20. If the resulting number is equal to or lower than the statistic, the save is successful.

Armor Class (AC) works on a scale in which a lower number is better. A Character with no armor is AC: 10 (unless otherwise stated within a Characters' race statistics). A shield improves AC by 1 to make AC: 9; chain mail is AC: 5; and plate mail and shield is AC: 2. (See the standard rule book for details.)

"D" is used as an abbreviation for "die" or "dice." 1D20 means one 20-sided die; 3D6 means three 6-sided die; etc..

HTK (Hits To Kill) is the number of points of damage that a Character or monster may sustain before being killed.

HTK Dice is the number of dice rolled to determine how many HTK the creature has. The type of die used depends on the class of character.

Monsters always use 8-sided HTK dice to determine how many HTK they have.

Magic Resistance indicates whether or not a given creature is resistant to magic effects. If a percent is listed, this is the percent chance of a spell's failure on a given creature. This chance is based on a spell being cast by a Skill 11 spell caster, and must be adjusted upwards by 5% for each level below 11, and downwards for each level above 11.

Movement (MV) is the speed of a Character or monster on a constant basis. The creature moves the stated distance in tens of yards if outdoors, and tens of feet if indoors or underground.

If only one number is given, the creature can only move on land. Other terrains could be listed such as air, water, underground, web, etc.

Priest, unless otherwise stated, refers to clerics and druids.

Saving Throws (save vs.): are listed for each character class in the standard rule book. To make a successful saving throw, a Player must roll the saving throw value or higher on 1D20. A successful saving throw often reduces or negates certain types of damage.

Size indicates whether a creature is (S) smaller than man-sized (4' or smaller), (M) man-sized (4'-7'), or (L) larger than man-sized (7' or larger).

Skill refers to the level of the character or spell.

Spell Abilities: Many deities and monsters use certain spells and/or the magical abilities of specified character classes. See the standard rule book for descriptions of spells not described herein, and/or for more information on the magic-using character classes mentioned.

THACO (To Hit Armor Class 0): When you know a Character's or monster's THACO, you will know the number required to score a successful hit on 1D20 (or multiply that number by 5 to get the percentage chance of success). A target's Armor Class is subtracted from the attacker's THACO to obtain the target number required on the 1D20.

For example, if a Character's THACO is 16 and his target is wearing chain mail with no shield (AC: 5), the Character needs to roll 11 or less on 1D20 (16-5=11) or roll 55% or less on a D% (11 x 5% = 55%).

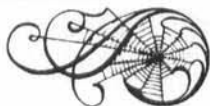
Treasure Type indicates the kind of treasure the creature has on its person or in its lair (see standard rulebooks for details).

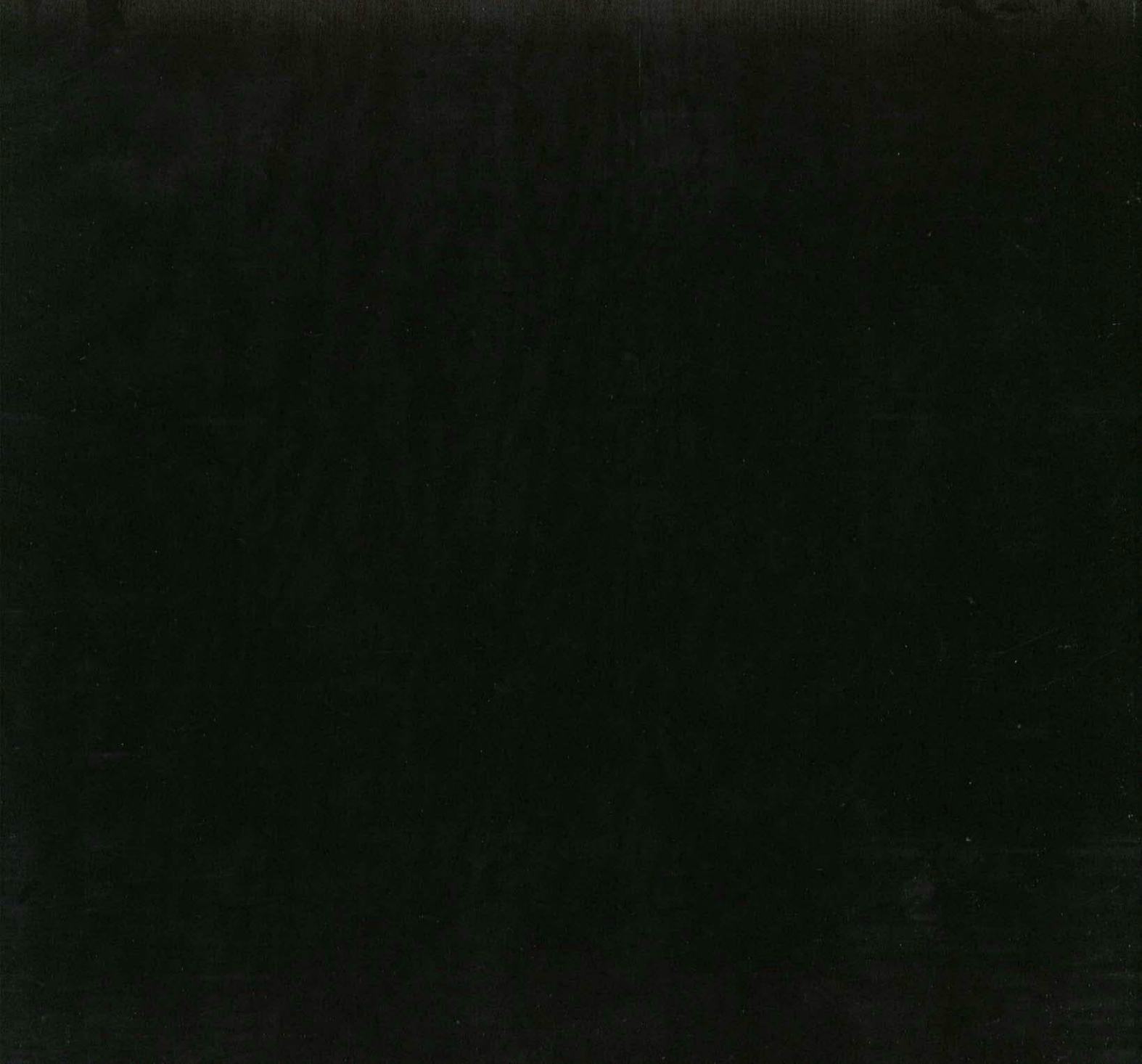
Value assumes that the value of one gold piece is about \$20 in current U.S. dollars.

Wizards, unless otherwise stated, refers to magic-users and illusionists.

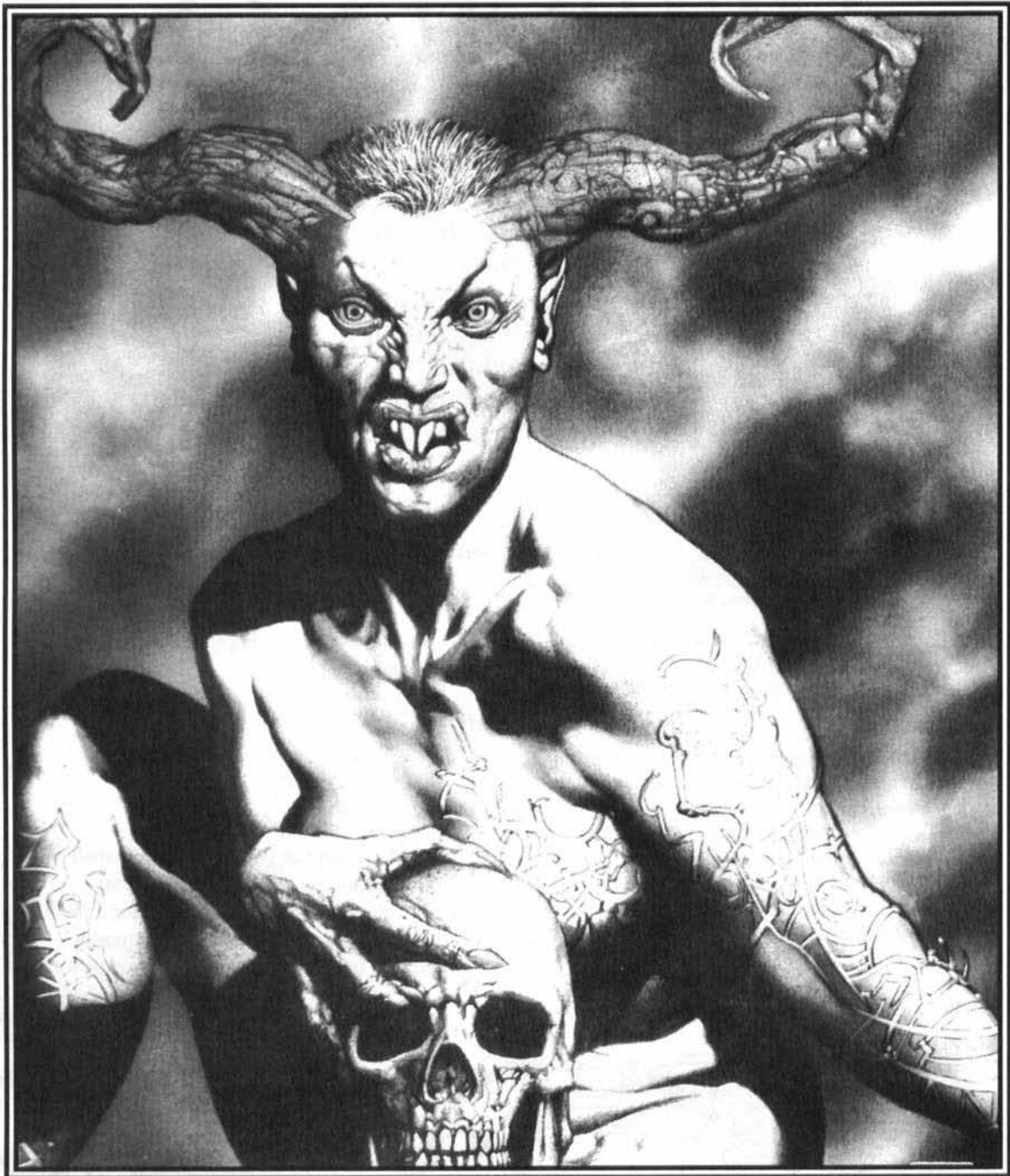
ABBREVIATIONS

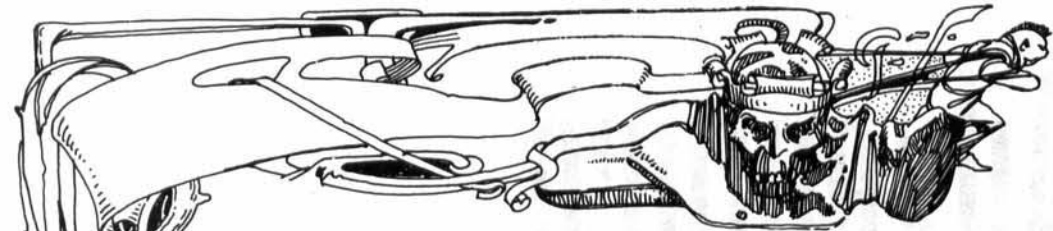
AC	.....	Armor Class
AL	.....	Alignment
APL	.....	Appeal
ARM	.....	Armor
ATT	.....	Attack
C. Evil or CE	.....	Chaotic Evil
C. Good or CG	.....	Chaotic Good
C. Neutral or CN	.....	Chaotic Neutral
cp	.....	copper piece(s)
DEF	.....	Defense
DEX	.....	Dexterity
DM	.....	Damage
ep	.....	electrum piece(s)
GM	.....	Game Master
gp or GP	.....	gold piece(s)
HTK	.....	Hits To Kill
INS	.....	Insight
INT	.....	Intellect
L. Evil or LE	.....	Lawful Evil
L. Good or LG	.....	Lawful Good
L. Neutral or LN	.....	Lawful Neutral
M	.....	Man-size
MV	.....	Movement
N	.....	Neutral
N. Evil or NE	.....	Neutral Evil
N. Good or NG	.....	Neutral Good
NPCs	.....	Non-Player Character(s)
PCs	.....	Player Character(s)
pp	.....	platinum piece(s)
PROF	.....	Proficiency
S	.....	Smaller than man-size
sp	.....	silver piece(s)
STA	.....	Stamina
STR	.....	Strength
SZ	.....	Size
THACO	.....	To Hit Armor Class 0
WPN	Weapon
XP	Experience Points





Adventure Book





DEMONS II

Adventure Book

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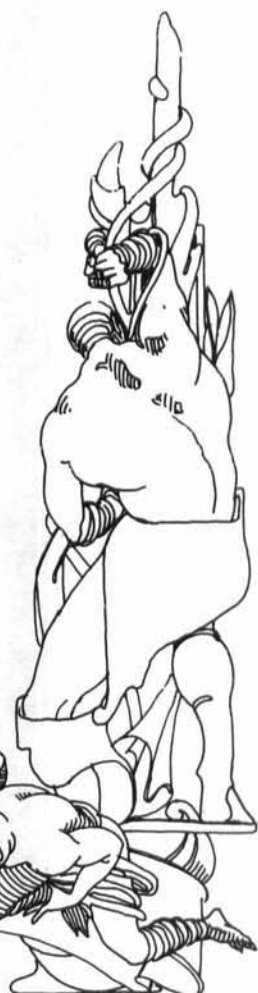
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A Note on Language:

For the sake of convenience, the male gender is used as a neuter term throughout this product. This does not imply any chauvinism on our part, it simply takes up less space and makes for much smoother reading.

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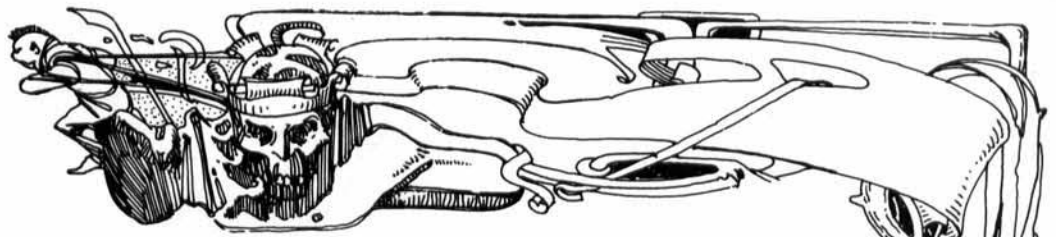


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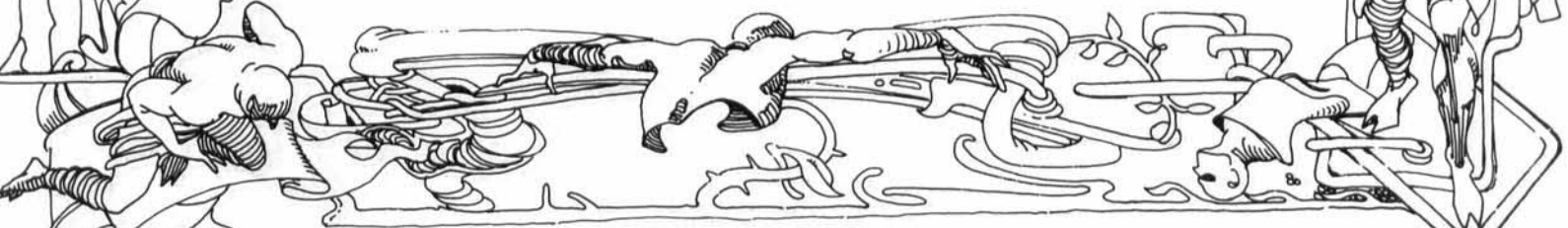
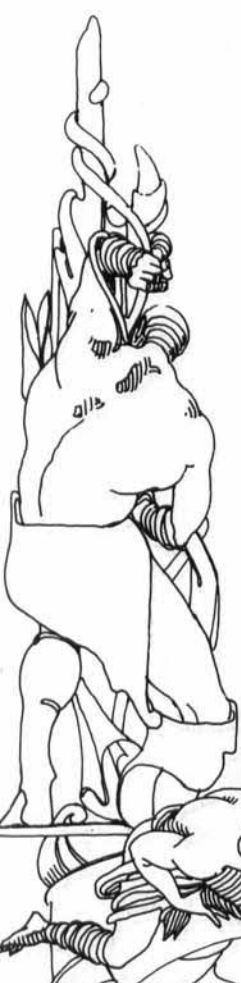
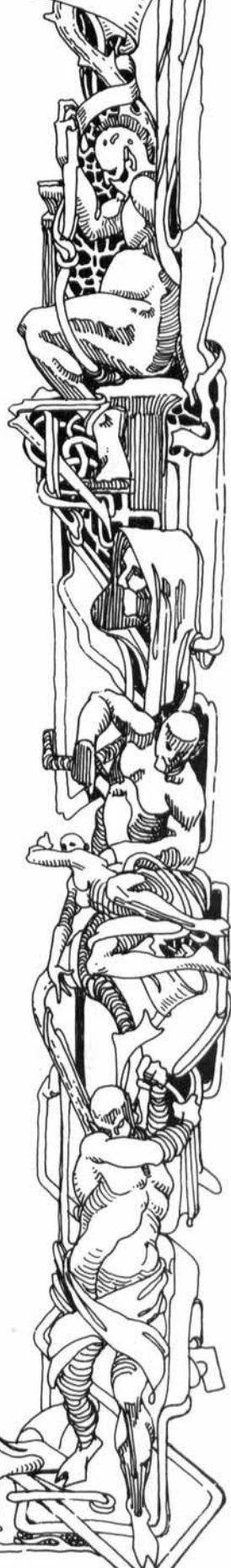
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VALE AND COURT

The following adventures are designed to introduce players and GMs alike to the machinations of demons on the mortal plane.

The first adventure is linear, revolving around the tragedy of a small family, and highlighting the individual suffering caused by these creatures. The second adventure is a sequel to the first, and details a nobles court in which the player characters must uncover a demonic plot before the country is plunged into a bloody civil war.

Each is written in a different style, and requires a different style of play. However, either adventure may be run without the other, if GMs feel that their campaigns or players are ill-suited to one or the other.

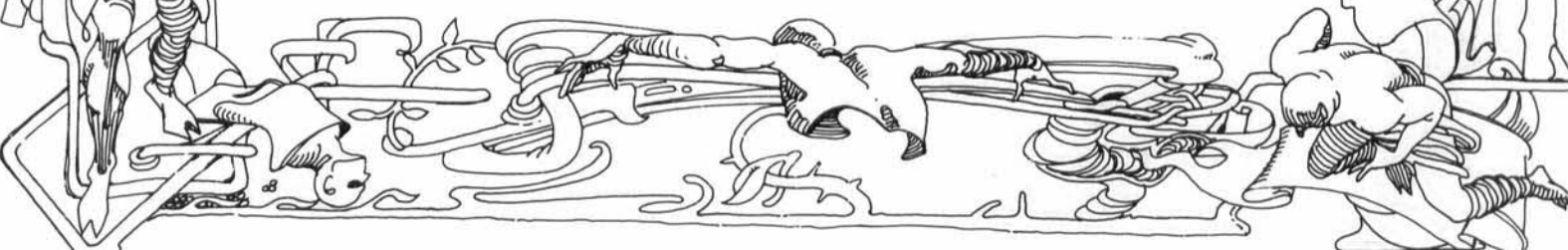
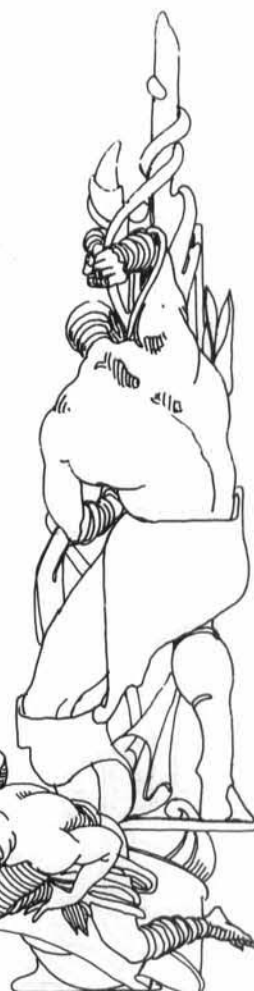
THE PLOTS

In the first adventure, the player characters are caught up in an attack upon a small manor-house, opposing the agents of the Infernus who wish to capture a magical sword. If the characters can defeat the demons and acquire the sword themselves, the second adventure may prove to be easier for them.

In the second adventure, the player characters are asked to investigate a murder and several unfortunate omens, which may lead them to discover a plot to spark a rebellion, involving disguised demons and power-hungry mortals. With skill and insight, the characters may foil the plot, using the sword from the first adventure to fight the demons.

Should the player characters fail to prevent the rebellion, GMs may wish to run other adventures in the war-torn country, and if the characters still have the sword from the first adventure they may become extremely important in the struggle. A brief section on the civil war follows the second adventure.

The land in which these adventures are set has not been named here, but is referred to as The Kingdom throughout. GMs may adapt or name the country to fit in with their established campaigns.



ILECH VALE

INTRODUCTION

The pretext for the player characters' visit to the Kingdom will depend upon the campaign that the GM is running. Some parties may habitually wander in search of employment or trade. Others may have been hired to deliver some parcel to a merchant, goldsmith or scholar in the area. As the adventure opens, the PCs are crossing the border into the Kingdom, moving between one travellers' inn and another. But the weather is foul, the journey is slow, and a vicious storm forces them to seek shelter with an impoverished noble.

The storm, of course, is not natural, but signals the start of a demonic campaign to destabilize or to destroy the Kingdom. At the manor where the characters seek shelter, there is a magical sword which might aid those who oppose the demons. By capturing the sword themselves, the demons hope to remove this threat. And being demons of murder and betrayal, the minions of Forneus, they have contrived a plot whereby the sins of homicide and treachery are spread. GMs may wish to read the following passage to the players:

"You are crossing a ragged mountain pass on the eastern boarder of the Kingdom, following the setting sun. A cold wind cuts through the valley and the air is unseasonably cold. You had been told that the pass should be easy to follow at this time of year, and the weather fair, but recent rains have turned the path to mire and waters, cascading from the higher slopes, cross the path as broad rivers. You are making slow progress, and do not expect to find an Inn for several miles. In the northern sky, grey-black clouds mass and coil, promising another storm.

"You trudge onwards, as the the clouds roll across the sky, swallowing the sun. You hear and see the rain crashing on the

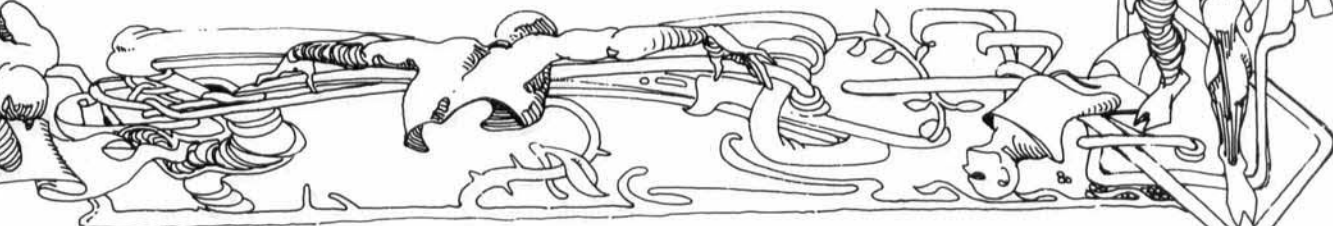
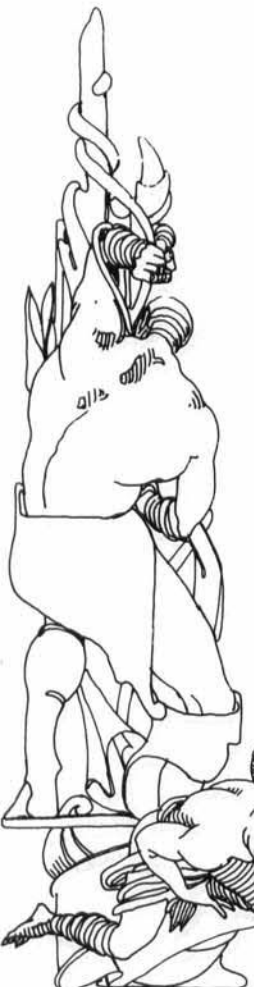
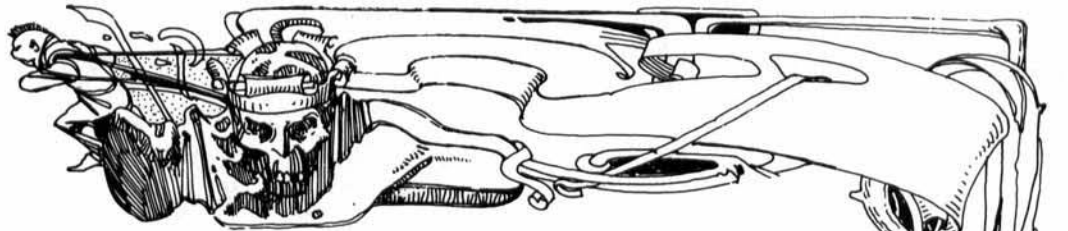
northern slopes, before the wind drives sheets of water into your party. It is the worst storm you have endured on your travels, and the ground is too rocky to pitch a tent. The blackened sky and driving rain obscure your vision, and having covered perhaps a mile in an hour, you round a spur of rock to see lights burning in a window two hundreds yards to your left. A long, low rumble of thunder echoes from the east."

The players may debate whether or not to approach the buildings, but to continue their journey would be to risk hypothermia and exhaustion. The ground is too rocky to make camp. There are no caves or other convenient shelters to seek refuge within.

ARRIVING AT THE HALL

The manor is built on the floor of a south-facing valley, overlooking the pass. It is a gentle climb up from the path, although the rain blows against the characters and the grass is slippery. The lights come from the half-shuttered windows at the front of a Lord's hall. The building is constructed of three separate halls, all linked together. Three entrances are apparent. A double door in the front (leading to the kitchen) above which is the main door accessed by a set of wooden steps, and a tall stable-door in the left wing. GMs may then wish to read the following to the players:

"Bracing yourself against the driving rain, you strike up the saturated hillside towards the light, as thunder rolls about the mountains. Sheltered in a shallow valley, the dark silhouette of a large hall becomes visible, the lights that you saw burning in the windows of its upper floor. Drawing nearer, you can see that the manor was built as three distinct halls, joined together, with a weathered wooden staircase leading up to the main entrance of the central building."



GMs may wish to give the players a sketched map of the hall at this stage, indicating the entrances. Loudly rapping on any of the doors brings a servant, Iors, to the main door at the top of the stairs.

"The door is nervously opened by a thin man in his forties. His tunic is stained with beer and flour, and his eyes dart from one of you to the other with surprise. 'Travellers! 'Come in of course, such vile weather, come in!' He ushers you into the torch-lit hall. 'Where have you come from, I shall inform my Lord immediately!"

"A younger man approaches from a doorway to your right. He interjects, 'There is no need, Iors, I shall see to this. Fetch beer and warm water for our guests.' He wears a green woolen tunic, not cheap but well-worn, and smiling, he holds his hand out to you in greeting. 'I am Clynedd, son of Lord Arand ap Llewach. Be welcome.'"

The young man is genuinely friendly, and concerned for any travellers unfortunate enough to have been caught in such a storm. He ensures that Iors brings them beer to drink and water for washing, stables their horses (if they have any), takes their soaked clothing and prepares a room for them. Dinner is to be served shortly, he assures them, and after they have changed, he sits down at the table to chat with them. Meanwhile, the rain persistently rattles against the roof and shutters, and the thunder continues.

Clynedd is interested in the characters: where have they been? what brings them to the Kingdom? Any hint that they are mercenaries or adventurers seems to make him reticent and thoughtful. The characters, for their part, may also have questions to ask. Some expected questions and Clynedd's answers are given here:

Is this weather normal? *On the contrary, storms this fierce are rare even in the deepest winter.*

CLYNEDD Ap ARAND

Human, Skill 1 Fighter

STR: 12 INT: 13

INS: 11 STA: 14

DEX: 9 APL: 11

HTK: 7

AC: 9

THAC0: 20

AL: Neutral Good

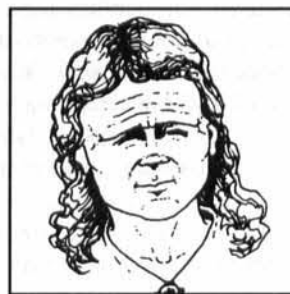
Wpn Prof: Broadsword, dagger

Wpns: Broadsword, small shield, and dagger

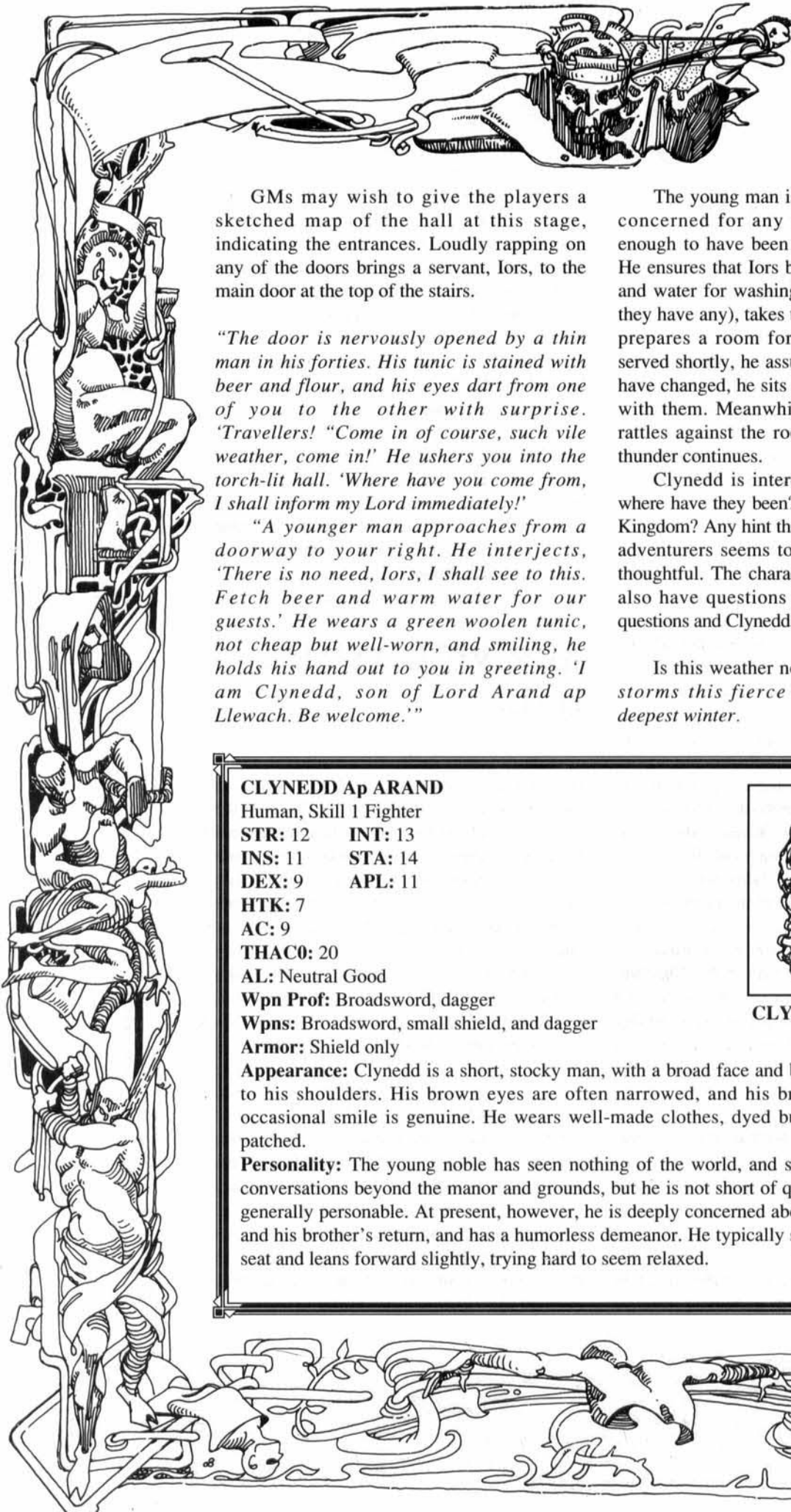
Armor: Shield only

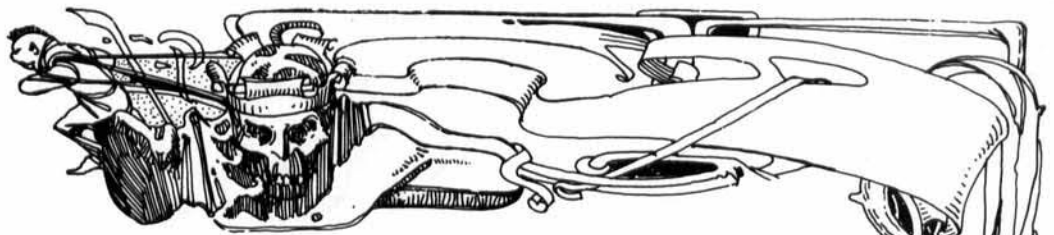
Appearance: Clynedd is a short, stocky man, with a broad face and brown hair that hangs to his shoulders. His brown eyes are often narrowed, and his brow creased, but his occasional smile is genuine. He wears well-made clothes, dyed but faded and slightly patched.

Personality: The young noble has seen nothing of the world, and so contributes little to conversations beyond the manor and grounds, but he is not short of questions to ask and is generally personable. At present, however, he is deeply concerned about his father's health and his brother's return, and has a humorless demeanor. He typically sits on the edge of his seat and leans forward slightly, trying hard to seem relaxed.



CLYNEDD Ap ARAND





Where is Lord Arand? *He is in his bed, unwell at present, but it is nothing to be concerned about.*

Is Lord Arand married? *He did have a wife, but they became estranged six years ago. She left to live with a cousin, and died two winters past.*

Who else lives at the hall? *Six people in all. There are three servants: Iors, his wife Hrtha, and her sister, Gewa. Iors's son, Penadd, acts as stable-boy and man-at-arms. Then there is only me (Clynedd) and my father.*

Are there no other guards? *No more are needed. Four men could easily hold the manor against a small-scale attack, and no greater threat is conceivable.*

Who else lives in the area? *There are several dozen shepherds managing their flocks in the mountains. All the lands within a day's ride belong to Lord Arand's estate, and although the lands are desolate mountains, the shepherds' meager rents maintain the Lord's small household.*

How long has the Lord's been ill? *Lord Arand has not been well for three years now. His condition worsens and improves sporadically, and this latest bout began around ten days ago. A passing physician blamed the foul weather and sold the lord some medicines.*

Questions concerning Lord Arand's other offspring, or recent threats to the Lord and manor, all receive more guarded replies. In truth, Lord Arand does have another son, Powden, who is Clynedd's twin brother and the younger by a matter of minutes. Always bitter and foul-humored, Powden left the hall shortly before his parents' estrangement. Two nights ago (roughly the time that these driving rains began) he rode up to the manor and demanded that he be given half of the estate's lands, and money to build himself a house. Lord Arand welcomed his son and offered hospitality, but could not agree to divide the estate, since its meager revenues could not support two households. Powden rode away, spurning his father's love and threatening to return and seize the entire estate.

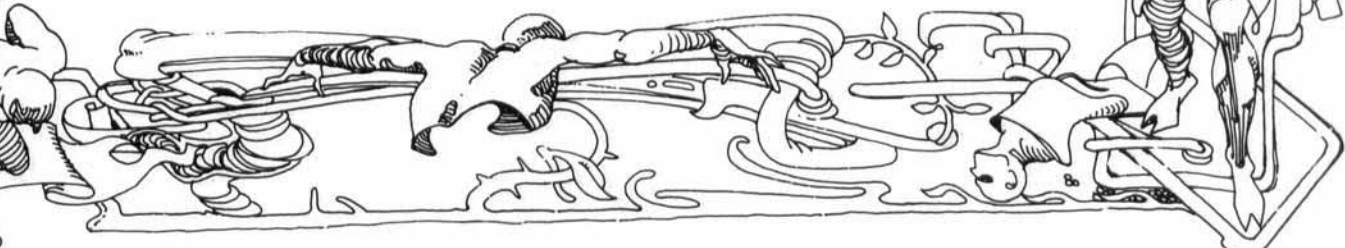
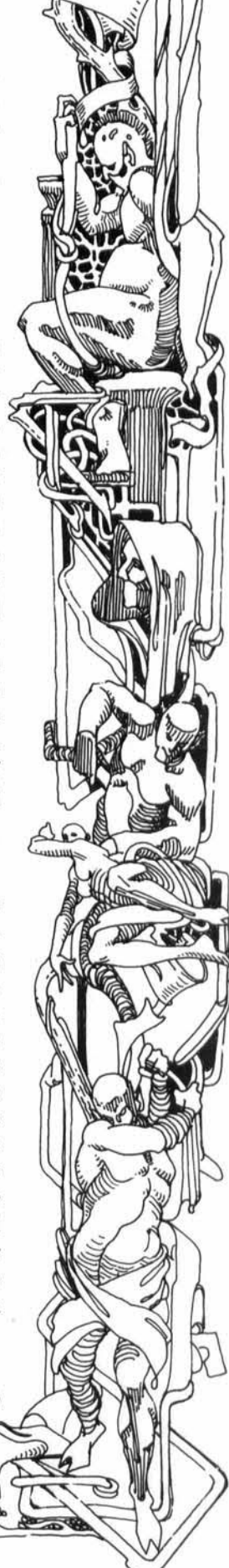
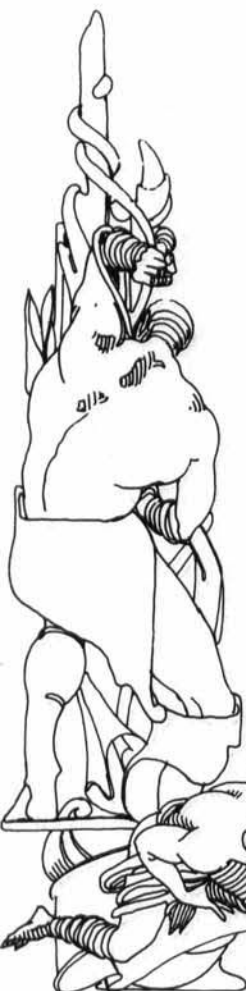
Clynedd is unsure how seriously to take his brother's threats, and cannot be certain that he can trust the player characters. GMs must decide, based upon the characters' attitudes to Clynedd, exactly how much he is prepared to reveal at present.

THE MANOR

The building is made from a local stone, hard, cold and grey, mortared carefully. The roofs are tiled with slate and supported by thick wooden beams. On the upper floor, wooden shutters cover unglazed windows, barred from within. The windows facing away from the prevailing wind are left open during the day, for ventilation, but are all fastened when the household retire for the night. The building is lit by torches, for which there are brackets on the walls in all of the rooms. The whole structure is sturdy, draught-free, but not warm. The Manor is a simple two story structure with a barn outside. A map of the manor and surrounding yard can be found on page 23. The following list provides a brief description of each room for the players, and additional notes for the GM.

1) The stable:

"The stables smell warm and musty, with rotting straw trodden into the earth floor. Eight stalls line the north wall, one being reserved for the Lord's aging brown charger, another containing a thin grey riding horse. Saddles and tack are stored along the southern wall, and at the eastern end is a small open area, apparently unused, perhaps originally designed to accommodate mules or sheep. In the south-west corner a sturdy ladder leads to a heavy trap-door in the ceiling, and in the south-east corner a tall door leads to the outside." The trap door can only be fastened from above, and is extremely strong. The door to the outside may be secured from within by two iron bolts, but could be demolished by a few determined axe blows.



2) Loft and Visitors' Room:

"A dingy room without windows, attached to the Great Hall by a low doorway in the eastern wall, and with a heavy trap-door in the south-west corner of the floor. The sagging beams hang just five feet above the wooden floor. A table and stools stand in the centre of the room, with straw-filled mattresses strewn across the floor." Most visitors are accommodated here. A wealthy or noble leader may be offered Powden's room, but the manor can offer nothing better.

3) Main Hall:

"The Great Hall is a long, high room, with a stone floor. A heavy table runs the length of the room, flanked by benches. A warm fire burns in the hearth, casting flickering shadows across the walls and ceiling, and a tapestry hangs on the far wall, depicting scenes of hunting and battle in faded browns and greens. Four heavy doors stand towards the south end of the hall: one in the south wall, flanked by shuttered windows and leading outside, and the other two in the west and one in the east walls." All four doors are thick and iron-bound, and can be fastened by heavy wooden bars to make the room a strong-point in case of attack. This is the room into which the players' characters first enter, and in which all meals are eaten.

4) Privy:

"This small, dark, wooden walk-in cupboard, perched on the side of the Great Hall, contains only a wooden ledge with a hole cut in the centre. A bucket of water and several folded cloths stand by the ledge." This is the Hall's only toilet. Waste falls in a small pile underneath, which is washed into the stream by the rain or taken to fertilize the vegetable gardens. The hole is too small for anyone to climb through.

5) Clynedd's Chamber:

"A patchwork blanket is spread across the bed which dominates this room, and sheepskin rugs covering the floor. The other furniture; including a clothes chest, table and chair; is well made and sturdy, but plain. A lute hangs from the far wall, above the bed." The chest is unlocked and contains only clothes, a sword

and a writing case. A water-bucket, bowl, and other utensils sit on the table or in the corners.

6) Powden's Chamber:

"A slightly musty, though clean room, this chamber contains sturdy furniture, and a broad bed with a tapestry cover. Clean sheepskin rugs lie on the floor, and though the furnishings are ample, still the room feels somehow empty." Powden took all of his possessions with him when he left, and the room now feels unwelcoming. Several important guests have lodged here over the years, but the chamber is kept ready primarily in case of Powden's reconciliation, rather than for visitors. Anyone spending a night here wakes infrequently, for no apparent reason, and finds it difficult to get back to sleep.

7a) Lord Arand's Anti-chamber:

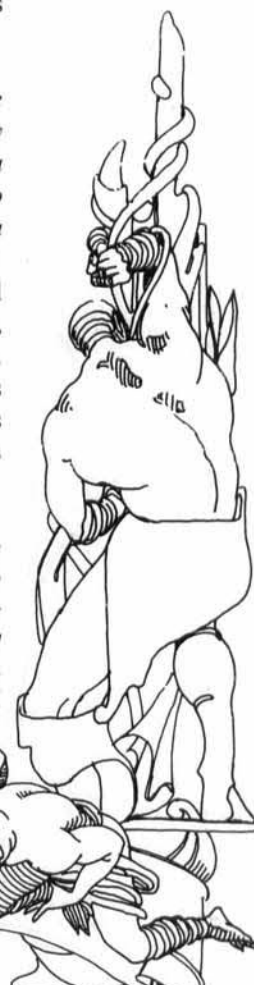
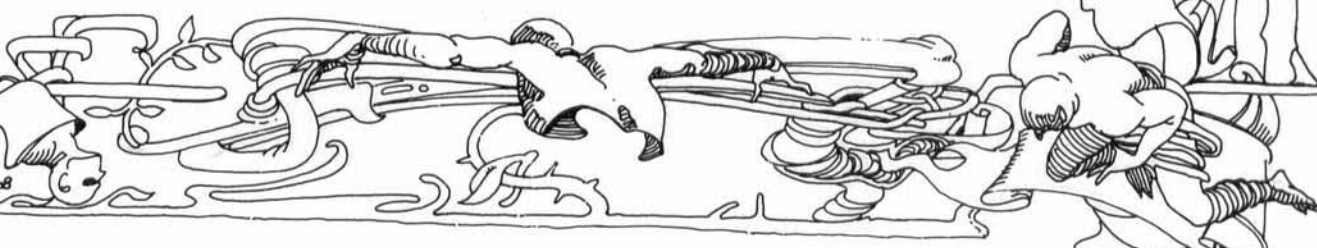
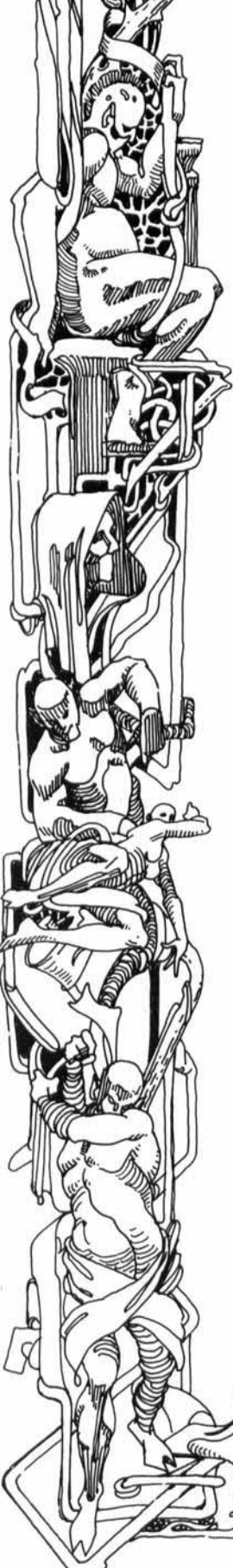
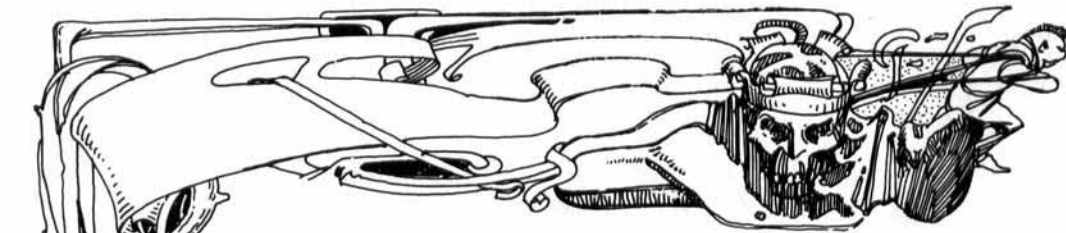
"The outer room is small but well lit, with two windows and numerous torch-brackets. Beneath one window is a small desk, with a pile of paper, ink pots and quills. A table and chairs stand in the centre of the chamber, and on a side table are several pewter goblets and a cask of wine." This is Lord Arand's reception room and study, unused since his recent illnesses began.

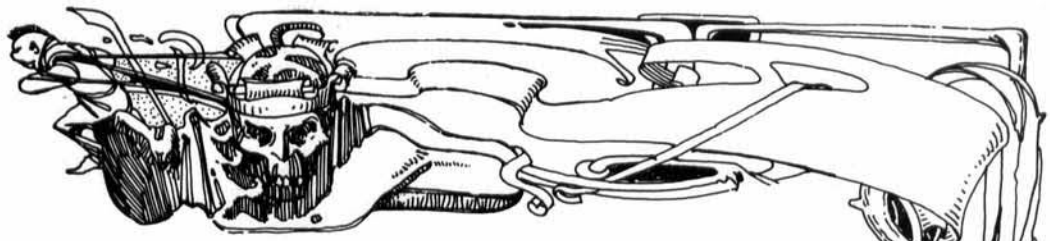
7b) Lord Arand's Bedchamber:

"The Lord's bedroom contains a large bed covered by a worn tapestry, and two heavy chests. A table stands beside his bed, and a bearskin rug covers the floor at its foot. Two glass bottles stand on the bedside table and a slight scent of aromatic oil hangs in the air." The bottles, half empty, contain ineffectual medicines for the lord's cough and weakness, and the oils are supposed to soothe his lungs. Both chests are locked. One contains clothes and his sword, the other holds the family's savings (2,090 gp). The Lord currently spends most of his day confined to his bed.

8) Kitchen:

"A stone ceiling arches over the shadowed room, where sacks of flour, barrels and sides of smoked meat are stored amongst the well-worn furniture. Two long tables stand by the hearth, and smaller tables, brewing vats and cauldrons litter the area. Lines crisscross





the ceiling, hung with damp clothing, and the air smells of soured milk and beer, herbs, roast meat and wood smoke." The three servants and Penadd sleep here, on straw mattresses beneath the larger tables. During the day, the servants work here almost continuously. The main source of illumination is the large cooking fire, and heavy shadows are cast across the room by the piles of provisions.

9) Barn:

"This slightly crooked wooden building stands aside from the hall, its timbers brown and warped with age. A smell of manure and damp fleece hangs about it." All the food which cannot be stored in the kitchen is left here, though it is not a secure building. Its double doors are fastened with a primitive padlock, but determined thieves might easily break in. Sacks of grain, flour, and vegetables are stacked out of reach of the animals who remain here during inclement weather (six sheep, two pigs and a cow). Hay, straw and oats for these animals and for the horses are kept in the hay-loft, which covers half length of the barn and is reached by a ladder from its floor. Should the players' characters have more horses (or servants) than can be accommodated within the main buildings, these are quartered here.

10) Outside:

Besides the hall and barn, the only features of note are the chicken coop (a wooden structure housing a dozen scrawny fowl), the stream (two feet deep and three feet wide, from which drinking water is taken) and the large vegetable garden (containing various hardy greens and adjoined by a rotting compost heap.)

DINNER

After the player characters have settled in and had a chance to speak with Clynedd for some minutes, dinner is served. Here they first meet Lord Arand, and the other servants.

After Iors lays the table with wooden plates, tankards, and pewter knives and spoons, Clynedd suggests that the characters take their

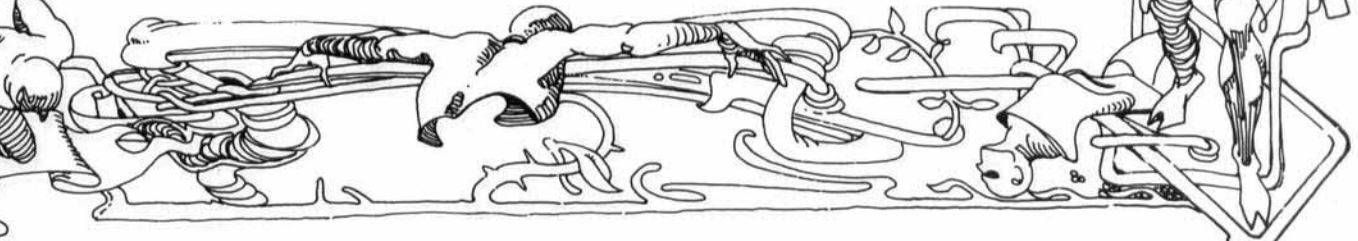
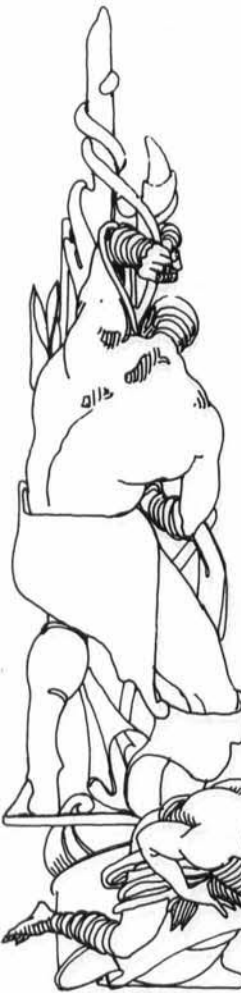
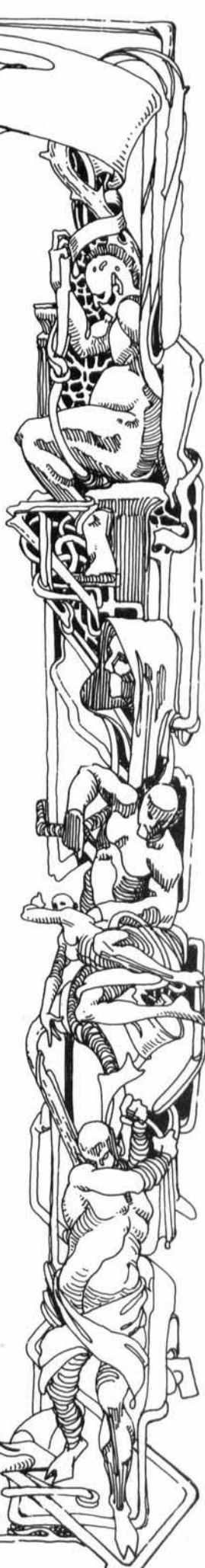
places. As they sit, Lord Arand enters. GMs may wish to read the following passage:

"From the east wing of the house, a tall, slightly bent figure emerges. Dull grey hair is combed back from his high forehead, but his skin is pallid and loose, his eyes somewhat sunken. A nervous middle-aged servant supports his arm tenderly, as he walks steadily across the room to the head of the table, stifling a thick cough. The old Lord glances at each of his visitors with a welcoming nod and a probing stare.

"Clynedd watches with evident concern as the old man lowers himself his seat as another peel of thunder rolls down the valley. The servant backs away unhappily. 'Be welcome!' the Lord coughs. 'Let us eat!' Iors and another woman emerge from the east wing, carrying a platter of roast meat and vegetables, a bowl of bread and a large jug of ale."

The meal proceeds. Lord Arand is polite and dignified throughout, but clearly finds the meal an effort and prefers his son to answer most questions for him. He takes little for himself, but encourages his guests to eat and drink well, though not to excess. Towards the end of the dinner, however, the Lord turns quite pale and begins coughing violently:

"Lord Arand's silence has become conspicuous against the rain drumming on the shutters, and his skin seems to have become paler still. He breaths uneasily and begins to cough, gently at first, and then more violently, a gurgling, choking cough that shakes his shoulders and makes his mouth water. Putting one clenched fist to his mouth the Lord makes to rise, but his legs will not support him. Clynedd rushes forward clumsily, upsetting several tankards and the jug of beer, and the servants run in from the east wing. They help the Lord from his seat, and support him as he staggers from the room. At the doorway he turns towards his guests, and shakes his head apologetically as his coughs stifle his words. Blood is visible on his lower lip."



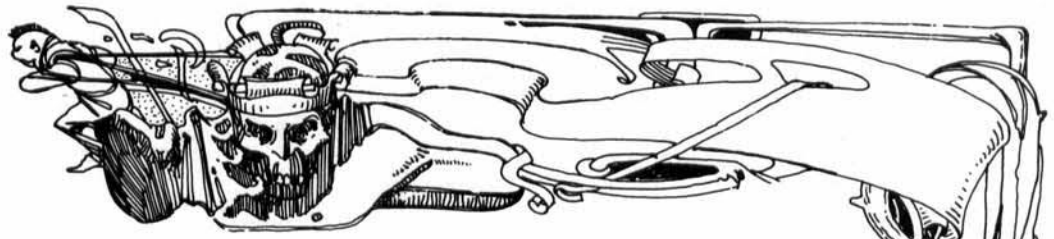
LORD ARAND Ap LLEWACH

Human, Skill 2 Fighter

STR: 7 **INT:** 12**INS:** 12 **STA:** 4**DEX:** 10 **APL:** 8**HTK:** 3 (due to enfeeblement; formerly 13)**AC:** 10**THAC0:** 24 (due to enfeeblement; formerly 19)**AL:** Lawful Good**Wpn Prof:** Broad sword, dagger**Wpns:** Broad sword, dagger**Magic Items:** Eltridd's Blade (see page 10)**Appearance:** Clearly reaching the end of his natural life, the old man is lean and weak. He walks slowly, coughs sporadically, and can no longer hold himself straight.**Personality:** Arand is angry with himself for having become so frail, and is saddened by the circumstances of Powden's return. He is actually embarrassed to be seen in such a weakened state by his guests, and tries to underplay the severity of his illness.**LORD ARAND Ap
LLEWACH****IORS (Arand's man-servant)**

Human, Skill 0

STR: 11 **INT:** 10**INS:** 10 **STA:** 12**DEX:** 10 **APL:** 9**HTK:** 5**AC:** 10**THAC0:** 20**AL:** Lawful Good**Wpn Prof:** Spear**Wpns:** Spear**Armor:** None**Appearance:** A bony, graying man in his early forties, Iors seems attentive and unflappable. He wears a simple tunic and breeches, and moves slowly around the manor with a dutiful resignation.**Personality:** Iors is dutiful but weary, and is deeply concerned for his master's health. He has no interest in the world outside, but treats guests with a quiet reserve, serving them with diligence. If a visitor treats him as an equal, however, his reserve cracks to reveal a kind heart and dry humour.**IORS**



The servants return the Lord to his bed, where Gewa begins a nervous vigil. Clynedd returns to the guests, and apologizes on his father's behalf for the sudden departure, a rudeness made acceptable, Clynedd hopes, by the circumstances. The player characters may wish to complete their meal, or may retire for the night immediately. Should any profess to be a cleric or healer skilled in dealing with illness, Clynedd would welcome their offers to examine or treat his father, but otherwise he discourages them from disturbing the old man. He says that such attacks are not uncommon and that his father merely needs peace and sleep. Nonetheless he is clearly worried and a little upset. The rain and thunder continue.

LORD ARAND'S ILLNESS

The Lord's illness is partly, but not wholly natural. He is an aging man, living in a harsh environment, and is simply becoming worn out. However, he is not naturally as frail as he is at present. He can usually walk, ride, and even fight, and his current decrepitude results from demonic influence.

Astute players may piece together information and realize that Arand's health deteriorated soon after the storms began, and magic using characters (with *Detect Magic* or similar spells) may deduce that he is suffering from the effects of a malign enchantment. Thus, spells which shield the Lord from magic or cure illness will partially restore his health. Spells such as *Cure Disease* and *Dispel Magic* temporarily improve the Lord's health (at least restoring his THAC0 and HTK to their normal levels). However, only a *Wish* spell or *Regenerate* (on his wheezing chest) will effect a full recovery.

THE SERVANTS

The servants, without exception, are completely loyal to Lord Arand and Clynedd.

The player characters may try to speak with them during their stay, but none will say anything of which their masters might disapprove. Their evasive answers should confirm what Arand and Clynedd have said, but provide no new information.

Stat boxes for each of the servants can be found on the subsequent pages.

POWDEN'S THREAT

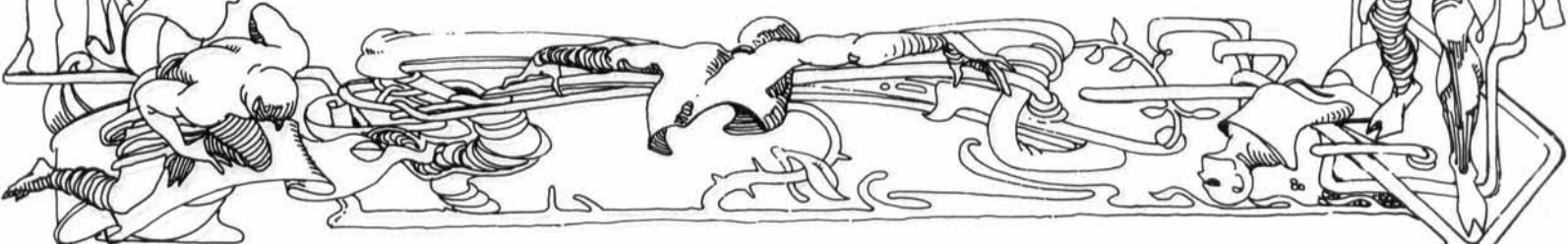
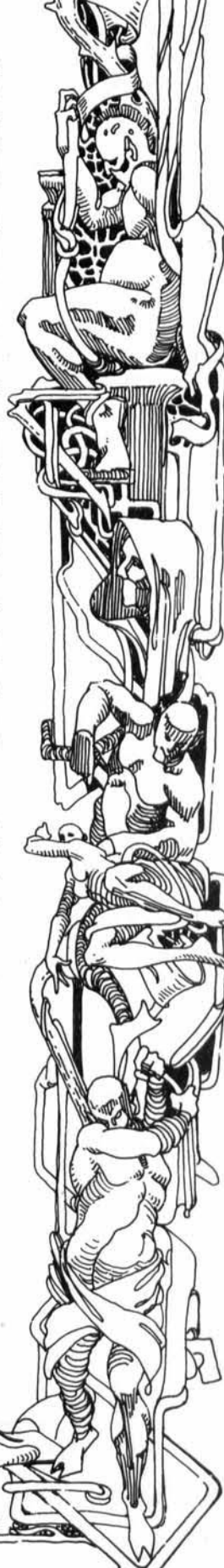
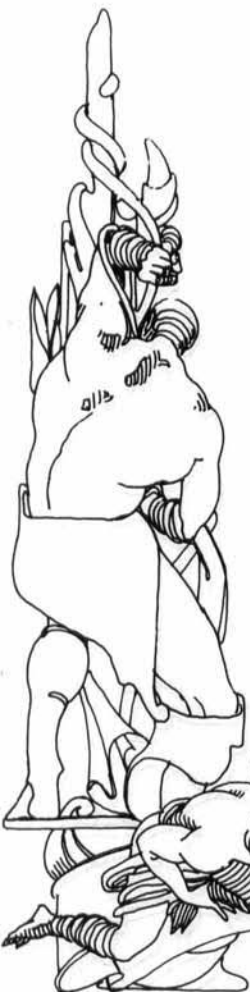
As the players' characters prepare to settle down for the night, Powden visits the hall once more, to deliver a final ultimatum to his father.

After dinner, the flustered servants lock all the doors and shutters, and bring the player characters several blankets and warm water. Clynedd bids them good night, says that he prays the weather will be fair by morning, and retires. If the characters have been obnoxious, threatening or secretive, he sets Penadd to stand guard inside the door from the Great Hall to the east wing, issuing orders that no visitors are to enter that wing. As the PCs wash and begin to settle down to sleep, Powden arrives.

"The rain continues to beat against the roof and walls, but the manor seems cosy and safe despite the chill in the air. There is a low rumble of distant thunder, and above the driving storm a voice shouts out: 'Clynedd! Clynedd!'" The man must be some yards in front of the main doors to the manor, and he shouts again, *"Clynedd, you fortunate thief, speak to me! Clynedd!"*

Within a minute Iors, Penadd and Clynedd move into the Great Hall and open one of the shutters to speak with the man. They are armed, but wear no armor. When one of the characters can see the visitor, read out the following description:

"The man sits on a weary brown horse, twenty yards from the buildings, facing towards the manor and into the gale. His



PENADD (Iors' son, Arand's stable-boy)

Human, Skill 1 Fighter

STR: 13 **INT:** 8**INS:** 8 **STA:** 14**DEX:** 13 **APL:** 7**HTK:** 6**AC:** 8**THAC0:** 20**AL:** Neutral Good**Wpn Prof:** Broadsword, spear**Wpns:** Broadsword and small shield**Armor:** Leather

Appearance: Penadd is a greasy-haired teenager, apparently awkward and gangling, but tough, supple and swift. Quite without confidence, he never looks anyone in the eye and avoids conversation whenever possible.

Personality: A deeply insecure youth, Penadd will see in the player characters, all that he wants to be, and feels that he isn't. His greatest wish would be to accompany people like the characters on their adventures, but hasn't the confidence to ask to join them. He grossly underestimates his own talents and potential.

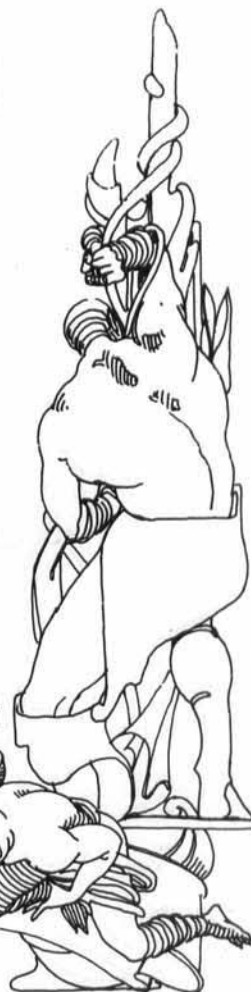
**PENADD****HRTHA** (Iors' wife)

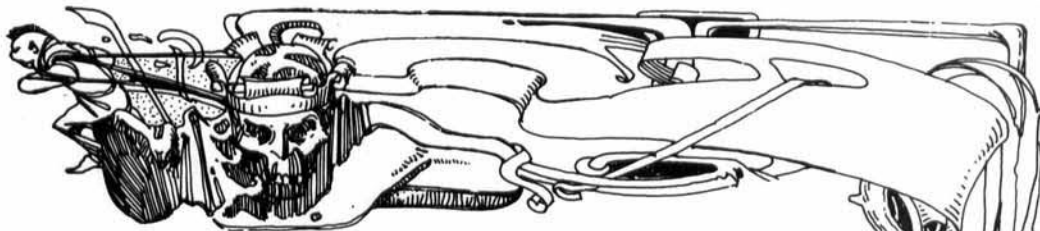
Human, Skill 0

STR: 8 **INT:** 8**INS:** 14 **STA:** 12**DEX:** 12 **APL:** 9**HTK:** 3**AC:** 10**THAC0:** 20**AL:** Lawful Good**Wpn Prof:** Kitchen knife (dagger)**Wpns:** Dagger

Appearance: A haggard, tired-looking woman, perhaps forty years old, a shapeless grey dress hangs over Hrtha's rounded shoulders. She inclines her head in deference if her masters or their guests pass or greet her.

Personality: A simple woman, Hrtha likes to know her place, and works with slavish commitment for her superiors. The player characters make her nervous, as they are strange "foreigners", and she would not presume to talk to any but the most lowly or congenial of them.

**HRTHA**



GEWA (Hrtha's sister)

Human, Skill 0

STR: 10 **INT:** 12

INS: 12 **STA:** 10

DEX: 9 **APL:** 11

HTK: 3

AC: 10

THACO: 20

AL: Lawful Good

Wpn Prof: Kitchen knife (dagger)

Wpns: Dagger

Appearance: Gewa is a slight woman, with graying rust-red hair and a nervous expression. In conversation she unflinchingly looks people in the eye, and answers questions with evident assurance.

Personality: Gewa is extremely fond of her Lord, Arand (almost in love with him) and is deeply concerned for his health. She is the most confident and forthright of the servants, and the most harsh in her criticism of Powden, whom she sees as an ungrateful traitor.



GEWA

sodden brown cloak flaps around his shins, but he sits bold and straight, a bastardsword at his side and heavy gauntlets on his hands."

Characters with exceptional night vision can see more:

"His face is pale with cold, his mouth drawn into a snarl of anger or discomfort, and his brown hood and dark hair are plastered to his brow. Water runs down his grey studded leather hauberk and trickles into his heavy boots and gauntlets. By his right hip hangs a long, hollow horn, twisted and dark."

Powden only wishes to speak with Clynedd, and in such conversations he takes the initiative, making statements and demands that Clynedd merely responds to. Unless the players' characters intervene (as they may) their exchange may proceed as follows. If the characters intervene, GMs should note that Powden occasionally and unconsciously

speaks of himself in the plural (as "we").

Powden: "*Clynedd! Our father is dying! It has been foreseen! I will have your oath before he dies!*" (He refuses to elaborate on how the death has been "foreseen".)

Clynedd: "*What would you have?*"

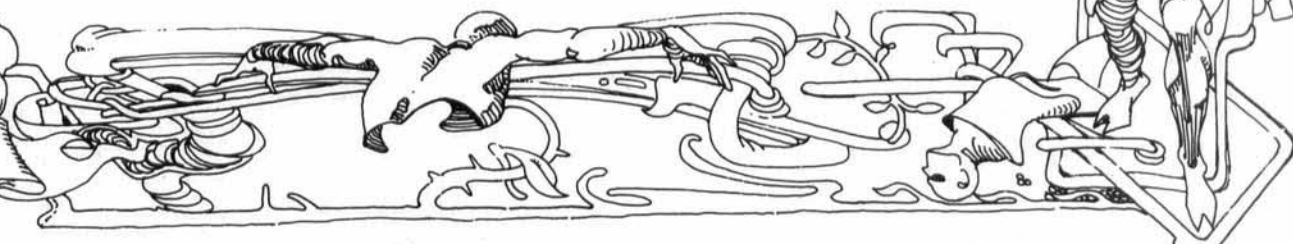
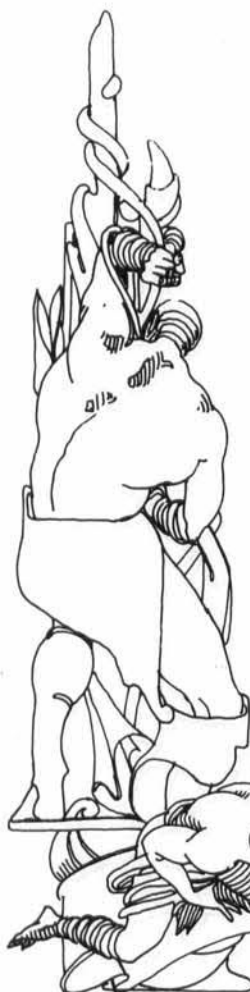
Powden: "*I want what should be mine as much as yours. I want our fathers lands on his death! What do you say!*"

Clynedd: "*Our father will leave his property as he pleases. I will not deny his right to give what is his.*"

Powden: "*You can afford to play the dutiful son, you cunning thief! Our father will give all to you! You know the custom! You took all from me as you struggled first from the womb. Now We will have it from you! Give me your oath, give me the land or I shall take it! Swear!*"

Clynedd: "*I shall respect my father.*"

Powden, (Furious): "*Be damned with our father, he is not only yours, and promise us the*



lands when he is dead!"
 Clynedd: "You'll have what is your right."
 Powden: "That's nothing!"

Clynedd does not answer, and Powden turns and gallops away, vanishing into the blinding rain. Any trying to follow him find that the rain seems almost to hamper them deliberately, always blowing into their faces whichever way they turn.

Powden voluntarily accepted the aid of a demon of the Mind, a Seducer serving Forneus. The creature has partially possessed the young noble, but prefers to leave the mortal his freedom, rather than control him. Having convinced Powden to betray his family, the demon wishes to leave the mortal free to complete his sinful vendetta.

Both Powden and Scathris, the demon possessing him, have stat boxes on page 19.

CLYNEDD'S PROPOSAL

When Powden has left, Clynedd asks the player characters for help. He is worried by Powden's words, and hopes that the characters may be able to investigate further. Clynedd asks to speak with the characters, or at least with their evident leaders. His initial offer is as follows:

"I am sorry your stay has been disturbed by our misfortunes. I am also sorry that our family squabbles have come out before strangers. I should wish to ask a favor of you, however. We are not wealthy, as you see, and cannot offer to pay any great fee. All I can offer is my gratitude. We would be obliged to you, my father and I, should you help us. We may provide hospitality, a retreat or refuge, should you need it, and I myself am not unable to fight should you ever require my assistance.

"My brother threatens my father and myself. I am afraid that he may be quite capable of cold murder. He threatens to disregard the law and take the estate by

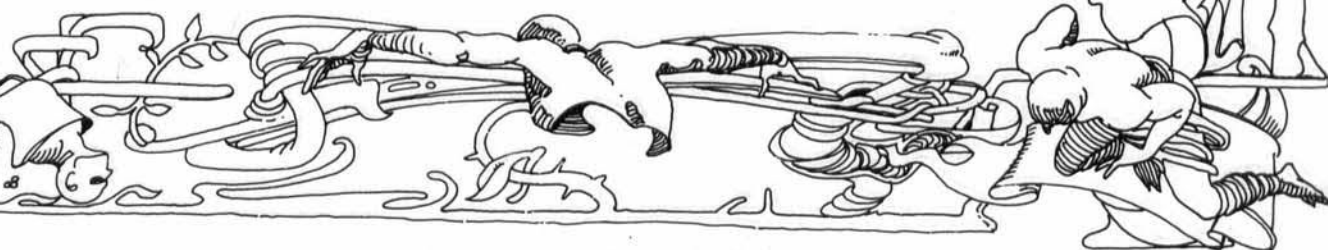
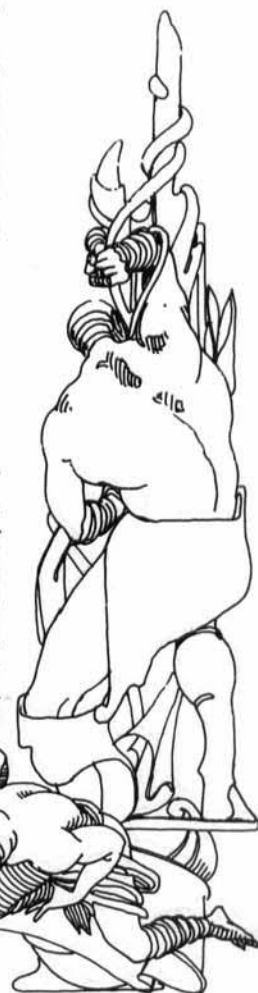
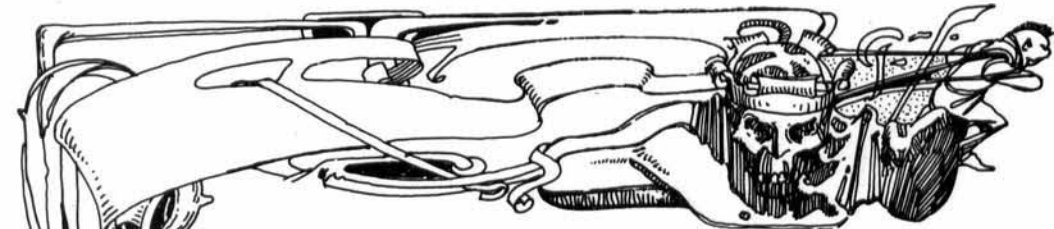
force. As well as for this household I fear also for the tenants, the peasants, who would suffer if war or banditry came to our lands. I would ask that you look for Powden. Find out what he is doing, who foretold my father's death, and if anyone helps him. Frighten him off, or reason with him, though he is my brother still and I would not wish him injured. I shall stay here, to guard my home, in case he should return while you are gone. Would you do this thing for us?"

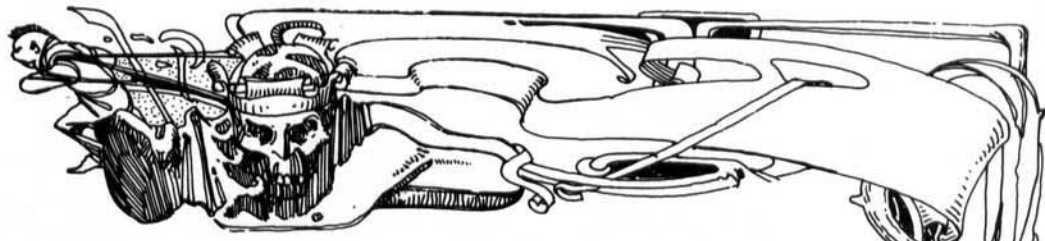
Clynedd is deeply worried for his father, and also for himself, and while he is not Lord of the estate he is willing to ask the characters' aid without his father's permission. Still, he cannot offer the characters much money, certainly no more than 1,000 gp in total, and is loathe to part with any of the family's meagre savings. He would look for Powden himself, but is unwilling to leave his father.

He will answer the characters' questions as well as he can. There are few places to shelter from the storm in these mountains. Clynedd knows of no caves, and the only buildings are the huts and barns of the tenant shepherds, to which he can give directions. Powden and Lord Arand fell out over the issue of the estate's inheritance, Powden demanding half and his father refusing, and no one knows where the prodigal went after their argument. The only other local landmarks are the graveyard and a great rock called The Spire (both outlined on page 17).

SEARCHING AMONGST THE SHEPHERDS

The following morning, the player characters set out to investigate Powden's appearance. Their most obvious course of action is to speak with the nearby shepherds. There are half a dozen who can be visited by the group in one day, the journey between each taking at least one hour, and GMs may wish to play their visits through in detail or





skim through the five which are relatively unimportant. A heavy drizzle, punctuated by occasional lightning, falls throughout the day.

Dyffes

The shepherd closest to the hall is Dyffes, an elderly widower who lives alone. As the characters approach his shack, they see him on the hillside above:

"A short, thin figure sits at the foot of a small cliff, wrapping a sheepskin blanket around himself. Below him, a score of miserable sheep tear at the wiry grass or cower from the rain beneath thorn bushes."

Dyffes has not seen Powden. He is not used to conversation and is wary of strangers, if possible answering all questions with a simple "Aye" (yes) or "Nay" (no).

Llaws

The next shepherd is Llaws, a wealthier, younger man with a growing family. The characters approach:

"a sturdy two-room cottage of stone and slate, flanked by a low stone barn which smells strongly of sheep. A small chicken-coop and well stand next to the house, and smoke rises from the chimney."

Llaws opens the door warily when the group knocks, his matronly wife hovering in the background. He knows as little as Dyffes, but is more communicative. He is worried and saddened by ill news of Lord Arand, and, having taken an interest in the affairs of his Lord, can confirm that Clynedd is telling the truth about Powden's departure. He may invite the players' characters into his home and offer them warm beer or broth, but if they seem particularly shifty or brutish he is happy for them to stay outside in the rain.

Garedd

Their third visit is to the young widower Garedd, a sad young man whose adored wife died in childbirth a year ago.

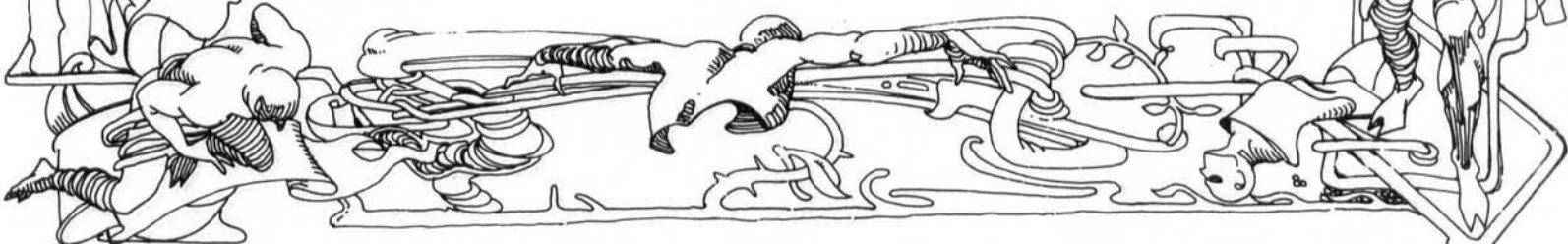
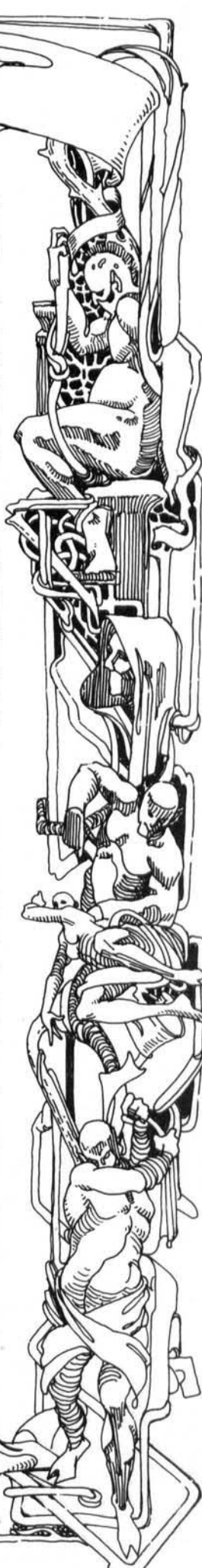
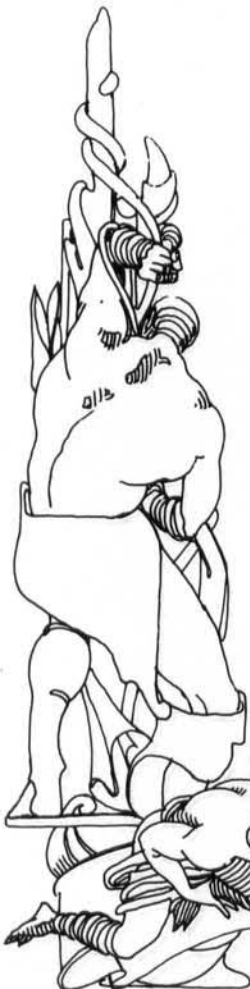
"A long, low stone building stands built against a tall cliff. The front door stands ajar, and no smoke rises from the chimney. Several sheep stray freely in front of the house."

Drawing closer, perceptive characters may note fresh hoof prints in the mud outside the door (those with Tracking proficiency can identify them as belonging to a horse which left at a canter about an hour before.) Inside Garedd's home, the following scene greets the characters:

"The house is cold and dim, no fires or torches burning, and sheep wander freely between rooms. One dozes on a pile of blankets, another lies under a table, a third steals porridge-oats from a sack. In the main living room a young man lies sprawled across a bed. He has broad shoulders and glazed eyes, and blood has dried brown around his mouth. A young girl, perhaps three years old, lies with her head on his stomach, sobbing weakly."

Garedd has been dead for three days. Powden arrived a week ago and accepted his hospitality while planning to attack his family, but he stabbed the shepherd for threatening to tell Lord Arand of his presence. He suddenly took his horse and fled an hour ago, for no evident reason (actually alerted by Scathris to the characters' approach). The girl, Lynell, has been sobbing ever since, and has not eaten. She is tired, shocked, hungry and dehydrated. She does not speak.

The players' characters may attempt to follow Powden's trail, but the heavy rain and rocky terrain make this difficult, and they have no real chance of catching up with him. Occasionally they may glimpse his silhouette as he rides along a high ridge, far above them, or they may see him in the distance as he canters away. He is trying to avoid them, and from his meandering tracks it is clear that he is not going anywhere in particular. On the contrary, he intends to stay in the vicinity.



Alternatively, the PCs may continue on to visit the remaining three shepherds.

Deuogg

The next shepherd is Deuogg, who lives with his wife Madadd and their three children.

"A large cottage and an adjoining barn stand in a sheltered valley. A thin trail of smoke rises from the chimney, and the windows' shutters are closed."

The couple readily invite their visitors in, offer them lunch and are eager to speak with travellers who may bring rumors and news from other lands. However, when told about Lord Arand's illness they become saddened and subdued, and if told of Garedd's death they are shocked almost into silence. They are kind people, and could easily be persuaded to take young Lynell into their home.

Brall

The fifth shepherd is Brall, a large, overweight man.

"A low cottage stands on a hillside, pens and shelters for the sheep scattered around it. Nearer to you, a girl in her early teens rubs her arms and stamps her feet for warmth as she watches the sheep graze around her."

The girl, Panedda, is Brall's daughter, and has a large bruise on one cheek, which she refuses to discuss. She escorts the characters to the hut, where the shepherd will give them a hostile reception. He is rude, defensive and brash, but he hides no relevant secrets. His wife and younger son sit passively in one corner. Brall knows that Powden was in the area a week ago, since the young noble asked for his hospitality. Brall turned Powden away and has not seen him since. News of Garedd's death only frightens him and makes him more belligerently defensive.

Lowrill and Beuca

Lastly, two sisters, Lowrill and Beuca, herd three dozen sheep overlooking the pass to the west of the hall.

"A large cottage stands on a gentle slope by a stream above the pass. Smoke trails from an opening in the roof."

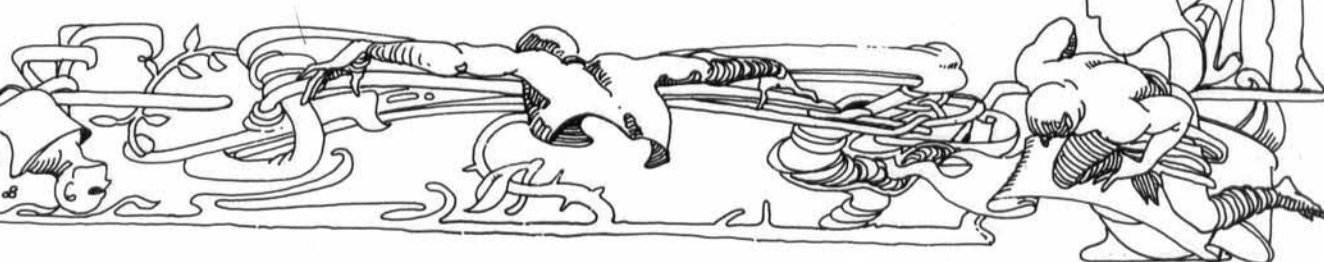
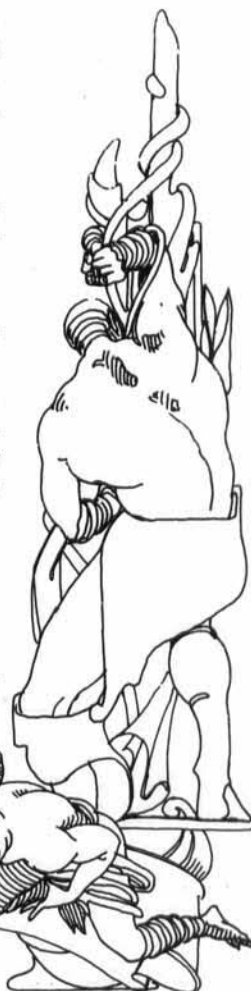
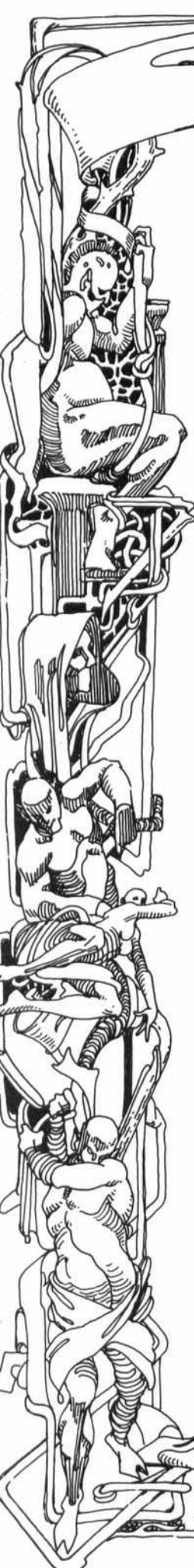
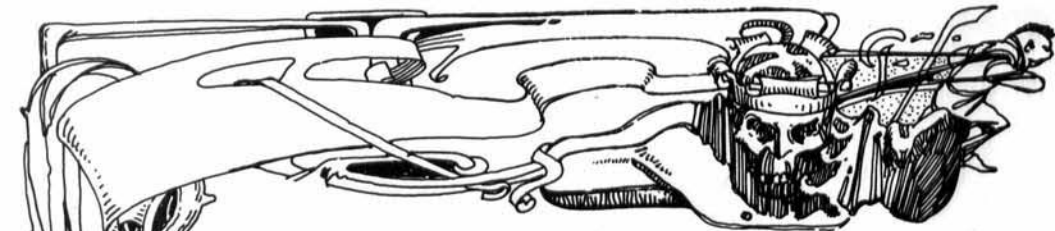
The two know nothing of Powden. However, Beuca was enamored of Garedd and bursts into tears if his death is mentioned. Lowrill is less distressed, but is concerned for their safety, and questions the characters astutely and sensitively. The sisters would also be willing to take Lynell in.

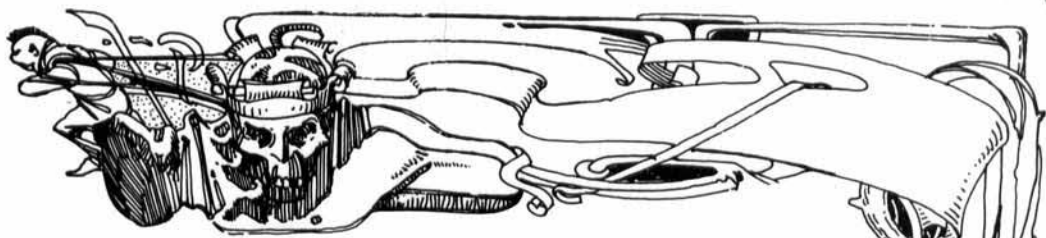
THE GRAVEYARD

As well as speaking with the shepherds, the players' characters may wish to investigate other local features. There are only two notable landmarks, the graveyard to the south-east of the hall, and The Spire (below). It should take an hour to reach the graveyard from the hall, and from here they might continue on to visit the nearby shepherds. In describing the graveyard, GMs may wish to read the following passage to their players:

"Nestled between two low mountains, a shallow stream meanders through a soft valley. Low mounds litter the streams' banks, some barely covered in grass, bearing rotting wooden grave markers, others sprouting thick thistles and heather, a few markers are worn away with time and are barely visible. At the edges of the valley, overlooking the lesser graves, a few tombs are covered in piles of stones. In the midst of these mounds, a small stone hut has been built, though the northern wall has collapsed inwards and the roof has fallen on top of this rubble."

This area has been used to bury the dead for generations, due to the relative ease of





digging the ground here. Still, the graves are not deep (rarely more than three feet), and the noble stone-covered tombs around the edges are shallower still. A careful examination of the sight yields two important clues.

Firstly, all of the lesser graves have been tampered with. Along the top of each grave, the grass and plants are withered and browned, and a slight acrid scent clings to the earth. If a grave is excavated, it becomes apparent that a yellowish liquid has been poured onto the graves, and this potion has now worked its way down through the earth to reach the corpses beneath. At least forty graves have been defiled in this way, and it would take several hours for a suitable cleric to reconsecrate the graves. Magics to ensure the peaceful rest of a body, or to counter malign spells, may be cast. (This would prevent these bodies from rising to help Powden (see below). Dismembering the corpses would be equally effective.)

Secondly, the stone building was a shrine, and the wall has been toppled recently, probably by the north wind which has blown so fiercely of late. Beneath the rubble are the remains of a fire, traces of ash still present despite the recent rains, in which all the shrine's wooden idols and accoutrements seem to have been burned. All of the stone or metal trappings have been broken, too, either by the falling wall or perhaps by whoever lit the fire.

THE SPIRE

To the north of the hall stands a rock called The Spire, which Clynedd would mention to the characters if they inquire about local oddities. They must walk for half an hour to get a good view of this landmark, and it takes another half hour to clamber up the hillside to reach it. GMs may wish to describe this rock using the following passage:

"The Spire is a cracked rock pillar, thrusting from a jagged ridge. All around it

harsh grey spikes and boulders protrude from the ground, but this is by far the largest of them, reaching nearly one hundred feet above the ridge and eight hundred feet from the valley below."

The Spire is a red herring, a distraction which may worry the players but has no bearing upon the plot. From here it takes one hour for the players' characters to journey to visit a nearby shepherd.

THE SECOND EVENING

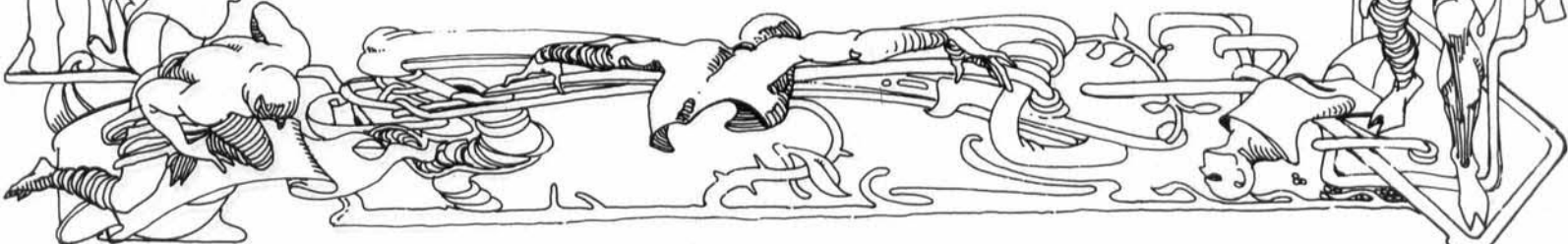
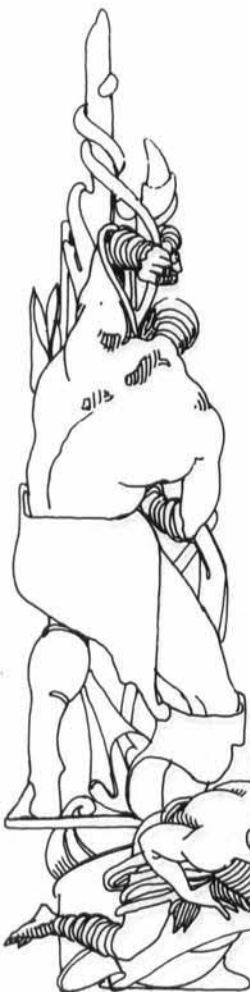
After investigating the area, the player characters return to the hall, tired and soaked through. GMs may wish to read the following passage to the players:

"The rain is growing harder, and the wind blowing more forcefully against you as you climb the hill up to the hall. Penadd stands guard at the one unshuttered window, clutching a spear, and watches you approach uncertainly. As you draw closer he recognizes you, and goes to unbolt the main door.

"Inside, the hall is still and warm, a crackling fire spitting in the hearth. Your sodden clothes cling to your bodies and hang heavy with water."

The PCs are likely to change and warm themselves in front of the fire before dinner. Anyone not changing out of their soaked clothing this evening must make a successful Stamina check or contract a chill (shivers, sneezes, lethargy, etc.), but any clothes given to the servants the night before are now dry. Characters who wore iron, steel or leather armor should spend some time drying, oiling and polishing their arms.

Dinner is a somber, informal affair. The weather is growing worse outside. Lord Arand can barely stand now, and Clynedd is clearly



worried. He is disturbed and saddened by news of Garedd's death, and shocked that even his brother could be so cruel. "He has changed much for the worse," he may remark. "His anger has festered." He is also deeply disturbed by news of the graveyard's desecration, though he is equally shocked if the characters have deliberately damaged the bodies. Throughout the meal Penadd stands guard in the hall.

After dinner Clynedd retires for the night, sitting by his father for an hour before going to bed. Iors replaces Penadd on guard in the hall, bars the shutters and checks that all of the doors are secure.

THE ATTACK

As the night goes by, the storm becomes fiercer, and soon after midnight, it is howling around the hall. At this point Powden attacks, assisted by numerous undead (minus any which the characters have put to rest or dismembered). In any case, Powden will be supported by at least one undead per person at the manor. These bodies, perhaps, were raised from scattered or unmarked graves, revealed to Powden by his demonic allies.

There is a sense of foreboding in the air and a 40% chance that each of the players' characters are awake. GMs should read the following passage to these players:

"It is long after midnight, and though your limbs feel heavy and tired, sleep seems impossible. The storm blows harder than ever and the winds roar around the outside of the buildings. The sound is so loud that only the deepest rolls of thunder can be heard above it. Rain crashes against the building. The horses whinny and shift uneasily in their stalls.

"Then there is a creaking from the stables, the sound of wood straining, and suddenly there is a loud crack from the Great Hall as a pair of shutters is torn from a window. From in front of the manor a deep

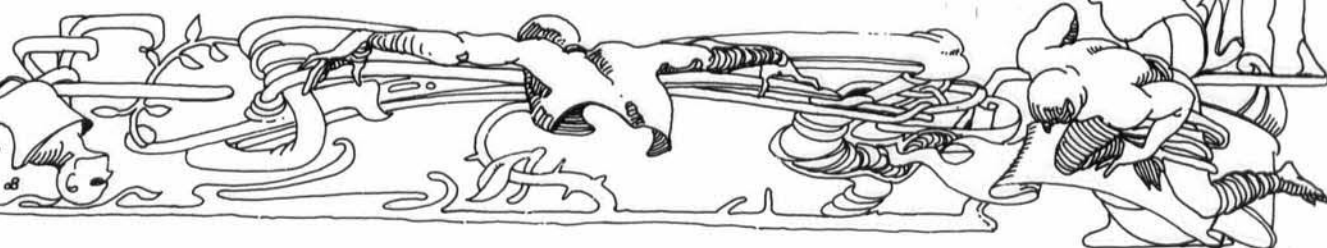
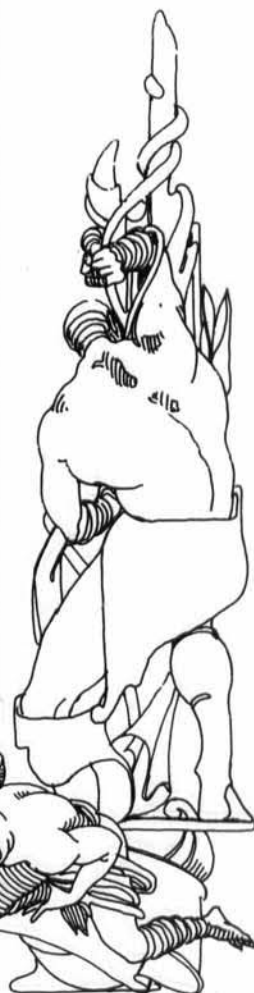
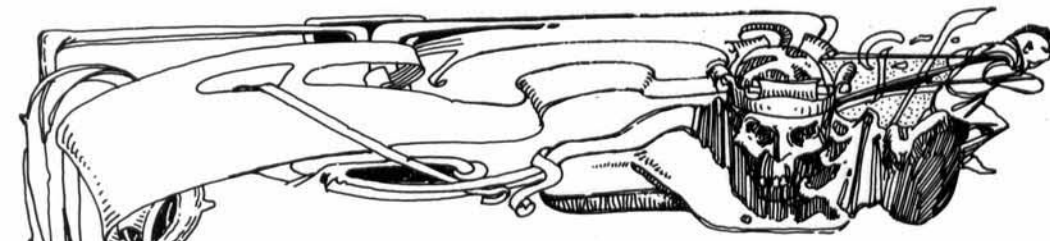
boom resounds, midway between the sound of a horn and a hollow drum, mixing with fresh peels of thunder and the howling of the wind.

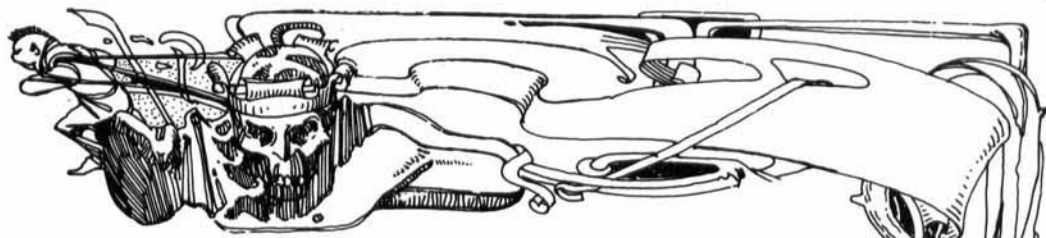
"The storm bellows even more loudly than before, and the whole building seems to sway a little, as the stable door bursts open, splintering and smashing back against the wall. Two tiles above your head are ripped loose and clatter across the roof and into the night, as the wooden bar holding the front door breaks with a crash and the door blows from its hinges."

From here on the events will largely depend upon the players' characters. Powden attacks as soon as the doors are open, charging from the lashing rain and in through the main entrance of the manor. If the characters have not prevented the bodies from rising as undead he will have many of these with him. GMs should decide how many undead are present depending upon the strength of the party, ensuring that the players' characters receive a considerable battering but suffer no fatalities. Total the skill levels of the entire party, divide by four and make the results the number of undead that are with Powden. The minimum should be 2 per player, and there should be no more than thirty five.

Powden's goal is to storm the hall and seize the sword, killing his father, brother, and ideally any other witnesses (such as the servants and players' characters). Should his assault upon the Great Hall be blocked, the winds tear open the doors to the kitchen and he leads a second assault through there. Throughout the attack the winds act to aid Powden, flinging tiles and masonry at enemies, blowing doors and windows open. If necessary, the winds might even blow open the trap door from the stables or breach the north wall of the east wing to enable his undead to attack from these directions too.

Clynedd fights valiantly to defend his home, but is obsessed by his duty to defend his father. Should any new threat to his father emerge, he will immediately break away from any current combat and rushes to

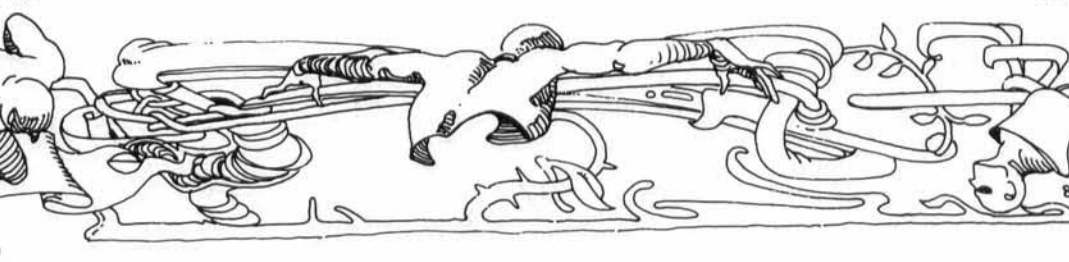
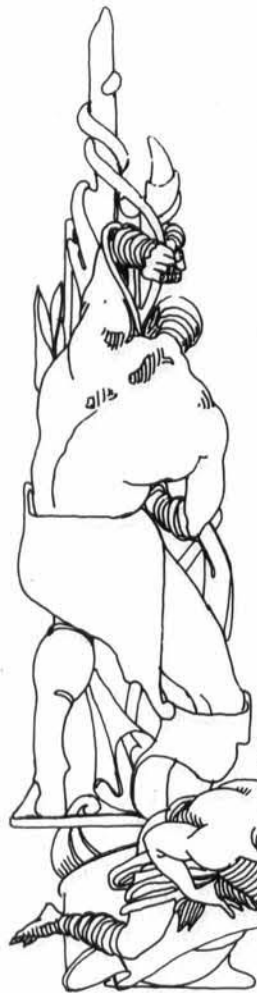


**POWDEN Ap ARAND**

Human, Skill 2 Fighter

STR: 14 **INT:** 10**INS:** 11 **STA:** 15**DEX:** 11 **APL:** 10**HTK:** 16**AC:** 7**THAC0:** 19**AL:** Chaotic Neutral**Wpn Prof:** Bastard sword (two hands), broad sword, dagger**Wpns:** Bastard sword, dagger**Armor:** Studded leather**Magic Items:** The Black Horn: the remnants of the undead raising potion (see The Graveyard, below).**Appearance:** Powden is an emaciated man, with short brown hair and a permanent scowl. His clothes are ragged, grey with use and age. His speech is abrupt and always aggressive, and he often refers to himself in the plural, as "we", quite unconsciously.**Personality:** Powden is a bitter, miserable man, twisted by his sense of resentment. He has grown to hate his brother, who inherits the lands before him, and his father, who will not give him a share of the estate. He is unfriendly, short tempered and erratic, no longer being fully in control of his own actions.**POWDEN Ap ARAND****SCATHRIS**

Seducer of the third Canto

STR: 13 **INT:** 17**INS:** 12 **STA:** 15**DEX:** 11 **APL:** 9**HTK:** 16**AC:** 7**THAC0:** 17**AL:** Chaotic Evil**Damage:** 1D4+2 damage with dagger (backstab dagger X2)**Powers:** Through Powden's body, the demon may cast Charm Person once per day, and Spook once per day. The spells take effect as if Powden had cast the magics himself.**Appearance:** At present, Scathris occupies Powden's body. If Powden abandons his vendetta, Scathris takes control of his body and will fight until slain to recover Eltridd's Blade. If Powden dies, a thin grey smoke rises from his mouth, ears and nostrils, as Scathris returns briefly to the Infernus.**Personality:** Seductive. However, in this adventure Scathris does not speak. It is content to sit back and let Powden betray his family, only possessing the noble if that is the only way to gain the sword.**Note:** (GMs wishing to run the next scenario may wish to write down some of the phrases spoken or heard by Powden. Scathris reappears in the sequel, and may wish to quote such phrases to give hints to the player characters.)**SCATHRIS**

protect Lord Arand.

If Powden has few undead to command, his attack will involve a mad dash to his father's chambers, hoping to dispatch him and grab the sword before the characters can intervene. However, it is likely that both Clynedd and the party will be able to intercept him either before or soon after he reaches Lord Arand's chambers.

SLATES AND MASONRY

As the fight progresses, large sections of the roof are torn away, and blocks of stone fall from the walls. Slates and stones tumble largely at random, although the demonic forces behind the storm can guide their flight to a limited degree. Powden is never struck by this debris.

Anyone standing within three yards of a wall, on the upper floor, has a 10%

chance of being struck by a lump of falling stone or wood. Each piece does 2D4 damage, and the undead are just as likely to be struck as anyone else.

Most of the roof slates blow off into the night, but each turn, for every player character on the upper floor of the manor, a slate strikes one of the combatants. (If there are three player characters on the upper floor, three tiles inflict damage. If four characters, then four slates, etc.) Roll, randomly, to determine who is struck, player characters, the manor's inhabitants and the undead are all possible victims. Each slate inflicts 1D4 damage.

ELTRIDD'S BLADE

Lord Arand's sword appears to be a battered heirloom, with a tarnished bronze guard and pommel, and a worn leather grip. But the blade, when drawn from the tatty

THE UNDEAD

STR: 7

INT: 4

INS: 2

STA: 9

DEX: 8

APL: 0

HTK: 4

AC: 7

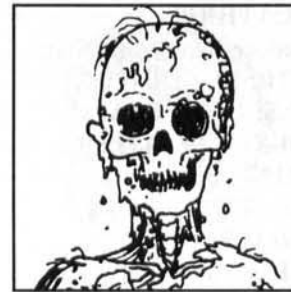
THAC0: 20

Weapons: Club

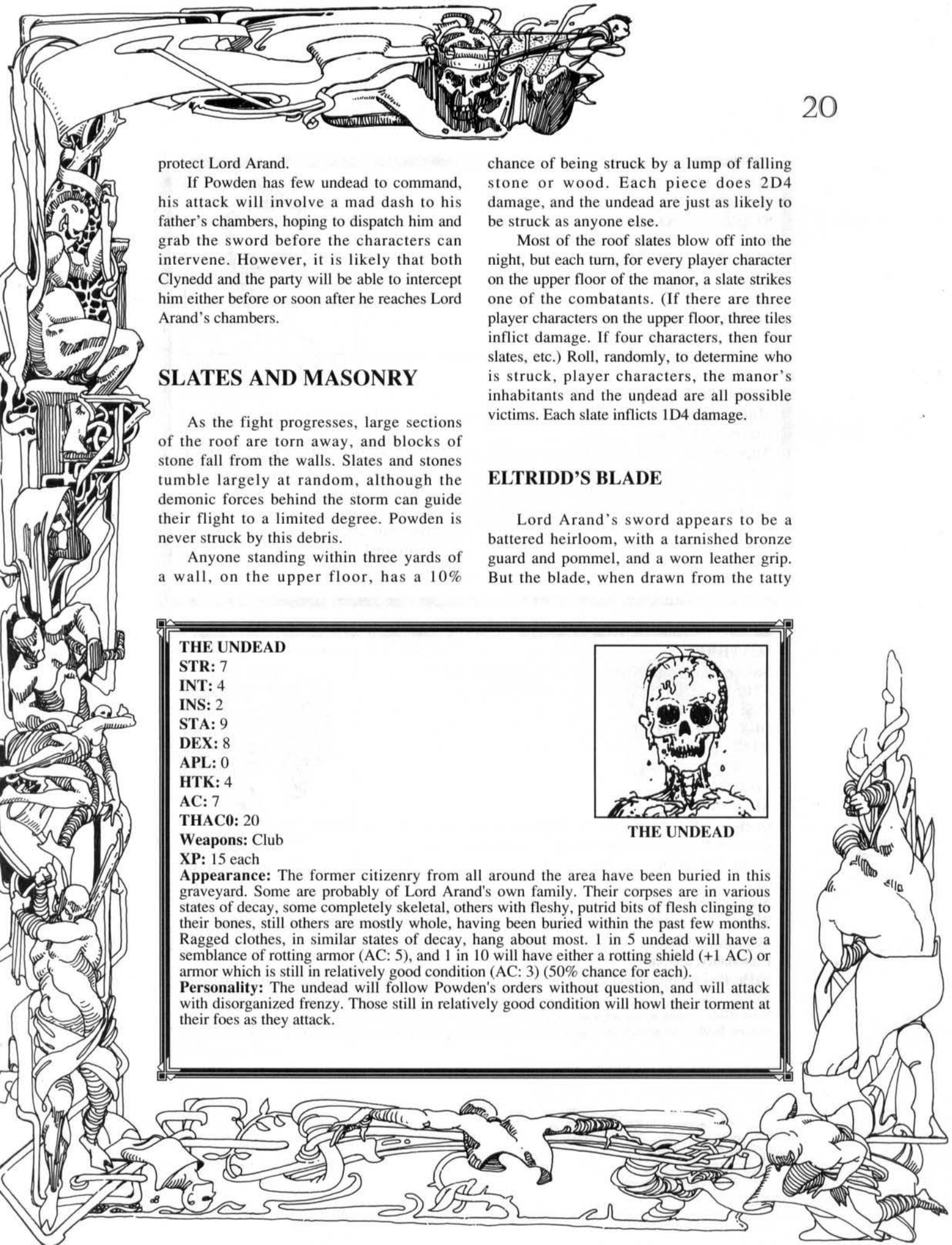
XP: 15 each

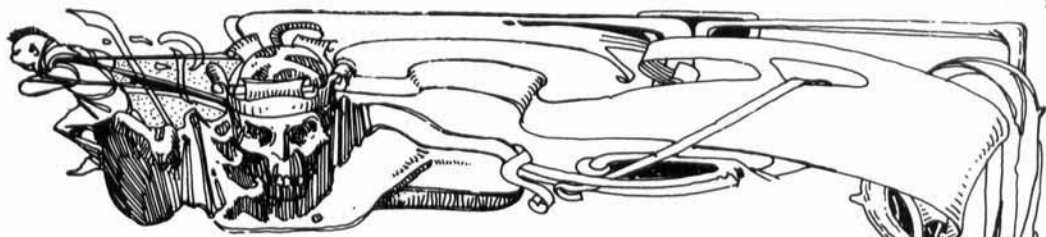
Appearance: The former citizenry from all around the area have been buried in this graveyard. Some are probably of Lord Arand's own family. Their corpses are in various states of decay, some completely skeletal, others with fleshy, putrid bits of flesh clinging to their bones, still others are mostly whole, having been buried within the past few months. Ragged clothes, in similar states of decay, hang about most. 1 in 5 undead will have a semblance of rotting armor (AC: 5), and 1 in 10 will have either a rotting shield (+1 AC) or armor which is still in relatively good condition (AC: 3) (50% chance for each).

Personality: The undead will follow Powden's orders without question, and will attack with disorganized frenzy. Those still in relatively good condition will howl their torment at their foes as they attack.



THE UNDEAD





scabbard, glitters brightly. Its smooth surface reflects its surroundings like a mirror, but occasionally fleeting glimpses of other scenes, battles, armies and journeys, may be glimpsed amongst the reflections.

The sword is usually, a +1 broad sword. However, against demons it acts as a +3 weapon (+2 against half-demons), and gives its wielder a +3 bonus on all saving throws against demonic magic, temptation, possession and attacks.

The images in the blade are "reflections" of battles in which the sword has been used to fight the forces of the Infernus. If the characters remove it from the manor (which is unlikely) they may one day catch glimpses of this battle in the blade.

The weapon is not the most powerful weapon ever forged to fight demons, but it is a notable artifact. It would certainly be a worthy prize for the player characters, and the forces of the Infernus would be pleased to remove it from mortal hands.

THE DEMON'S ARRIVAL

When the attack commenced, a deep bellow sounded, "sounding midway between a horn and a hollow drum." This sound was Powden calling for the aid of a demon.

Forneus had said that this Warrior would aid Powden. But true to form, the duke betrays its promise. The creature is sent from the Infernus in response to Powden's call, but too late to help him. When Powden dies, or when the last of the undead falls, if Powden is captured or persuaded to cease his vendetta, the creature dives down and perches for a moment on the top of the walls. It is then that a player character will spot the beast.

"Crouched on the crumbling walls above you, a great shadow sways in the gale. Larger than a man and winged like a vast bat. It glares back at you, and hesitates for a slow second. Then it swoops."

KANDARASCH (The demon)

Falshan (type 3 demon)

STR: 16 **INT:** 11

INS: 7 **STA:** 18

DEX: 15 **APL:** 1

AL: Chaotic Evil

AC: 0 **HTK:** 40

THAC0: 13

No. of Attacks: 3 (claw/claw/fork)

Damage: 1-8 (claw); 3-18 (fork)

Spec. Defense: +2 or better weapon to hit

Special Abilities: May breathe fire, 2" long cone (2-20 damage). May track by smell, as a Skill 12 Ranger.

Movement: 12" land/ 20" air **Magic Tolerance:** None

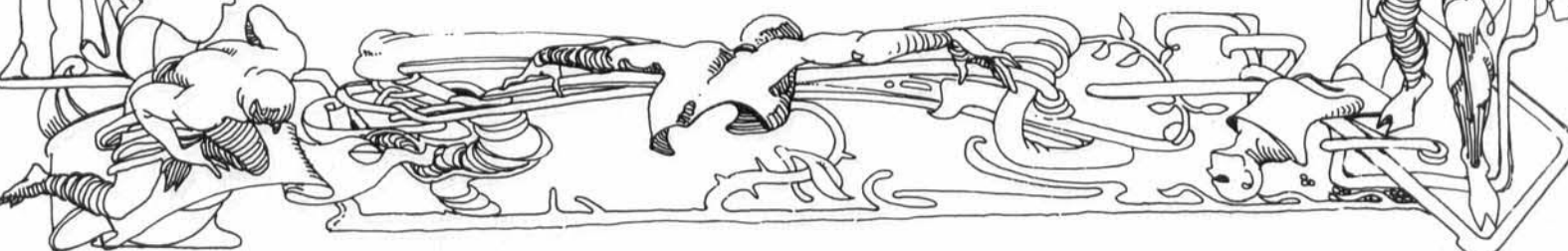
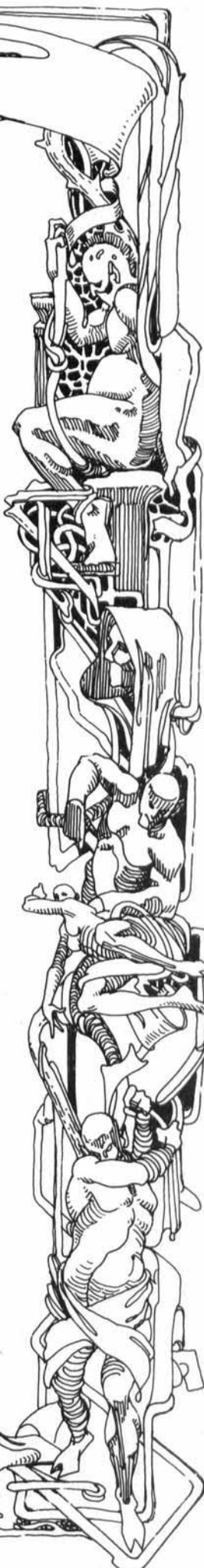
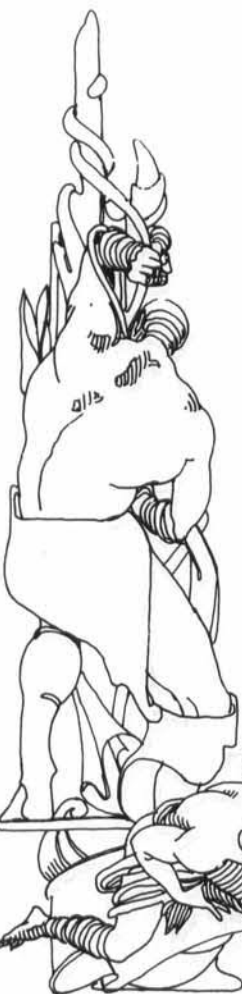
Size: M **XP Award:** 1,400

Appearance: A large winged demon, nearly seven feet tall, with powerful clawed feet and a vicious fork in its hands. The creature has dark wings, half feathered and half scaled, a hooked snout, and a thick, wrinkled hide.

Personality: Bestial, arrogant and obnoxious. The creature is much given to bellowing about its strength and achievements, but will not permit such indulgences to interfere with its fighting.



KANDARASCH



The demon's sole concern is to seize the sword. It can sense magic, but not the sword specifically, and will ravage the manor in its search. It will attack any character who has some magical artifact or spell cast upon him, unless the character is obviously not carrying the weapon. The demon will attempt to evade other characters, but it is certainly not afraid of them. It believes that it could, if it wished, destroy them all (and it may be right).

The demon is only sidetracked by one thing. If it kills any opponent, it will pause to rip the victim's head off, splintering the skull with its teeth and scooping the brain out with its multiple tongues. After one round, the brain has been devoured, along with a portion of the victim's soul, and it is ready to continue.

Once it grabs the sword, the demon launches itself into the air and vanishes into the blackest of the billowing clouds, returning to the Infernus. If the player characters flee with the blade, it will pursue them. Otherwise, it continues to sack the building until it is killed, finds what it wants, or until dawn.

Player characters hoping to defeat this creature must be very tough, or very lucky, or both. Using Eltridd's Blade against it may be their only hope.

THE BLACK HORN

The horn seen earlier at Powden's side is a battle-horn which, when blown, is heard by the duke of betrayal, Forneus. The demon lord may then focus upon the horn's location and gate in whatever thralls it wishes, with whatever orders it cares to give them.



The Black Horn

After the attack the horn may be found hung from Powden's saddle, although the player characters are unlikely to have a use for it. If Forneus did choose to send any underlings in response to their call, which is unlikely, its thralls would probably be hostile to the characters. The characters may therefore find this item more a curse than a boon. Many thaumaturgists and cultists might be interesting in regaining it, and inquisitors and slayers might become suspicious of anyone owning such an object.

Physically, the horn is two feet long, slightly curved, and dark grey, being rather cold to the touch and always damp. It is slung from a frayed leather strap.

THE AFTERMATH

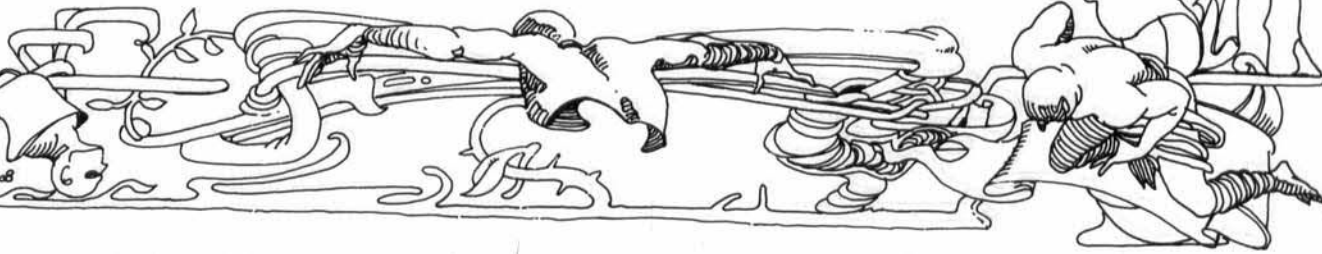
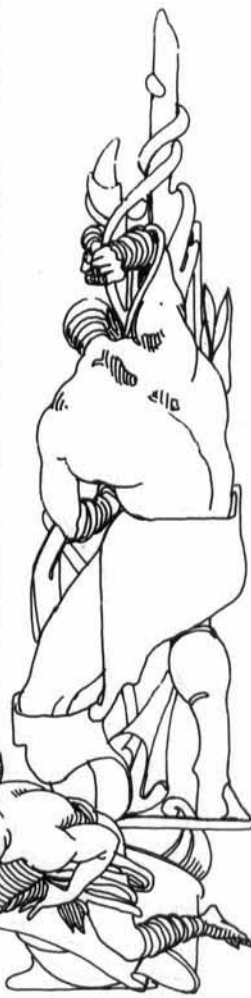
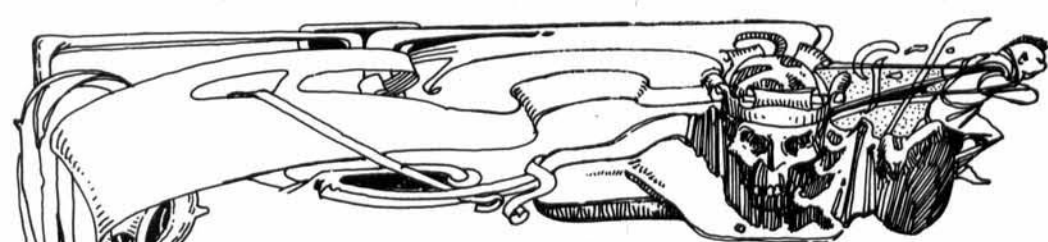
The storm howls until nearly dawn, when the rain ceases and the wind calms. As the sun rises, the clouds thin, and a cold blue sky emerges.

The characters have probably gained little save for the undying gratitude of Clynedd and his household. If the PCs seem unsatisfied, he will offer 1,000 gp in gratitude. Though a number of circumstances, the party might have possession of the Eltridd's Blade as well.

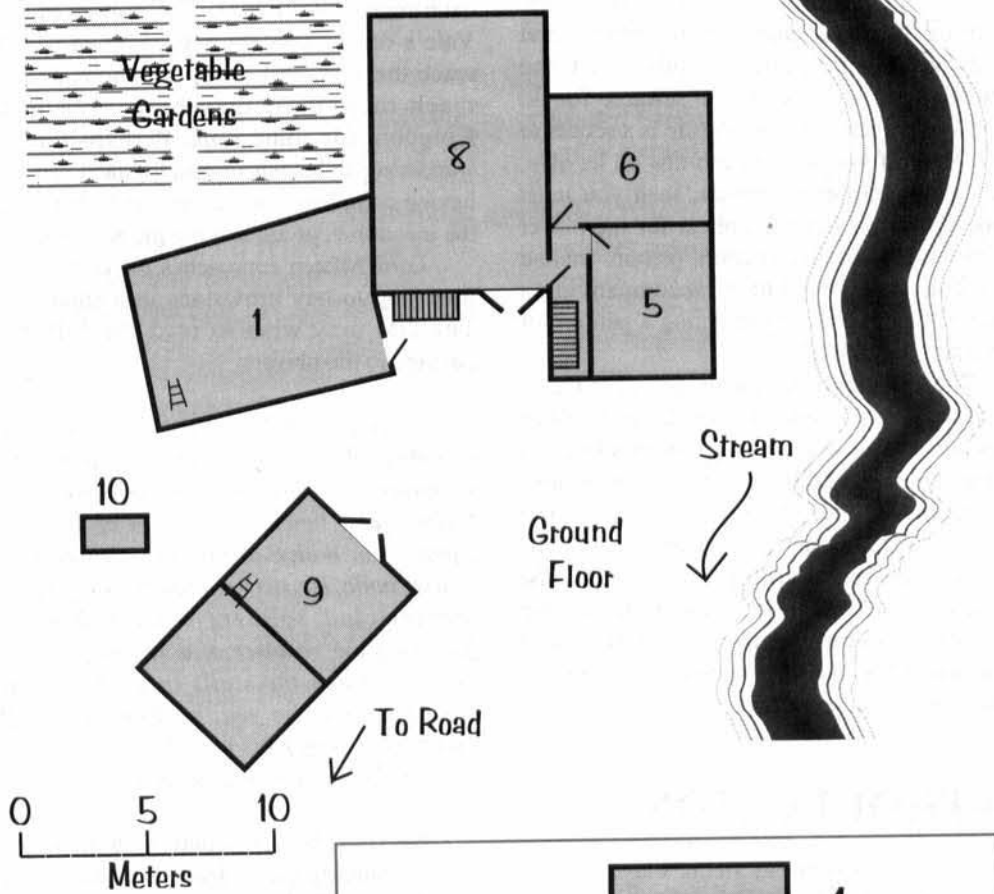
Powden will either have lost his life, or his family. Some of the servants may be injured, and are now, perhaps bleeding and helpless, reliant upon the characters.

The manor has no roof, broken walls and smashed floorboards. The barn has collapsed, killing or injuring some animals and trapping others in the wreckage. The chicken coop has blown away completely, leaving scattering chicken corpses across the hillside where it eventually smashed. The bodies of the undead litter the site, and need to be reburied.

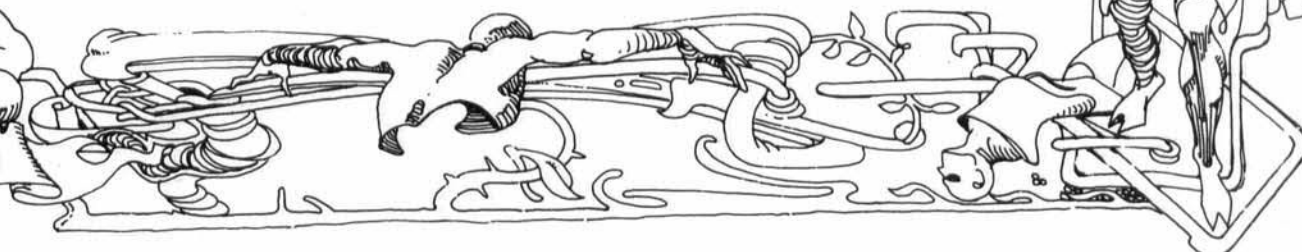
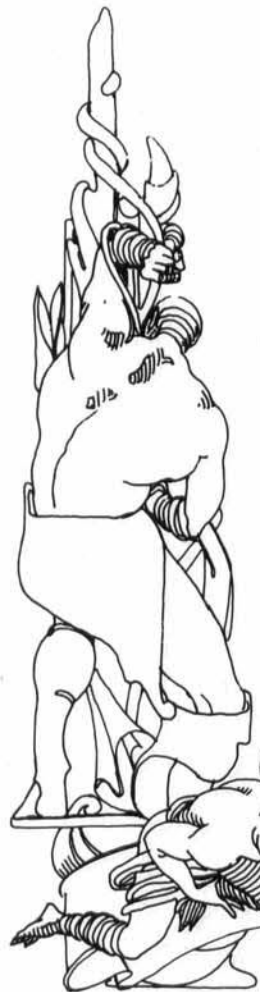
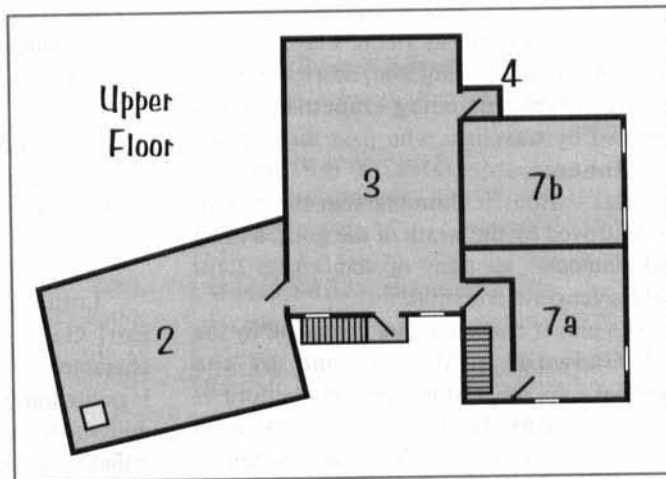
The local herdsmen have probably had their own dwellings damaged, barns flattened and animals scattered, and have no time to help the Lord or the player characters at the manor.



Ilech Manor



Map Key	
	Ladder
	Door
	Stairs
	Trap Door
	Window





THE COURT OF EORL GADWULF

This is an investigative adventure, requiring the player characters to decipher and thwart a demonic plot. It requires tact and patience, and so may not be suitable for all groups of players. This adventure is a sequel to *Ilech Vale*. If you wish to run this on its own, without the earlier adventure, then you must come up with a suitable pretext for the player characters' attendance at court, perhaps invited by a concerned inhabitant, accompanying a political delegation, or presenting a petition of some sort to the Eorl.

The information here is presented in a form different from that in the preceding adventure. The court has many inhabitants, and innumerable different situations may arise during the course of play. Thus, after the introductory encounters, there are no sections of text to be read to the players. GMs must improvise throughout this adventure, setting the scene, evoking the atmosphere and controlling the plot in response to the player characters' actions.

INTRODUCTION

After the events at *Ilech Vale*, rumors spread through the Kingdom, stories told by the local shepherds being embellished and recounted by travellers who pass through the area. Innumerable tales of the disaster circulate, variously claiming that the Manor was destroyed by the wrath of the gods, a great wind elemental, an army of demons, or Lord Arand's vengeful ancestors.

The player characters are contacted by the Eorl Gadwulf Elthswain, one of the Kingdom's six greatest nobles and overlord of the borderlands. He wishes to know what really happened at *Ilech Vale*, and sends an advisor, Lord Alfsten, to summon them to

him. The Eorl expects the characters to come to his castle to speak to him. He is not in the habit of chasing around after commoners to woo them for information.

Exactly when the player characters are approached by Lord Alfsten must be determined by the GM. The rumors of *Ilech Vale's* destruction take at least one week to reach the Eorl, and so his summons does not reach them until they have been in the Kingdom for some time. Perhaps they are wandering in search of employment, possibly having completed an unconnected adventure in the meantime, or are leaving the Kingdom.

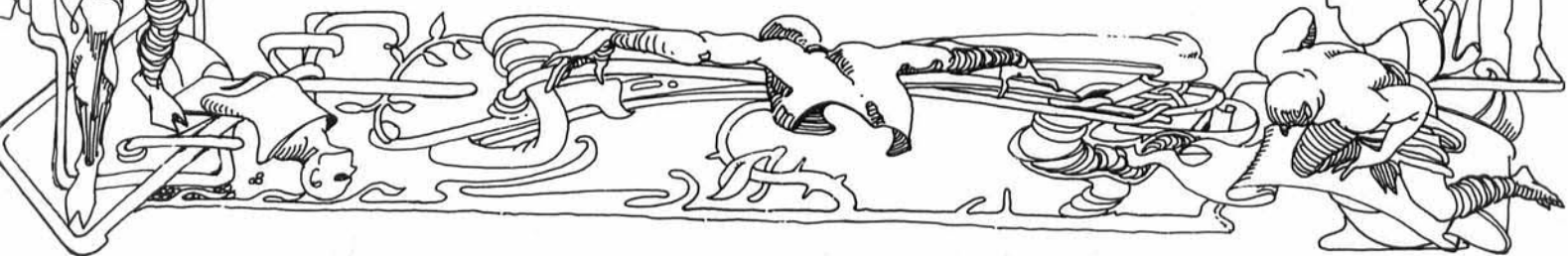
Lord Alfsten approaches the characters as they stop to buy provisions in a small town. The GM may wish to read the following passage to the players:

"It is grey and overcast as you pick your way through the market stalls, glancing at the weapons and trinkets but more interested in finding some lunch. At the edge of the market square you notice a thin, bearded man in a scarlet tunic. He sits on a tall brown horse, six leather-clad soldiers around him and, following the gestures of a scrawny local, he peers between the stalls in your direction. Fixing his eyes on you, he dismounts swiftly, and begins to pick his way through the jostling crowds, followed by four soldiers."

Nervous characters may wish to avoid the man. Assuming that at least one stays to speak with him, the GM may continue:

"The nobleman picks his way through the crowds, appearing increasingly irritated with the locals, and eventually reaches you. He nods with forced courtesy, and addresses you by name."

Lord Alfsten explains that his lord, the Eorl Gadwulf, wishes to see the player characters, concerning events at *Ilech Vale*. He is polite but insistent that they accompany him, and shows respect only to nobles, priests or paladins amongst their number. If the player characters are awkward or refuse to go with



him, he becomes increasingly irritated but more polite. If necessary, he can order his soldiers and the town militia to capture the characters, and drag them to the castle in chains. Hopefully, however, this will not be unnecessary.

THE EORL'S COURT

Besides the Eorl, Gadwulf Elthswain, three Lords, a priest and a wizard live at the castle, attended by thirty servants and fifteen guards. One of the servants is his personal valet, a young lad named Wythren. The Lords are Cardwein, who commands the soldiers, Alfsten, who is the Eorl's closest advisor, and Halfsun, who is the Steward responsible for the running of the household and the servants. Cardwein is married to Isobael, the Eorl's younger sister, and Halfsun's wife is Ruttan, both of whom live at the castle with their husbands. Further, a young woman named Strase came to the castle three weeks ago to stay with Lord Cardwein.

Mosmendil is the court's "wizard" and most notable cynic, introduced to the Eorl by Lord Cardwein four years ago, and lives in the gorge below the castle. The Eorl's priest is Erngan, who lives by the gatehouse and tends a nearby shrine to the Gods of nobility, justice, obedience and warfare.

The soldiers include three young nobles, Cnanden, Llweredd and Aethan, and twelve commoners. Four of these low-born guards are second Skill Level warriors, while all of the others are first Skill Level. Whilst on duty, they wear leather armor and carry shields, but usually wear only normal woolen clothing. Each carries a broadsword at his waist. All of the soldiers are male.

The servants are all Skill Level Zero. Notable amongst them are Hanga, the senior cook, Eldein, the lazy old man who is in charge of the stables, and Grovett, the hot-tempered blacksmith. They all serve in the castle throughout the year, and have a deep respect of their masters.

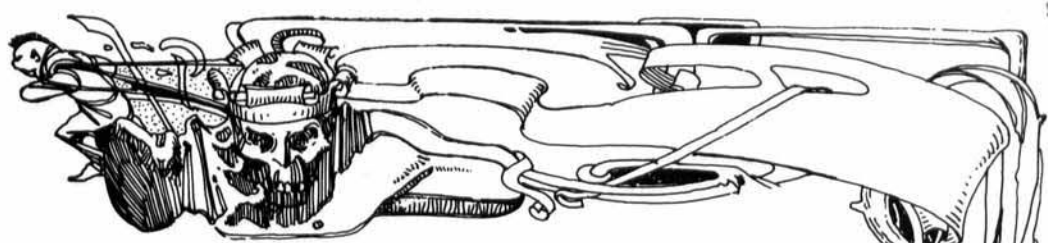
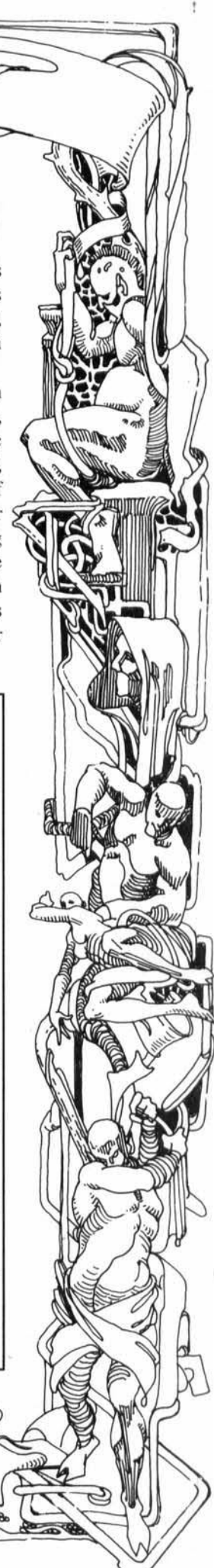
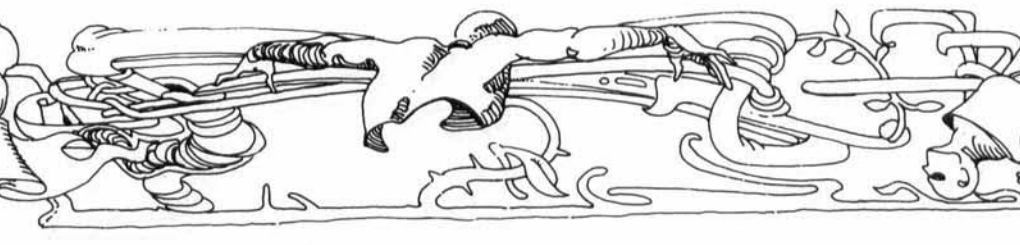
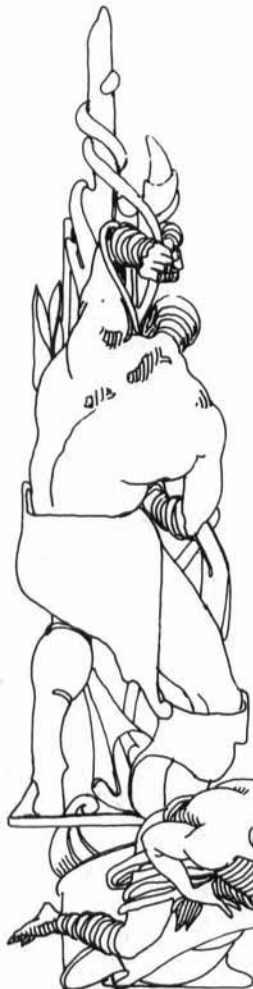
THE NPCs

Before attempting to run this adventure, GMs must understand all of these characters, their motives and attitudes, as the mystery revolves around them, and the player characters' conversations with them will determine what they learn of the mystery.

NPCs appear in a boxes on the left pages within this adventure and are presented in simple, condensed format. Each entry begins with basic necessary statistics (Skill Level, alignment, THACO, AC, HTK and damage) and spells or powers, a brief physical description, an explanation of their personalities and motivations, and any distinguishing mannerism. This final heading suggests a memorable peculiarity which each NPC displays in conversation or other dealings with the PCs. From this Mannerism, players should find it easier to remember different NPCs.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

- Aethan: a young noble and soldier.
- Alfsten: a local Lord and the Eorl's closest advisor.
- Braetha: the Eorl's first love, now dead though the demon Scathris has assumed her identity.
- Cardwein: a local Lord who seeks the throne.
- Cnanden: a young noble and soldier.
- Eldien: the lazy stablemaster.
- Erngan: the Eorl's priest.
- Gadwulf Elthswain: the local Eorl.
- Grovett: the half-demon blacksmith.
- Halfsun: a local lord and the household Stewart.
- Hanga: the senior cook.
- Isobael: Cardwein's wife and the Eorl's younger sister.
- Llweredd: a young noble and soldier.
- Mosmendil: a thaumaturgist, the court wizard.
- Ruttan: Halfsun's wife.
- Strase: a demon in the guise of a young woman staying with Lord Cardwein.
- Tromas: a murdered inquisitor.
- Wythren: the Eorl's personal valet.



The Eorl GADWULF ELTHSWEIN

Skill Zero

STR: 11 INT: 14

INS: 12 STA: 9

DEX: 8 APL: 13

AL: Neutral Good

THAC0: 20

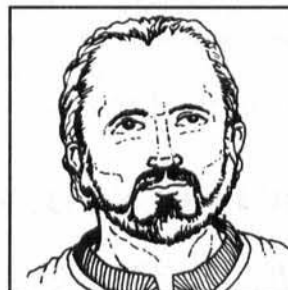
AC: 10

HTK: 4

Wpn Prof: Broadsword, dagger

Wpns: Broadsword

Armor: None

**GADWULF
ELTHSWEIN**

Description: The Eorl is a broad man, around thirty years old, with high cheekbones and a short beard. A pale blue robe, edged in black and silver, is fastened around his growing belly with a thick black belt.

Personality: The Eorl was left desolate and depressed by his love's betrayal, but now that she has returned to him he is filled with joy and wonder. He is frequently distracted, and rarely speaks with his old friends. At meals he has a far-away look in his eyes and, through most of the day, locks himself away in his chambers with her, allowing only his servant Wythren to enter. If necessary, however, he can become cold and cunning, exercising authority with a natural confidence.

Mannerism: Usually, when thinking of his love, the Eorl sits back and smiles slightly, letting his fingers drum together. If moved to assert his authority, however, the smile vanishes and he leans forward to rest his chin lightly on one clenched fist.

Lord ALFSTEN

Skill One Fighter

STR: 8 INT: 11

INS: 13 STA: 7

DEX: 8 APL: 10

AL: Lawful Neutral

THAC0: 20

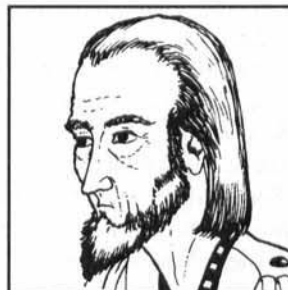
AC: 10

HTK: 5

Wpn Prof: Broadsword, dagger

Wpns: Dagger

Armor: None

**Lord ALFSTEN**

Description: Lord Alfsten is a tall man, around fifty years old, with graying mousey hair and a pointed beard, dressed in a deep red tunic.

Personality: Unshakably loyal to the Eorl and deeply worried by his present reclusiveness, Alfsten is friendly to anyone who treats him with respect. He loathes those who are surly, and is hostile to player characters who are discourteous or disrespectful. He views social inferiors with distaste, but always tries to be polite. Since the death of his inquisitor, he has become frightened that a demonic plot brews in the castle. He has no firm suspects, but the unladylike Ruttan, the fiery Grovett and the magician Mosmendil attract his suspicions.

Mannerism: Blatantly arrogant, Alfsten addresses all nobles, priests and paladins as "Lord", but lesser folk he simply calls "peasant", rarely bothering to remember their names.

THE PLOT

The dramatic events of the player characters' brief stay at the castle revolve around the ambitions of two men: Lord Cardwein, commander of the soldiers, and Mosmendil, the court wizard. Cardwein wishes to become an Eorl, an aspires ultimately to usurp the Kingdom's throne. To these ends he has married the Eorl's daughter, making him the heir, and enlisted the cunning and powers of Mosmendil, who is a Thaumaturgist.

With the aid of two demons, who have agreed to support the pair, but have signed no Pact and are not controlled by the wizard, they intend to foment a rebellion, murder the Eorl, and then blame the King for the assassination. When the indignant nobility rise against the King, Mosmendil intends to Summon demonic Warriors as assassins in the coming campaign, thus hoping to ensure the rebels' victories, and to place Cardwein upon the throne. Naturally, he assumes that having given the greedy noble the crown, he will be given a privileged place at court, and could use that power to make the land safe for the Cabal, and the Traditionalists in particular.

The main flaw in this plan, is that the two demons enlisted to aid Cardwein, demons of murder and betrayal, cannot be trusted. While they want a rebellion to begin, they are unconcerned with the outcome of the war, and would readily betray Cardwein and spread sin amongst other folk at the same time.

BACKGROUND

Six months ago, Mosmendil began negotiating with the demon duke Forneus, lord of traitors, using a minion as a courier. Predictably, Forneus agreed to help foment a rebellion, and to send Seducers and Warriors to that end, but first suggested that Eltridd's Blade should be removed from the land.

Therefore, he sent the demon Scathris to "possess" Powden, who was at the time serving as a soldier in the Eorl's guard, along with the potions and the Black Horn (encountered in the preceding adventure). The events at Ilech Vale followed from this.

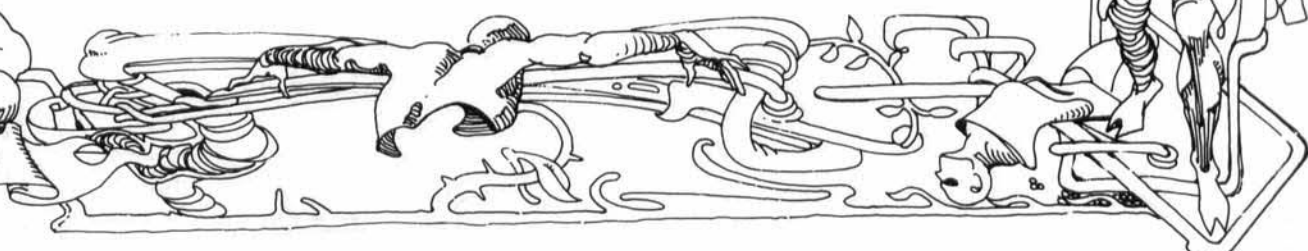
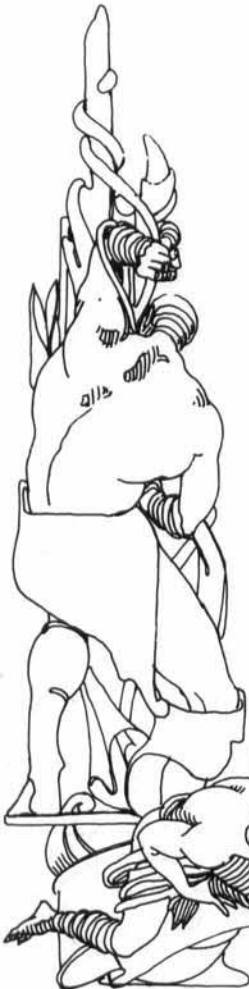
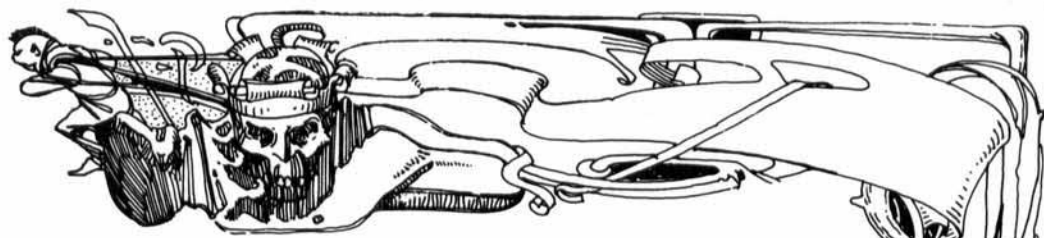
When not possessing Powden, Scathris disguised itself as Lady Braetha, Eorl Gadwulf's first and only love, who had deserted him to marry another and later killed herself. Scathris came to him, claiming to be this woman, saying that she had "faked" her suicide and had hidden from her husband ever since, because she wished to return to her "true love" the Eorl.

The lovelorn Gadwulf swallowed Scathris's story, and took the demon in. Over the next few months, the Eorl came to listen less and less to his traditional advisor, Lord Alfsten, preferring his lover's council. "Braetha" persuaded him that the King's increased taxes were designed specifically to cripple the poorer border lords, and that a rebellion was required. So, the Eorl has contacted many other nobles over the past months, and although there is no revolt as yet, many are amenable to the idea.

With the rebellion forming, the demons launched their attack upon Ilech Vale, in which the player characters became embroiled, and whether or not the Blade was seized, the demons are now ready to assassinate the Eorl and spark the revolt.

After Ilech Vale, Scathris has returned to the persona of Braetha and stayed by the Eorl. However, the demon's charms have not persuaded the Eorl to overlook these events, and so he has now sent for the player characters, seeking an explanation.

In addition, an Infernal alliance has been struck between Forneus and Gusion, demon duke of murder. Consequently, a second demon has arrived at the castle. Strase, lord Cardwein's new "servant" arrived three weeks ago, a failed Seducer and now a Warrior in the service of duke Gusion, to help bring about the revolt. Unfortunately, "Strase" still wants to be a Seducer, and has tried blatantly and



Lord CARDWEIN

Skill One Fighter

STR: 12 INT: 11

INS: 13 STA: 10

DEX: 9 APL: 15

AL: Chaotic Neutral

THAC0: 20

AC: 8

HTK: 7

Wpn Prof: Broadsword, dagger

Wpns: Broadsword, dagger

Armor: Light Ringmail (AC 8)



Lord CARDWEIN

Description: Aged about thirty, Lord Cardwein is a stocky, red-haired man, with a flat nose and jutting chin. He usually wears a suit of dark, light ring-mail armor (AC 8).

Personality: Initially reserved, Cardwein quickly becomes familiar and jovial, swift to smile and always ready to share a joke. He treats social inferiors as equals, and others with clear respect. Intensely ambitious, Cardwein wishes to replace first the Eorl and then the King. If the player characters openly threaten him, he sends Strase to kill them. Otherwise, he attempts to befriend and manipulate them. He hates Ruttan, whose confidence disconcerts him. He has encouraged the rumor that the inquisitor was killed for political reasons, and may hint (falsely) that Lord Alfsten had a grudge against the inquisitor.

Mannerism: Cardwein tucks his thumbs into his belt and often grins broadly.

ISOBAEL

Skill Zero

STR: 7 INT: 9

INS: 10 STA: 11

DEX: 9 APL: 13

AL: Lawful Good

THAC0: 20

AC: 10

HTK: 3

Wpn Prof: None

Wpns: None

Armor: None

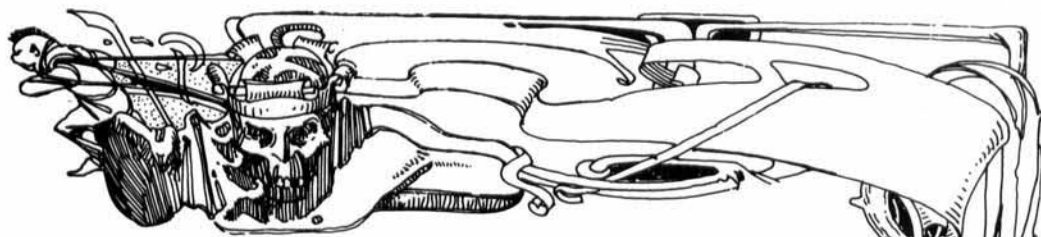


ISOBAEL

Description: Isobael is a broad-shouldered but thin young woman, her hair pulled back into a bun, wearing a loose grey dress.

Personality: The Eorl's younger sister has been treated as a political asset by her brother, and now by her husband. She dislikes both of them, and is curt and unfriendly to most men. Her only real friend is Ruttan, whom she finds inspiring and engaging. She assumes, without great concern, that the inquisitor was investigating her brother, husband, or "some other bloody man", and that some of the soldiers were ordered to kill him.

Mannerism: Isobael looks away from men as they speak to her, and answers as briefly as possible. With women she is more relaxed, but smolders with an indefinable anger.



unsuccessfully to tempt both Hanga and Eldein to commit homicide.

One final complication has arisen. Several days before the characters arrive, an inquisitor named Tromas came to the castle. He had been secretly invited by Lord Alfsten, not because the lord had any firm suspicions of a demonic plot, but because he wished to ensure that the Eorl's changed behavior was not demonically caused. But before the Inquisitor could see the Eorl or commence his investigations, he was murdered. His first night in the castle, staying in one of the rooms the characters now occupy, he was killed in his sleep. The door was smashed down, and Tromas was butchered. Erngan buried the unfortunate the following day, on a nearby hillside, and now keeps all of the Inquisitor's equipment in his rooms, including a set of torture implements and a copy of "The Razor of Righteousness" (included in this pack).

THE CASTLE

The journey to the castle takes a day or two, and is uneventful. GMs may wish to read the following passage to the players as their characters approach it:

"The castle stands at the summit of a steep hill, flanked by rocky slopes and guarded at the rear by a gaping ravine. The castle's walls stand thirty feet tall, and are built from lichen-mottled granite. A taller keep rises from the midst of the walls, weather-beaten and slightly skewed. All around, jagged hills overlook the stronghold, and as you trudge along the rutted road towards the place, dark clouds roll and coil overhead."

Two hefty wooden doors are pulled open at Lord Alfsten's approach, and the player characters enter unopposed. A troupe of mucky servants emerge from the stables and the kitchens, taking the characters' horses and luggage. Lord Alfsten assigns two cleaner

servants to show the characters to appropriate lodgings and tend to their needs, while he goes to inform the Eorl of their arrival.

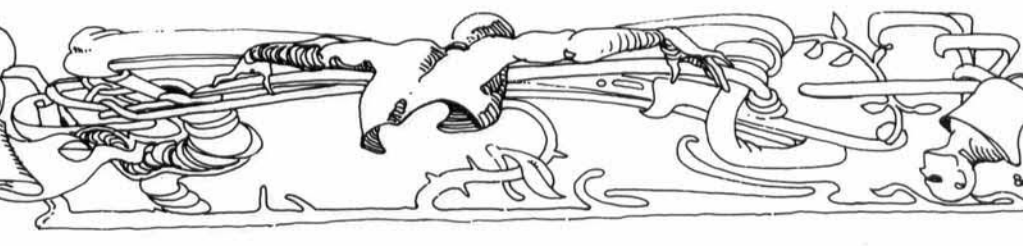
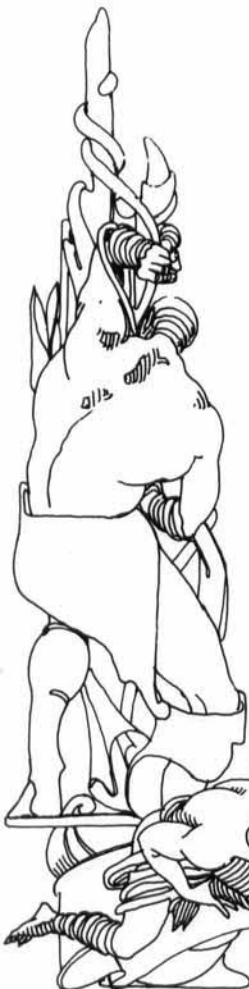
Most characters are given individual rooms, but any appearing particularly impoverished or filthy are assumed to be menials and are expected to sleep with the horses. Food, drink, and baths are prepared if the characters ask, and minor services are performed as they request, clothes taken to be mended, horses groomed, etc.

Meanwhile, Lord Alfsten is discovering that Eorl Gadwulf has inexplicably taken to his rooms and refuses to emerge. Red-faced, he returns to the player characters, apologizing that the Eorl is unavailable at present, and checking that their accommodations are satisfactory. If the characters feel unhappy with the rooms, stabling or servants, he sends a servant to Lord Halfsun, who deals with their complaints. Otherwise, he leaves them to settle in, explaining that dinner is served in the great hall at dusk.

THE PRIEST'S OFFER

The player characters have little chance to relax or explore the castle. As soon as Lord Alfsten departs, they are approached by the castle's resident priest, Erngan. The priest is deeply concerned about the recent events in the castle, and seeks to enlist the characters' aid in discovering what is happening. First, however, he wishes to ensure that they are at least upright folk, and questions them about their origins, religions and beliefs.

Eventually, addressing himself primarily to warriors and priests, and ignoring wizards and women, he asks if the characters are aware of the recent events in the castle. He explains about the Eorl's reclusiveness, and particularly about Tromas's death. He underlines the ominousness of the inquisitor's murder, and mentions several omens which he has recently noted; seven black birds flying towards the setting sun, and clouds shaped like tombs.



Lord HALFSUN

Skill Zero

STR: 11 **INT:** 12**INS:** 9 **STA:** 9**DEX:** 12 **APL:** 10**AL:** Lawful Good**THAC0:** 20**AC:** 10**HTK:** 5**Wpn Prof:** Longsword, longbow**Wpns:** Longsword**Armor:** None**Lord HALFSUN**

Description: Lord Halfsun is an overweight man of about thirty, with shaggy black hair and dark shadows beneath his eyes. He wears a cream tunic and checked trousers.

Personality: Harassed and tired, Halfsun is extremely worried by the Eorl's retreat from the world, but he has more pressing worries. Meat has started to go rancid in the storerooms, and several petty squabbles and dissensions amongst the servants have given him recurring headaches. His wife's constant attempts to interfere with his job and champion the underdog in such disputes has placed an increasing strain upon him.

Mannerism: Halfsun reacts anxiously to everyone's approach, fearing that they bring a new crisis for him to mediate. Engaged in conversation he rubs his aching head as he thinks.

RUTTAN

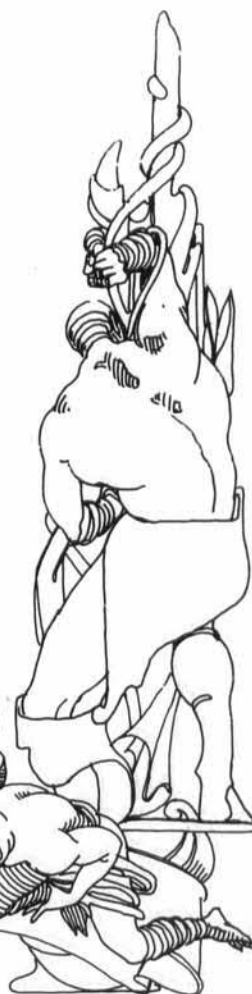
Skill One Thief

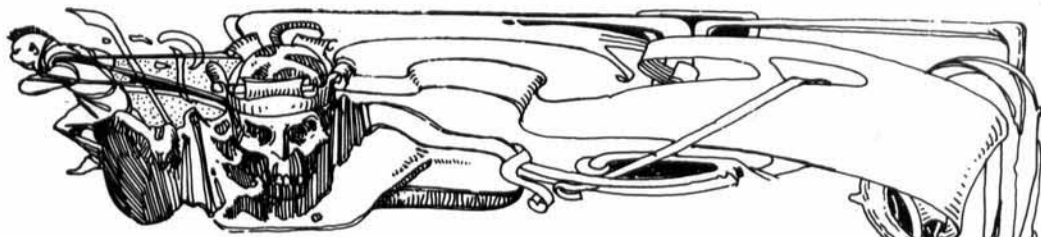
STR: 7 **INT:** 9**INS:** 10 **STA:** 11**DEX:** 9 **APL:** 13**AL:** Neutral Good**THAC0:** 20**AC:** 10**HTK:** 6**Wpn Prof:** Longsword, dagger**Wpns:** Dagger**Armor:** None**Thief Skills:** Climb Walls 60%, other Thieves Skills at 15%**RUTTAN**

Description: A short woman in her thirties, with a broad brow and thick limbs, Ruttan wears a rust-red dress and always seems to carry a half-finished embroidery in one hand.

Personality: Ruttan came from a poor city family. She stole and begged for a living, and eventually came into the service of a local merchant. When the merchant died she appropriated much of his wealth and, claiming to be a widow, seduced Halfsun. She is actually very fond of her husband, but is angered by his insensitive exploitation of the servants and tries to make him grant them more concessions. In truth she is bored at the castle, but would rather be here than on the streets. The inquisitor's death has made her increasingly edgy and cautious, but she sees no point in discussing the matter.

Mannerism: Conversing with anybody, she always looks them straight in the eye, and gives a faint, challenging smile.





Erngan asks the characters to investigate the goings-on at the castle, and take all action necessary to thwart any evil plot that they discover. As they have never been here before and have no links with the inhabitants, he hopes that they are impartial. GMs may grant payment as they see fit for this service, but the priest cannot afford more than 100 gp in cash. Several points of healing may be promised, and a +1 weapon or a potion can be procured.

Characters asking his opinion on the matter of the murder find that he gives grounds to suspect almost everyone (including the nervous Halfsun, the reclusive Eorl, and the ill-humored Grovett). But he hints heavily that Ruttan and Mosmendil are likely culprits, the former being “unnaturally arrogant” and the other “an untrustworthy wizard”.

Characters wishing to look at the inquisitor’s belongings, may do so and are permitted to read Tromas’s copy of “The Razor of Righteousness”. Indeed, this tome may be given to the characters as part of their payment for investigating the castle’s difficulties.

TIMELINE

The following description suggests a timetable of events for the three days of the characters’ stay. However, GMs must be prepared to improvise substantially, as the characters’ actions may cause the key NPCs to act more hastily or plan alternative strategies. This timeline assumes that the player characters confine themselves to passive investigation. Cunning players, however, may devise more active strategies, deciphering the plot and taking appropriate action before the end of the second day.

DAY ONE

The player characters arrive in the castle during the late afternoon, and speak with Lord Alfsten and Erngan, as described above. There

is still an hour before dusk, during which time they may settle in or begin their investigations. The servants are busy in the kitchen, preparing for the coming meal, and the Eorl is refusing to speak with anyone, but the castle’s other inhabitants may be approached.

At dusk, dinner is served in the great hall, on the ground floor of the keep. At this and subsequent gatherings, places are reserved at the head of the Eorl’s table for the Eorl himself, the three lords and their wives, Erngan, Mosmendil and any player characters of noble birth. A long table runs along the length of the room, seating the other diners. Farthest from the lord’s table are the grooms and other servants not involved in preparing or serving the meal, then the less respectable player characters, the off-duty soldiers, Eldein (an important servant), the more respectable characters and, nearest to the Eorl’s table, the three noble soldiers. Grovett never dines in the castle. Strase sits with the characters if she is certain that none of them are slayers or inquisitors, otherwise feigning illness and avoiding the meal.

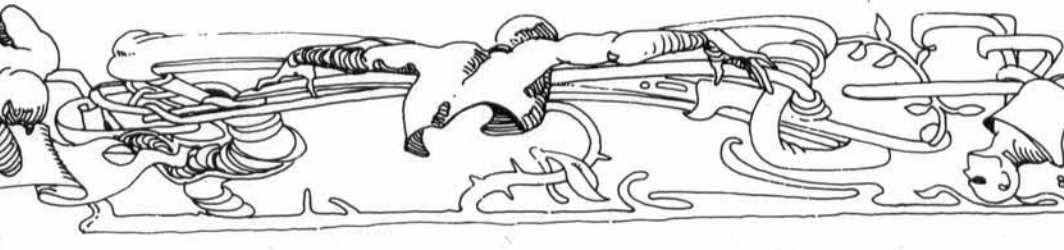
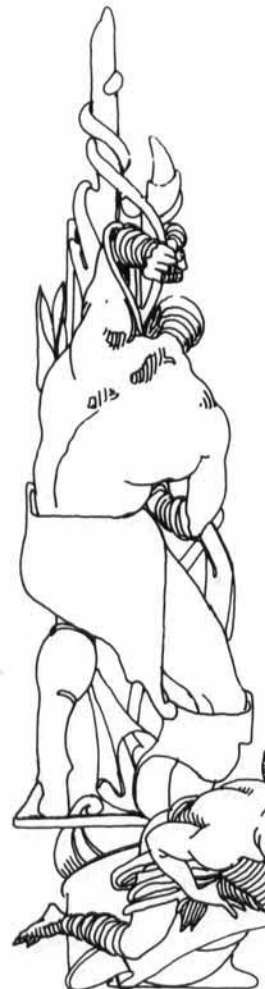
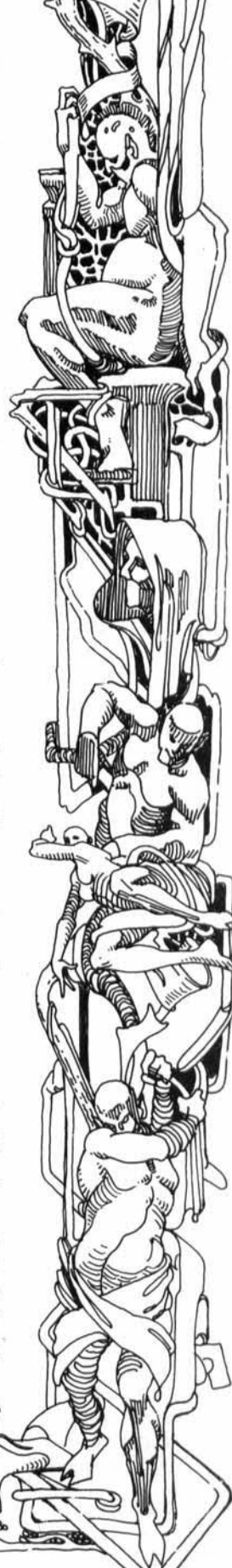
Dinner is a prolonged agony, lasting for two hours without any entertainments. The characters, considered a novelty, are prevailed upon by those sitting near to them for tales of their exploits and news of Ilech Vale.

After dinner, all return to their own quarters. Within two hours, everyone in the castle is asleep, except five guards (below), and Grovett. The manic sound of the smith’s hammering is the only audible sound in the still night.

DAY TWO

The morning brings clear, pale skies and a chill wind. The servants rise at dawn, and a young serving girl comes to asks the player characters if they wish to eat in their rooms or in the great hall.

Breakfast is an informal affair. Only the nobility may eat at the top table, but otherwise people sit where they please, arriving and leaving as they wish. The hall is in use for about two hours, but no one person is present



ERNGAN

Skill One Priest

STR: 7 INT: 9

INS: 11 STA: 9

DEX: 10 APL: 9

AL: Lawful Good

THAC0: 20

AC: 10

HTK: 3

Wpn Prof: Mace

Wpns: None

Armor: None

Spells: *Bless***ERNGAN**

Description: A scrawny man in his early forties, Erngan is tall and prematurely bald, with his remaining blond hair dropping limply past his shoulders. He wears pale robes, and the innumerable pouches of herbs which dangle from his belt always wreath him with a sour aroma.

Personality: Erngan tends to distrust people, although he feels compelled to trust the player characters in the present circumstances, and is deeply suspicious of wizards and women. He particularly dislikes Mosmendil (whom he holds to be a "blaspheming atheist"), and Ruttan, whose confidence strikes him as arrogant and "unladylike".

Mannerism: Erngan clasps his hands together firmly at all times.

MOSMENDIL

Skill Five Thaumaturgist

STR: 6 INT: 13

INS: 13 STA: 10

DEX: 11 APL: 11

AL: Neutral Evil

THAC0: 19

AC: 10

HTK: 16

Wpn Prof: Quarterstaff, dagger

Wpns: Quarterstaff

Armor: None

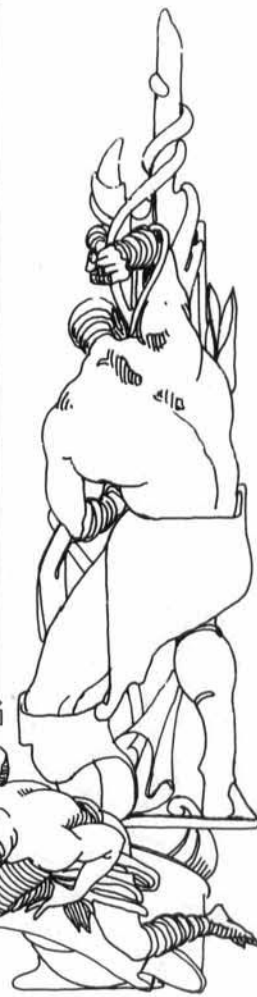
Spells: *Summon Demon Warrior, Summon Minion, Dismiss Minion, Cantrip, Chill Touch, Detect Undead.*

**MOSMENDIL**

Description: Mosmendil is a tall, bony man, with close-cropped brown hair. He wears a baggy brown robe and oversized hood, and carries a sturdy oak staff in his left hand.

Personality: This thaumaturgist is an avaricious and greedy man, determined to gain mundane and arcane mastery, and uninterested in the suffering that he causes. As a member of the Cabal, he is a staunch Traditionalist, but is more concerned with immediate and mortal plots at present. By making Cardwein King, he hopes to become a man of great influence. He is presently very anxious about both the player characters, whose investigations he fears, and his demonic allies, whom he does not trust. In conversation, he remains unflustered however, and appears carefree and even foolish.

Mannerism: Mosmendil constantly drums his fingers on his staff or some other nearby surface, and smiles foolishly.



WYTHREN

Skill Zero

STR: 7 **INT:** 10**INS:** 9 **STA:** 8**DEX:** 9 **APL:** 13**AL:** Lawful Neutral**THAC0:** 20**AC:** 10**HTK:** 2**Wpn Prof:** Shortsword, knife**Wpns:** Knife**Armor:** None**WYTHREN**

Description: Wythren is a small sixteen year-old lad, with a short pale tunic, blond hair, high cheekbones and nervous, darting eyes.

Personality: Wythren is Eorl Gadwulf's personal servant, and he alone is permitted access to the lord's chambers. He suspects that a woman now lives with the Eorl (having seen womens' clothing half-hidden in the apartment and being asked to bring up more food than the Eorl usually eats), and is disconcerted by such an anomaly. However, he is fiercely loyal to his master, and constantly fends off curious questions about the Eorl's reclusiveness. He feels hassled and annoyed by the other servants, and finds it difficult to understand what he can do to help his possibly deranged or besotted master.

Mannerism: The servant's eyes dart constantly from one person to another or from place to place.

"STRASE"

Caldagore, Thrall of Gusion

STR: 18/76 **INT:** 16**INS:** 13 **STA:** 10**DEX:** 11 **APL:** 8**AL:** Chaotic Evil**THAC0:** 15 **AC:** 6**HTK:** 25 **Wpns:** Dagger**Damage:** 1d4+4 damage with dagger

Demonic Traits: May only be damaged by silver or +1 weapons; burned by fresh milk (1d4 damage); causes any pregnant woman touched to miscarry, and babies within six feet to cry. Climb Walls 90%, other Thieving Skills 50%.

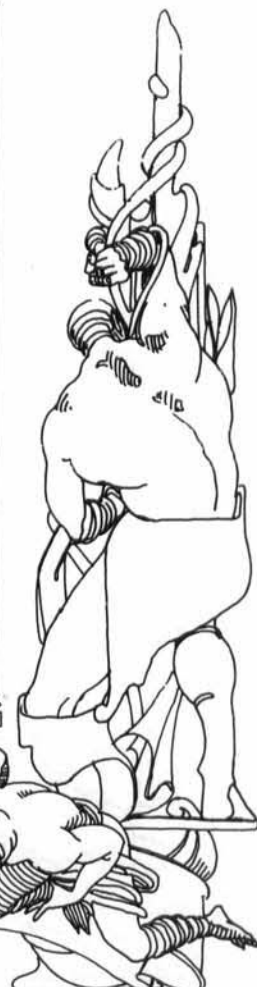
**"STRASE"**

Description: Strase is a square-faced woman in her thirties, with long brown hair, tied back. She wears a tight-necked tunic and brown leather trousers, and carries a simple brass dagger on her belt. The human disguise is imperfect, however, as scales cover her back and shoulders beneath her tunic, and she secretes human blood instead of saliva.

Demonic Description: In demon form, Caldagore appears as a malformed human female, with scales all over its body and a bloody syrup dribbling from its mouth, a noose around its neck and a tattered shroud as a cloak. From 2am until dawn, the demon cannot assume any disguise.

Personality: Quietly Bestial. Strase delights in murder, and is liable to encourage it whenever possible (as he has with Hanga and Eldein). The demon is ambitious to rise in the Infernus, but lacks the cunning. She avoids frivolous conversation, has no understanding of human emotion, and is obedient to Lord Cardwein.

Mannerism: Strase usually keeps her lips tightly closed and barely parts them even to speak, due to the blood in her mouth.



DAY THREE

By dawn the rain has stopped, but the sky remains ominously dark. If the murder was not prevented by the player characters, the servants find that they cannot enter the Great Hall in the morning, the doors having been locked from within by Wythren. Lord Halfsun coordinates attempts to force the door, but it is too firmly bolted. He asks the player characters for suggestions, consults a useless Mosmendil but, unless aided by the characters, he resorts to splintering the door with axes.

Inside, Wythren and Gadwulf are dead in their chambers. Braetha, who was unknown to any besides the Eorl, has vanished but, inexplicably, a number of womens' dresses may be found in chests around the Eorl's room. Two pairs of wet footprints lead to and from the window. Their average size indicates no particular suspect, but investigation will prove that they are too small to be Grovett's.

Cardwein, immediately acknowledged master of the castle, organizes a search of the entire castle, using soldiers and trusted servants. He asks the player characters to keep out of the way, and within 2-12 rounds of the body's discovery the soldiers forbid them entry to the Eorl's chambers, hustling them out if they are within. The Lord will question them briefly. The castle is rife with speculation. Everyone is guilty, according to different unfounded rumors, not least the player characters who, as nosy strangers, are immediately suspect.

Grovett, unless the player characters point out his obvious innocence, is arrested (for want of a better suspect) because only he was known to be up throughout most of the night. It takes eight men to drag him to the dungeon. There, three guards are assigned to interrogate him.

Lunch is served a little late, and the servants apologize that there is no wine left. All that was delivered the day before has turned to vinegar, but they would rather not admit this to guests. Cardwein takes the Eorl's seat (a disrespect which prompts

some murmurs), and even Mosmendil is present. Only Cardwein's wife is absent, sobbing in her chamber where she has found the bloodstained tunic that her husband wore the night before. Occasionally, during the meal, Grovett's screams may be heard above the subdued chatter.

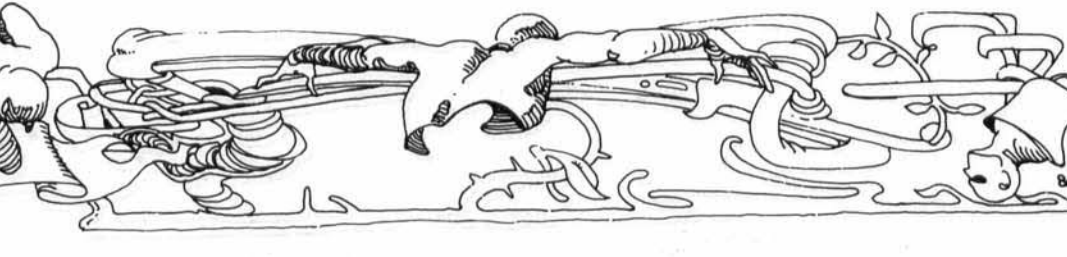
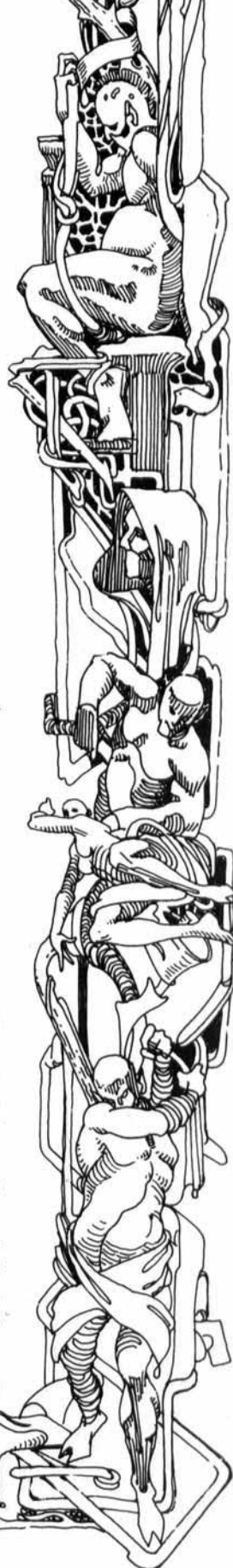
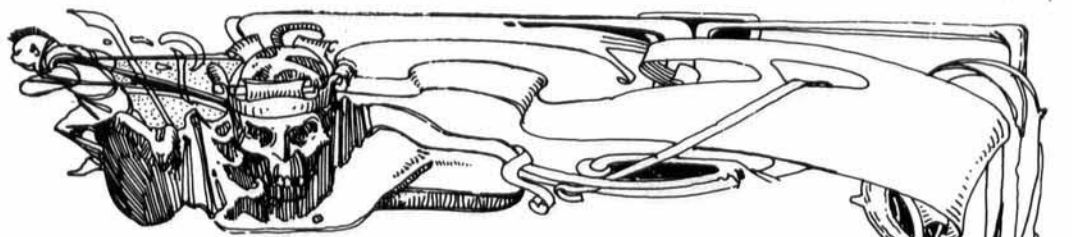
After lunch, Cardwein personally takes charge of Grovett's interrogation. The half-demon's shouts and screams continue. Anyone loitering near to the dungeons can hear his protests ("I haven't done anything", "I don't work for anyone", "I didn't do it").

After an hour, Grovett is persuaded to "confess" that he assassinated the Eorl on the King's orders. The soldiers involved in the interrogation spread this gossip amongst the curious servants, and mention the blacksmith's deformed arms, but note that the second assassin has yet to be identified.

Strase seeks out one of the player characters (preferably whichever is most devious-looking), asking him or her to meet Lord Cardwein in his chambers in one hour. "The interrogation has revealed certain facts," Strase explains "and we have need of your talents. Lord Cardwein will explain further, and will discuss payment of course."

Cardwein himself retreats to his chamber, and begins to write letters explaining that the Eorl is dead, he has replaced him, and that the King was responsible for the murder. The letters call the nobility to arms to depose the "despotic" King. Within an hour a dozen letters have already left the castle with three messengers.

When the invited character arrives at Cardwein's chambers, he or she is let in by Strase and led to the Lord. There, Strase and Cardwein immediately draw their weapons and the Lord screams "Guards! Murderer! Guards, to me!" The character is being set up. All of the Guards congregate upon the Lord's cries, except for two who remain by the gate. The player character is told to surrender, and he or she is disarmed and dragged to the dungeon. If the character resists, he or she is attacked mercilessly, as Cardwein continues to



"BRAETHA"

Scathris, Seducer of Betrayal

STR: 18 **INT:** 17**INS:** 12 **STA:** 10**DEX:** 14 **APL:** 17**AL:** Chaotic Evil**THAC0:** 17 **AC:** 7**HTK:** 22 **Wpn:** Dagger**Damage:** 1d4+2 HTK damage with dagger (backstab damage x2).**Demonic Traits:** May only be harmed by +1 or silver weapons.

Any non-magical weapon used to attack Scathris begins to rust or corrode the following night, and any silver which it touches immediately turns black; wine in its vicinity slowly turns to vinegar, and meat is corrupted; Scathris suffers a -3 penalty to all attacks and perspires visibly in the presence of any priest of law. Scathris may cast *Magical Aura*, *Phantasmal Force*, and *Audible Glamor* twice each per day.

Description: "Braetha" is a slender, red-haired woman in her late twenties, with a thin face and long fingers. A fine, pink dress is gathered at the waist with a gilt chain, and a silver-hilted eating dagger hangs at her side. This human disguise is perfect.

Demonic Description: For one hour each day (while the Eorl sleeps or dines) Scathris must return to its true form. It is a wrinkled but muscular humanoid, with fang-like teeth, two mouths and three eyes. Its clothes are the skins of unborn lambs, and its fingers are twisted and bent.

Personality: Seductive. Scathris plans the Eorl's death, having already persuaded him to press for a rebellion against his King, so that greater betrayals may be perpetuated throughout an extended civil war. If discovered, it would willingly offer to conspire to get the player characters whatever they desire, just so long as the plot to spark the civil war is not endangered, though Scathris would betray its promises to the player characters.

Mannerism: Braetha smiles innocently and flutters her eyelashes occasionally. In demonic form, Scathris grins broadly and shoots characters knowing, sideways glances.

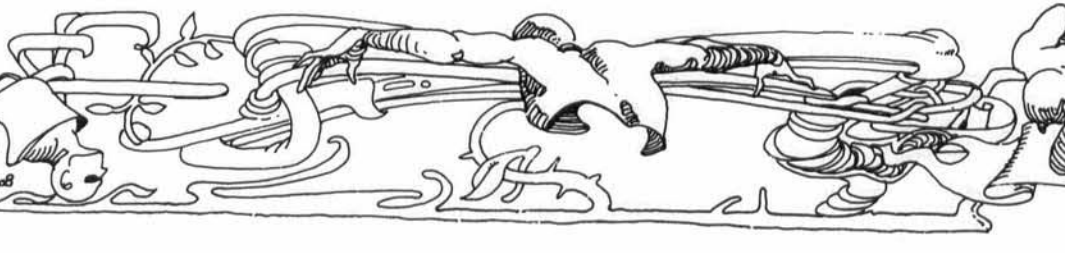
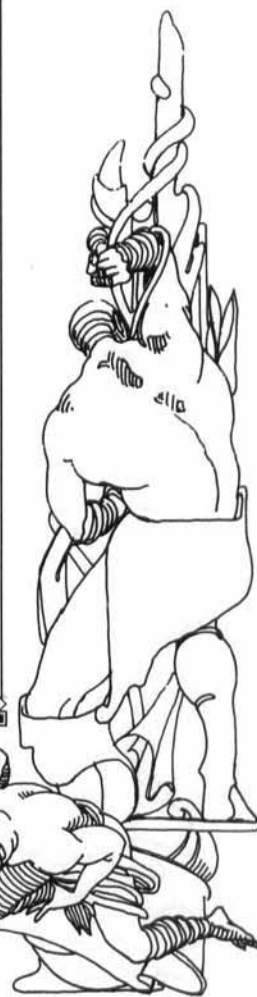
**"BRAETHA"****DEMON WARRIOR****STR:** 14 **INT:** 8**INS:** 10 **STA:** 10**DEX:** 16 **APL:** 6**AL:** Chaotic Evil**THAC0:** 18**AC:** 4**HTK:** 15**Wpn:** Claws**Damage:** 1d10 damage with claws.

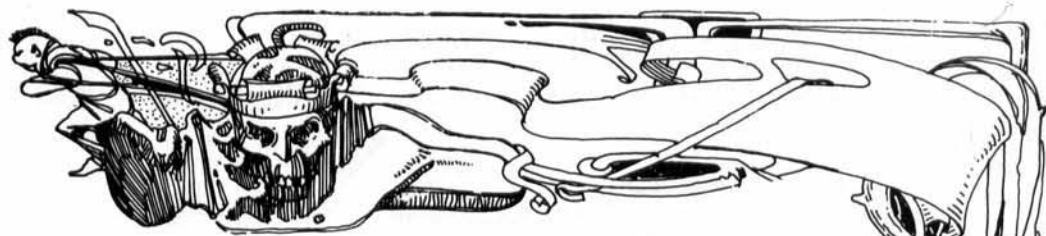
Demonic Traits: May only be stuck by silver or +1 weapons; withers all plants that it touches; may cast *Charm Person* once per day, upon one ally of the person it impersonates.

Note: This is a typical Warrior Summoned by Mosmendil, should he ever feel mortally threatened, or should a second attempt upon the Eorl's life become necessary.

Description: The creature clumsily attempts to impersonate one of Mosmendil's enemies, probably the strongest warrior amongst the player characters. It actually appears as a caricature or parody of the person, with grossly exaggerated features and blackened weapons. Its hands are soaked in blood, and its tongue is forked like a serpent's.

Personality: The creature is happy to practice its skills against "mere mortals".

**DEMON WARRIOR**



shout that the character attempted to kill him.

As soon as the accused character is dead or imprisoned, the guards are ordered to arrest the other characters, gathering a militia of servants if necessary. The characters must either flee, rapidly convince the guards of their master's guilt, be imprisoned, or else slaughter the castle's inhabitants and likely be outlawed by the country's remaining nobles.

If no character is gullible enough to go visit Cardwein on Strase's invitation, the Lord will simply order them all arrested.

THE RESCUE

Cardwein and his allies hope that the characters are all captured. If so, they are disarmed, stripped half naked, and thrown into the dungeon, with a guard outside the door. Cardwein intends to spend the following day torturing a confession out of them, and will then hang them. The demons, however, have different plans.

On the night after their capture, Scathris, the demon of betrayal, appears in the castle once again, now appearing as a trusted ally of the characters. Alfsten, Llewredd, Erngan, or anyone else who the PCs have befriended during the adventure. The demon kills the guard, and releases the characters, showing them their clothes and equipment (in the storeroom next to the dungeon) and suggesting that they grab their horses (if any) and fight their way out of the gate. They may wish to take Grovett, but he cannot even walk after his torture, and it may be necessary to abandon him. Meanwhile the disguised demon tells the players a twisted version of the truth. It claims that Cardwein has framed them for murdering the Eorl (which they must have guessed), and has already sent messages to the nobles raising a rebellion against the King, whom Cardwein claims that the characters work for. Cardwein seeks to lead the rebellion, with Mosmendil as his aide, and become King. The players must tell the King immediately, for which they will doubtless be rewarded, and join the struggle against the upstart. The demon thus betrays its

own ally, and ensures that the civil war will not be too one-sided or brief.

The player characters will have to fight their way out of the castle and either flee the country or warn the King. GMs may decide that not all of the player characters' equipment is in the store room, Cardwein having removed obviously magical artifacts for his own use. Thus, characters will have to storm Cardwein's chambers on their way out (which the demon would discourage as an unnecessary diversion), or else remain in the Kingdom until the rebels are crushed and they can reclaim their property.

ASKING QUESTIONS

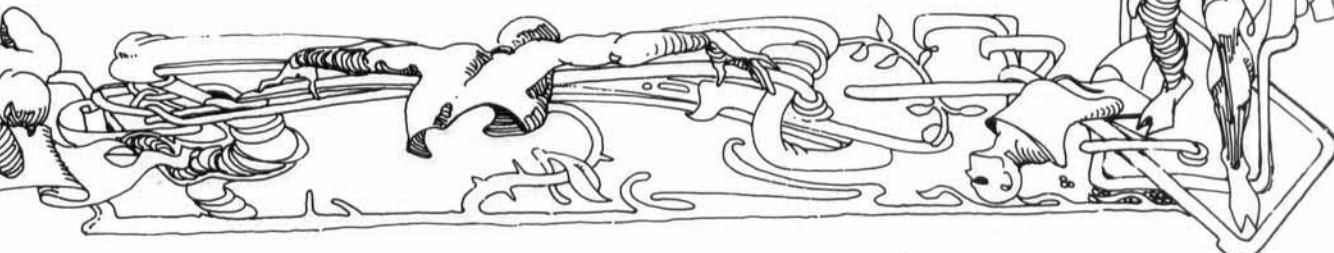
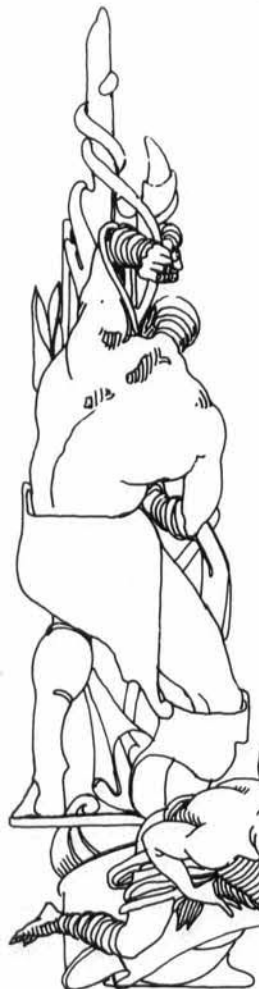
Certain information may be easily gained, by asking almost any servant or soldier, or in amiable conversation with one of the Lords. These facts are common knowledge amongst the castle's inhabitants, and they see no harm in talking to strangers about them.

-Marriages and other obvious relationships are willingly explained, for example, that Lord Cardwein has married the Eorl's sister and is now his heir.

-Powden's presence as a soldier is also mentioned freely, although with regret, if the characters have explained that he turned against his own father. He came to the castle after leaving home, became a valued guard and was often particularly trusted by Lord Cardwein. He was quiet and withdrawn, with neither friends nor enemies.

-Other information must be gleaned more tactfully. Rumors may be gathered through conversation with the servants, or be eavesdropping on their gossiping. Twenty Rumors are listed below.

-Detailed information concerning the politics and relationships of the Lords may be gained only through speaking with the castle's important inhabitants. What each NPC may divulge, is given in their individual descriptions, scattered throughout the corners of this section.



CNANDEN, LLEWREDD and AETHAN

Skill One Fighters

STR: 12 INT: 10

INS: 10 STA: 11

DEX: 10 APL: 13

AL: Lawful Good

THAC0: 20

AC: 7

HTK: 6

Wpn Prof: Broadsword

Wpn: Broadsword

Armor: Leather and shield

Description: The noble soldiers are sturdy, well-groomed young men, with leather armor, broad swords and shields.

Personality: Sent by noble fathers to serve their overlord, these young warriors are loyal to their own families first, the Eorl second, and Lord Cardwein only because he serves the Eorl. All would support a rebellion against the King, whose increasing taxes are crippling their families, but only Cnanden is brash enough to say so in public. Llewredd vaguely knew Lord Arand, being a distant neighbor, but disliked Powden intensely. Aethan harbors a barely rational dislike of Lord Halfsun, whom he regards as an irritating weakling. All are deeply worried by the inquisitor's death.

Mannerism: Cnanden is tactless; Llewredd has a wry smile and a penchant for sarcasm; Aethan speaks hesitantly and rubs his ear when thinking.

**CNANDEN, LLEWREDD
and AETHAN****HARDENED SOLDIERS (4)**

Skill Two Fighters

STR: 14 INT: 10

INS: 10 STA: 12

DEX: 9 APL: 10

AL: Lawful Neutral

THAC0: 19

AC: 7

HTK: 10

Wpn Prof: Broadsword

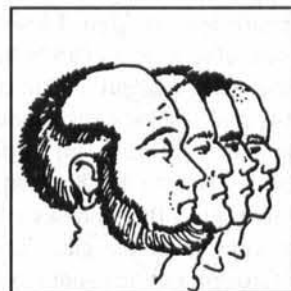
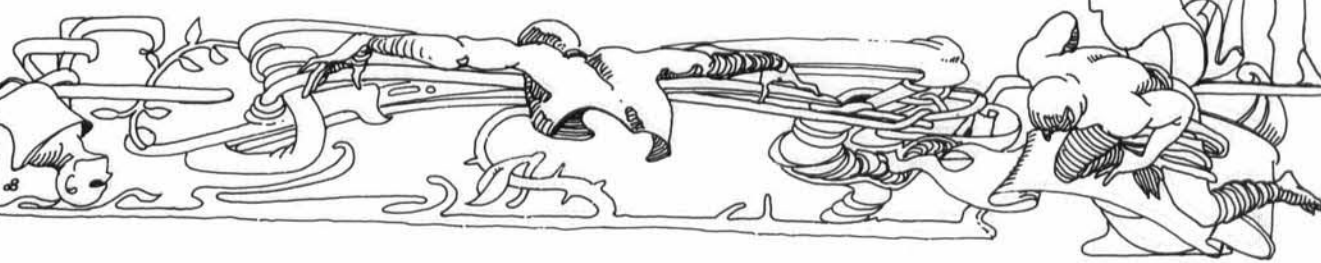
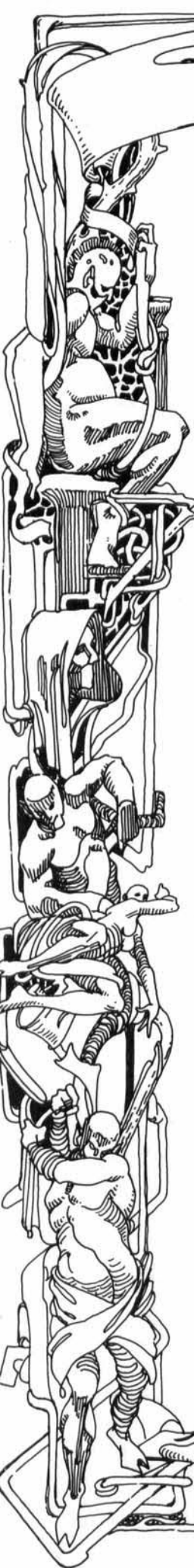
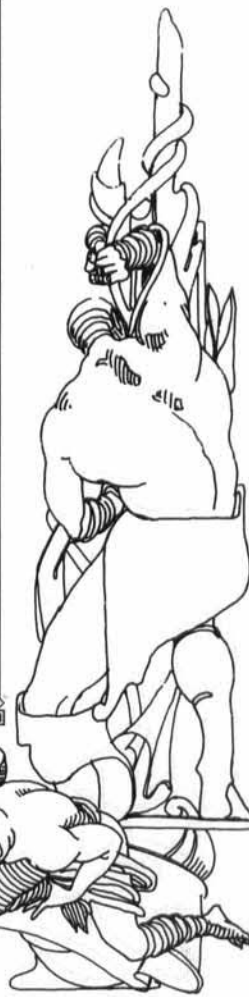
Wpn: Broadsword

Armor: Leather and shield

Description: The experienced soldiers share a rugged strength, practical short haircuts, and a number of scars. They carry broadswords and shields, and wear leather armor.

Personality: Hard-headed career soldiers, these four veterans are loyal to the Eorl, but may defect to serve anyone who will pay them as well and keep them alive for longer. Doing a dangerous job for little money, the only topic they avoid in conversation is death.

Mannerism: They tend to shrug, grimace, laugh loudly and ridicule cowards.

**HARDENED SOLDIERS**

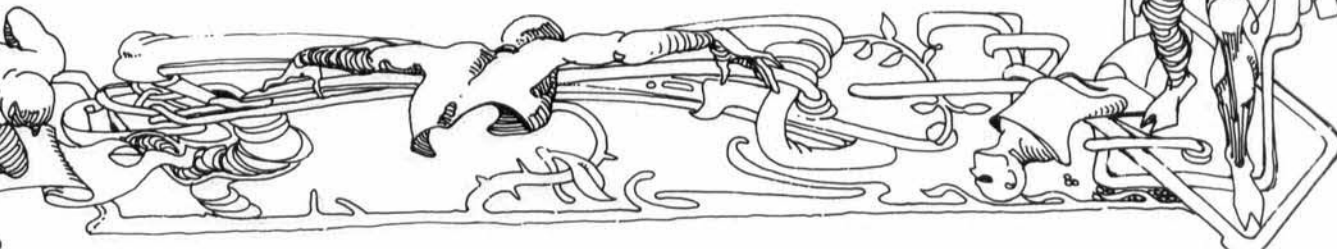
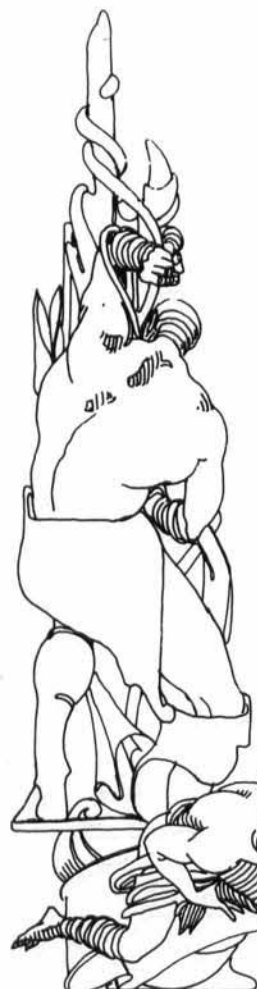
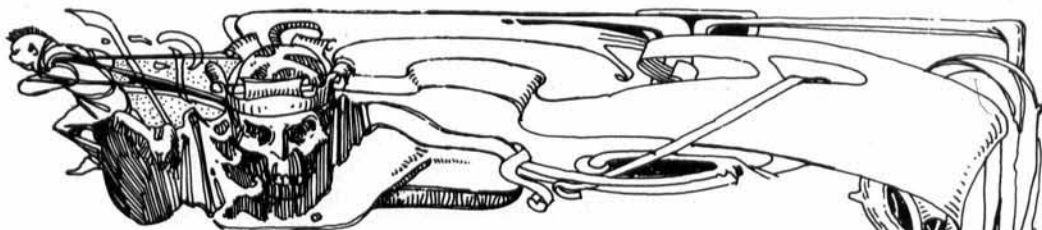
RUMORS

The following rumors may be gleaned from any of the castle's inhabitants or, perhaps, from the surrounding townfolk. All of the information below is known to the Lords, but they have their own motives and agendas, and disclose information accordingly, as explained in their individual descriptions. The servants and soldiers, however, are likely to be less self-motivated in their revelations, talking freely to any characters whom they trust. Each rumor is marked T, if it is true, or F if false.

1. Following the King's increased taxation demands, the Eorl has entertained many lesser nobles, and corresponded with some of the other Eorls. (T)
2. Lords Alfsten and Cardwein have both become increasingly nervous of late, as the Eorl spends more time alone in his quarters. (T)
3. Lord Alfsten has sent secret messages to many other nobles over the last month. (F)
4. Lord Cardwein has taken an increasing interest in the discipline of the guards. (T)
5. The Eorl's servant, Wythren, is really his bastard child. (F)
6. Strase, Lord Cardwein's servant, is really his mistress. (F)
7. The Eorl, though a confirmed bachelor, has recently bought a large double bed. (T)
8. Several bales of goods have been delivered to the Eorl's chambers over the last month. No one but Lord Halfsun the Steward knows what they contained, but they looked as if they may have held blankets, cloth or quilts. (T)
9. The Blacksmith, Grovett, is possessed by a demon of anger or insanity. (F)
10. The inquisitor, Tromas, was called to the castle by the Eorl to investigate the Blacksmith. (F)
11. The inquisitor had come to the castle on the instructions of one of the Lords; Halfsun, Cardwein or Alfsten. (T)
12. Following the murder of the inquisitor, the priest Erngan conducted certain special rites and cast powerful magics on the corpse to protect it from the forces of evil. (F)
13. The wizard Mosmendil has undead slaves within his chambers, armed with enchanted weapons. (F)
14. Mosmendil never attends the rituals of the priest, Erngan, and has never asked for his aid or blessing. (T)
15. The marriage between Lord Cardwein and Isobael has not been a success, and they rarely speak to one and other now. (T)
16. Lord Alfsten has begun an affair with Isobael. (F)
17. Grovett the Blacksmith is best avoided, especially after dark, as he has a vile temper. (T)
18. Grovett must have murdered the inquisitor. Only he has the strength to smash through a solid door, but there is no way he could have got into the castle without assistance. (F)
19. Tromas the inquisitor was murdered for political reasons, as he was an agent of a rival Eorl. (F)
20. Mosmendil is not merely a wizard, but is a necromancer, who has been heard speaking with the dead in his chambers. (F)

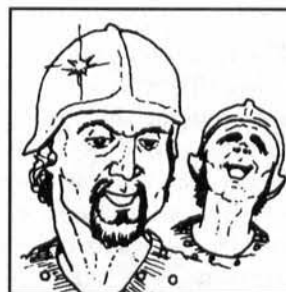
SKULDUGGERY

Not content with merely talking with the castle's folk, the player characters may wish to break into buildings, follow or intimidate certain inhabitants. Bribery, threats and torture certainly loosen timid tongues, although Cardwein would be particularly unlikely to reveal that he deals with demons, and it requires much persuading to make Mosmendil reveal anything. The disguised demons are immune to mundane coercion. However, Erngan disassociates himself from the characters if they are unnecessarily violent, and if they are implicated with any break-in or violence, Eorl Gadwulf or Lord Cardwein has them ejected from the castle, possibly flogging them or taking a hand off to teach them a lesson.



RAW SOLDIERS (8)

Skill One Fighters

STR: 10 **INT:** 9**INS:** 10 **STA:** 9**DEX:** 9 **APL:** 10**AL:** Lawful Neutral**THAC0:** 20**AC:** 7**HTK:** 6**Wpn Prof:** Broadsword**Wpn:** Broadsword**Armor:** Leather and shield**RAW SOLDIERS**

Description: Tough but comparatively timid soldiers, these eight wear leather armor barely scratched by combat, and carry pristine shields and swords.

Personality: Lacking the self-assurance and experience of their elders, these eight rarely take individual initiatives, but are prone to unreasonable heroism and bravado. They become aggressive if insulted, and may occasionally bully weaklings to entertain themselves. Essentially loyal to the Eorl and Lord Cardwein, but acquiescent to any noble, they may be bribed to perform questionable deeds.

Mannerism: These soldiers are typically subservient to paladins and nobles, respectful towards wizards and priests, and belligerent towards anyone else.

HANGA the Cook

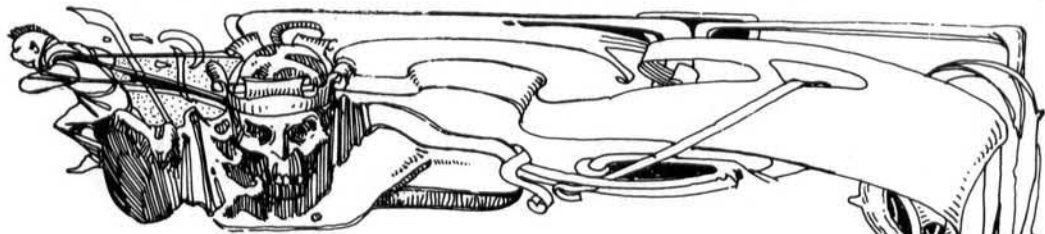
Skill Zero

STR: 10 **INT:** 6**INS:** 9 **STA:** 11**DEX:** 7 **APL:** 7**AL:** Lawful Neutral**THAC0:** 20**AC:** 10**HTK:** 5**Wpn Prof:** None**Wpns:** None**Armor:** None**HANGA**

Description: A broad, tubby woman in her forties, Hanga wears a loose dress and an apron stained with fat, blood and flour.

Personality: Hanga is the undisputed mistress of the kitchens, and seems to think that she rules the entire household, much to Halfsun's annoyance. She is bluntly unpleasant to anyone who seeks to undermine her position, and despises lay-abouts (like Eldein), but is otherwise a loudly jovial woman, who may even seem too friendly. She is disgusted by Strase, who once blatantly suggested that Hanga should take a meat-cleaver to a lazy maid. She believes that Grovett is possessed and is responsible for the Inquisitor's murder.

Mannerism: Patronizingly friendly, Hanga addresses all men as "my lovely" and all women "my little". She spits on the floor if Strase or Grovett are mentioned.



Sneaking around peoples' personal chambers, however, may reveal a great deal of information to the characters. Most notably they may discover "Braetha's" existence in the Eorl's chambers. They may also overhear Cardwein, Mosmendil and Strase plotting in Cardwein's apartments, and could catch Braetha or Strase in undisguised demon form.

Player characters may also wish to follow or watch certain NPCs for a while. Generally, the noble ladies spend their time talking and embroidering, being "ladylike" and bored. The servants and male nobles are largely occupied with their duties, while the Eorl keeps to his chambers, and the soldiers and Lord Cardwein have little to do but sit and chat and drink. However, Mosmendil is notable for his surreptitious wanderings. He frequently speaks with Cardwein or Strase, and may be found in the kitchens, talking with the servants and subtly asking what the player characters are up to. Occasionally, when the Eorl is occupied at dinner or elsewhere, he goes to the top of the keep to speak with Braetha.

THE GUARDS

Five guards are on duty at any given time. At the castle's gate, one hardened fighter commands two lesser soldiers, and two others walk around the top of the wall together. The inside of the castle is not patrolled. However, during the day servants mill around the courtyard constantly, and characters skulking around at night may encounter sleepy servants heading to or from the toilet.

AT NIGHT

Each night, the castle gates are barred, only to be opened in an emergency. The keep itself is also locked by Wythren from the inside, so that even the servants cannot get into

the great hall or the upper chambers. (Particularly determined characters may crawl along the drain and enter through the toilet, but they will stink after the attempt.)

FURTHER HINTS

While cunning and perceptive players may even prevent Lord Cardwein from overthrowing the Eorl, many players may find themselves confused by this adventure. The following list suggests some subtle and some more blatant clues which GMs may give struggling player characters.

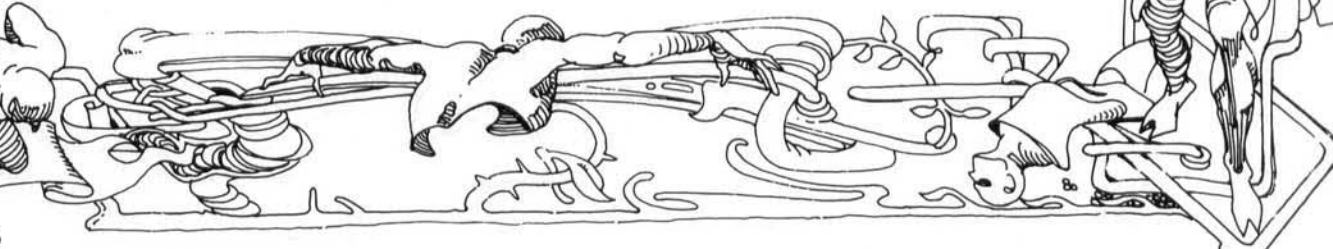
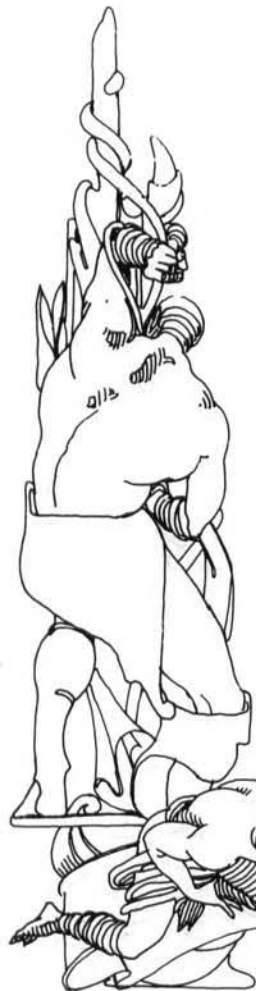
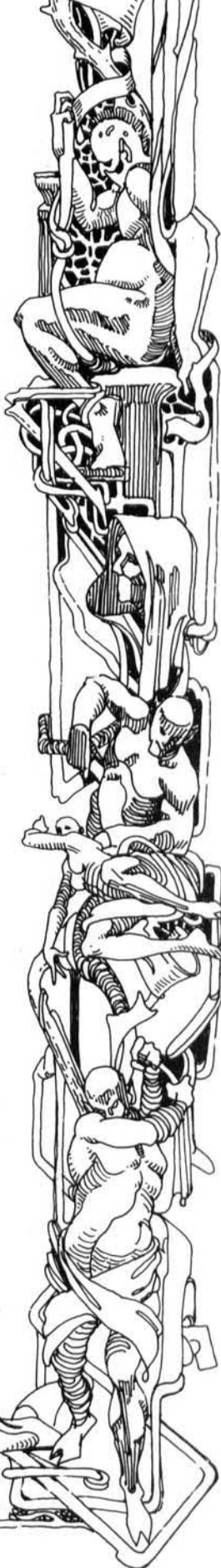
- Because of Braetha's presence, the entire keep becomes tainted. "Innocents" such as children are greatly unsettled by the place, animals avoid it, and at meals' wine turns to vinegar.

- If the characters sneak in to Cardwein's rooms, they happen to get in just as Strase has momentarily dropped her disguise. Likewise, if they enter the Eorl's chambers when he is not there, they may find Braetha in demonic form.

- A mild demonic taint spreads across the castle. Animals become edgy, and the player characters with the highest Insight scores have disturbing dreams: Knives arcing downwards, splatters of blood and cries of horror are apt ingredients for such nightmares. Dreams of Summonings, demonic seductresses or a broken crown provide more blatant clues.

- Erngan might successfully pray to his gods for the *Detect Evil* spell, then sense Strase's unholy nature and inform the player characters.

- Isobael begins to suffer from excruciating headaches, due to the proximity of Strase's room to her own. For advice on curing the affliction, she might go to a priest or wizard amongst the player characters, Erngan, or a servant with whom the characters are friendly (such as Hanga).



ELDEIN the Stable Master

Skill Zero

STR: 11 INT: 8
INS: 9 STA: 10
DEX: 8 APL: 9

AL: Lawful Good

THAC0: 20

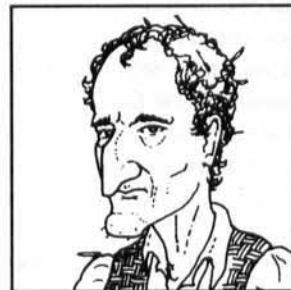
AC: 10

HTK: 3

Wpn Prof: None

Wpns: None

Armor: None

**ELDEIN**

Description: Eldein is a short, thin man in his sixties, with sparkling green eyes and a hawk-like nose. A smell of horses clings to him, and several pieces of straw are entwined in his grey hair.

Personality: Eldein is a relaxed old man, who has lived longer than most and is content to spend his twilight days snoozing in the stables, while his underlings do all of the work. His greatest enemy is Grovett, the fiery blacksmith, whom he is convinced is possessed by a demon. Strase has encouraged his hatred, and has even suggested that he kill the blacksmith.

Mannerism: Eldein nods slowly while anyone speaks to him, even if he disagrees with their words and proceeds to contradict them.

GROVETT the Blacksmith

Skill Zero, Half-demon

STR: 18/28 INT: 7
INS: 8 STA: 14
DEX: 10 APL: 7

AL: Chaotic Neutral

THAC0: 20 AC: 10

HTK: 6 Wpn Prof: Hammer

Wpns: Hammer (1D4+2)

Armor: None

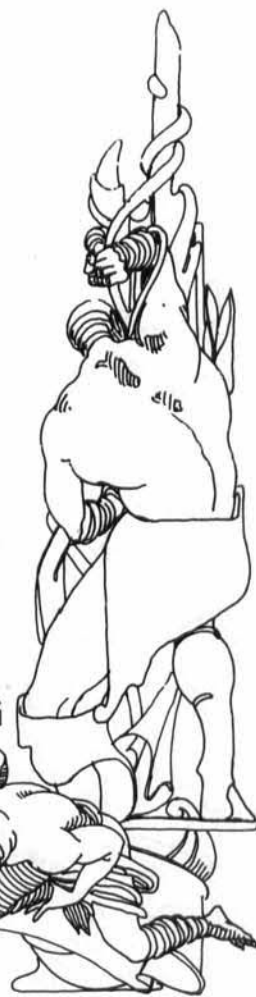
Half-Demon Abilities: Sense the Infernus (greater);
Premonitions and Damage (lesser abilities).

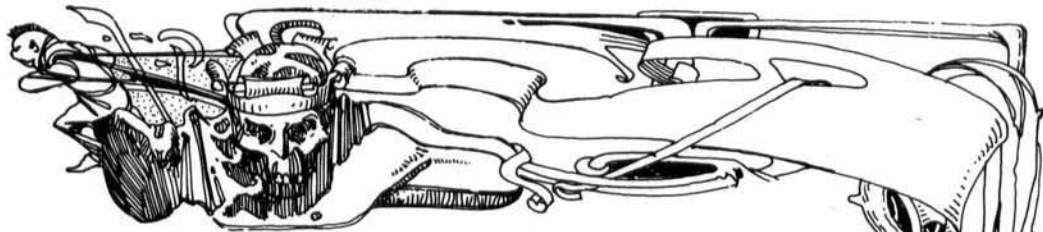
**GROVETT**

Description: Grovett is a broad-shouldered man, with fiery eyes and a nervous scowl, wearing a stained blacksmith's apron over a filthy tunic. His hands are huge and his hairy forearms are as thick as a normal man's thigh.

Personality: Grovett's derangement is Split Personality, and every dusk he becomes extremely angry and aggressive, working until dawn with an unproductive ferocity, until he collapses, exhausted, and sleeps until noon. During the daylight, he is extremely nervous and defensive, constantly fearing that someone will discover that he is a half-demon. He never leaves his smithy, having food brought down to him. He rarely sees strangers and always keeps his arms covered. His 18 Strength has caused his arms to become impossibly muscular, always rippling slightly and being covered in thick hair. He is particularly worried because, through his Sense the Infernus, he knows that there are two demons in the castle, and his Premonitions ability has given him flash-visions of a bloody murder, although he cannot identify the victim or perpetrator.

Mannerism: Faced by strangers, Grovett frowns angrily, and keeps his fists clenched. From dusk until dawn he roars and curses at visitors, attacking them with the slightest provocation. If anyone says "demons" he over-reacts dramatically.





- If the player characters mention demons or demonic plots to any of the servants, Grovett hears of their interest. He immediately rushes into the castle, grabs the first character that he sees, and shaking him or her screams "I'm not involved, and I don't know who they are or what they want, so leave me alone! I'm not a demon!". Then he rushes off.

- The character sleeping in the room where Tromas died has a nightmare, in which he or she witnesses the murder. The dream may be vague, distorted or completely accurate. The demonic assassin may appear as a foul humanoid, or disguised as an innocent member of the castle's community.

BUILDINGS IN THE CITY

All of the buildings in the castle are made of mortared stone, with slate roofs, battered with age but still sturdy. The walls are thirty feet high, dropping to rocky slopes below. (Anyone falling or jumping from the battlements takes 3D6+3 damage.)

A map of the castle and the immediate grounds can be found on page 47.

1) The Main Gatehouse:

Two stone towers flank a sturdy but aged pair of doors. Neither tower has windows or arrow slits. The gates themselves are barred by a stout oak beam, requiring two people to lift - or a successful Strength check from one person. (1a)The southern tower contains a guard room (ground floor), from which three soldiers watch the gate, while the upper floor is a dormitory for the unmarried guards. (1b)The northern tower contains two floors, each divided with wooden partitions to provide a degree of privacy for the six married soldiers. (1c)Above the gate a passageway provides arrow slits overlooking the approach to the

castle, while three small private rooms look out over the courtyard, providing accommodation for the three noble soldiers.

2) Erngan's House:

The priest's house(2a) consists of a reception room, and a bed chamber. A door also connects with the chapel(2b). This small temple contains a stone altar and other suitable accoutrements (determined by the GM as appropriate to the Campaign's deities). Eleven (non-magical) swords, belonging to past Eorls, hang around the walls, many finely worked and inlaid with gems, worth 25-500 gp each.

3) Stables:

A single long barn houses the castle's twelve horses, and there is room to accommodate a further eighteen beasts if necessary. Ladders from within and without lead up to the hay-loft, where horse-feed and straw are kept, and where particularly grubby player characters may be expected to sleep.

4) Lord Alfsten's Quarters:

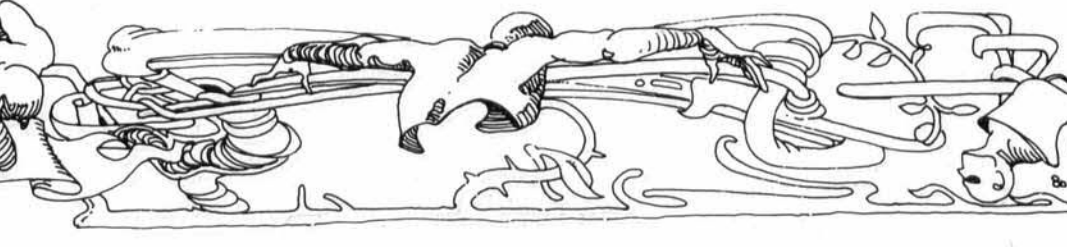
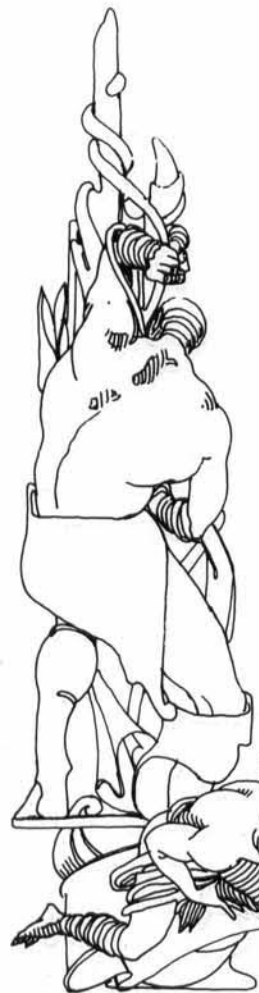
A reception room leads into Alfsten's own chamber and a spare bed chamber for his personal guests. All three rooms are comfortably and tastefully furnished, with a luxury second only to the Eorl's chambers.

5) Mosmendil's Tower:

Accessible only via a skewed stone bridge from the battlements. The tower may only be entered on the top floor, where Mosmendil keeps a little-used reception chamber. Beneath this is the wizard's private bed chamber, containing utilitarian furniture and a large locked chest: This holds Mosmendil's spell book, and various other papers, including the "History of the Great Endeavor" (enclosed with this pack). On the lowest floor, behind a thick oak door fitted with five heavy locks, is an unfurnished Summoning Chamber, where the wizard casts his demonic magics. This lower chamber is demonically tainted, and feels cold, damp and drafty.

6) Lord Halfsun's Quarters:

Two well furnished rooms, providing accommodation for Halfsun and Ruttan. The



large reception room also functions as the lord's office, where he calculates the accounts, speaks with merchants and chastises the servants. The bed chamber is dominated by a large four-posted bed and a broad, vivid tapestry of a hunting scene.

7) Servants' Houses (12):

These single room houses are the shoddiest buildings in the castle. Each houses a pair of married servants, plus any young children which they may have, and contain only the most basic and rustic of furnishings. Hanga and Eldein, though unmarried, have also been given one of these houses each.

8) Dungeon (near the Keep):

A narrow coridor provides access to a dank cell (securely bolted from without), a little used torture chamber, and a small storeroom in which prisoners' clothes are kept. If any prisoners are held in the cell, a soldier is placed on guard in the coridor.

9) Lord Cardwein's Tower:

The ground floor contains a reception room, the best furnished and most comfortable room in the tower, with a jug of wine always ready for visitors. The second floor was a spare bed chamber, but is now occupied by Strase. The uppermost chamber is Cardwein's bed chamber. Isobael's clothes remain in chests and wardrobes in the room, but she no longer sleeps here. The entire tower is tainted by the demon's presence, and all animals avoid it.

10) Guests' Quarters (4):

Most of these chambers are given to visiting nobles, priests, merchants, etc., and the player characters will likely be quartered here. Each room is clean, comfortable, but not luxurious. A somewhat larger room is usually reserved for visiting Eorls, being more comfortable, but is presently home to Isobael (Eorl Gadwulf's daughter and wife of Cardwein). A suite of three luxurious rooms is reserved for the King and members of the royal family, should they ever wish to stay.

11) Grovett's Forge:

Just outside the gate, Grovett works

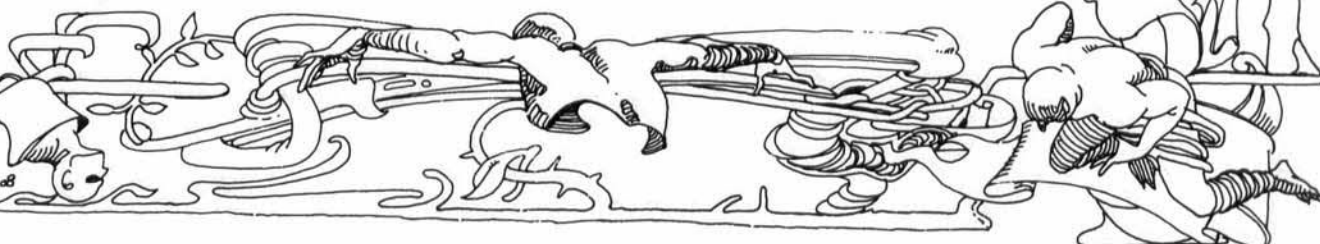
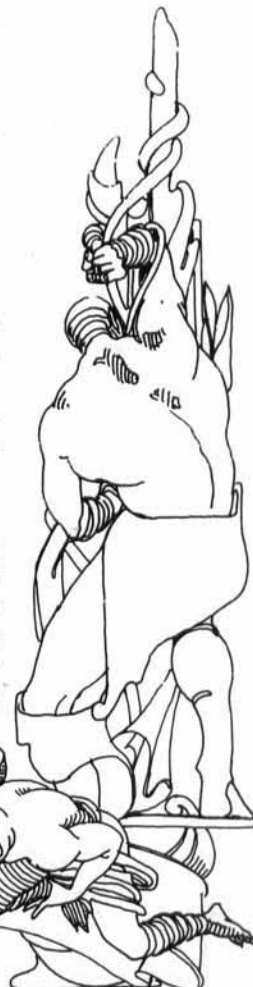
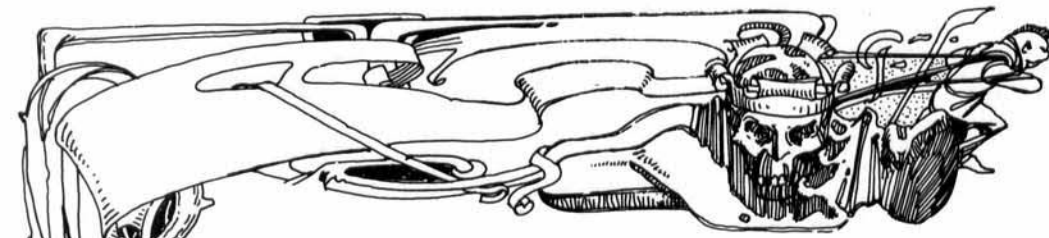
from noon until dawn. Thick black smoke pours from his chimney, and a huge woodpile outside is constantly replenished. Inside, a rough bed and ramshackle furniture are pushed to the edges of the room, the Blacksmith's tools litter house and the heat of the forge billow from the door and windows.

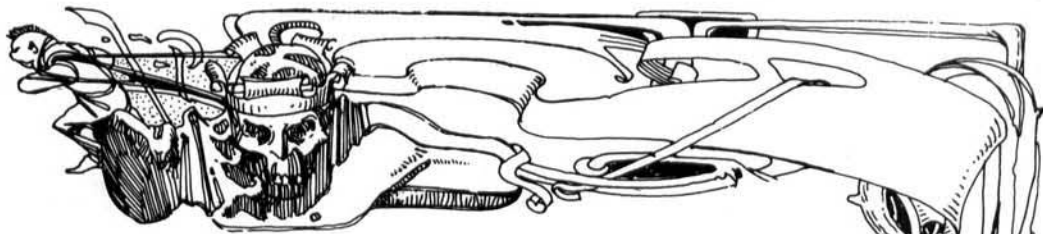
12) The Keep:

At the front of the Keep, a pair of doors lead into the Great Hall, and a flight of stairs descend to the kitchens. The servants' sections of the keep occupy the two cellars, the lower of which is filled with foods, wine, beer, and so forth, and the upper of which is occupied by the kitchens, in which the unmarried servants also sleep at night. The Great Hall contains two tables, the lord's table facing the door and the common table running along the length of the room, each flanked by benches. From the Great Hall, a door leads to a small antechamber, containing a primitive toilet, and a flight of stairs run up to the Audience Hall. In this under-furnished hall, the Eorl greets visitors, judges disputes, and so forth, seated on a throne and usually requiring lesser mortals to stand rather than to sit. On the top floor, accessible only via stairs from the Audience Hall, is Wythren's small chamber, and the Eorl's own sumptuous apartment. Eorl Gadwulf's chamber contains tapestries, fur rugs, cushions, flagons of fine wines, and other modest luxuries, and has access to a fortified balcony and roof from which the entire castle may be surveyed. The top floor is tainted by the demon's presence, and several bats flit around the Keep during the night.

13) Outbuildings (2):

Each shack contains a hole in the ground, covered by four wooden boards. The pit beneath is connected to a tunnel two feet wide by two feet high, and metal grates next to each toilet provide drainage for rainwater which also flushes waste towards the nearby





cesspit. This stinking underground chamber (five feet deep and currently half full of waste) is emptied by opening a sluice, its contents then spilling down the the hillside, to be washed into the ravine.

COMPLETING THE SCENARIO

The ending of this scenario depends entirely upon the actions of the player characters. They may save the Eorl, expose the traitors and banish the demons, or may end up fleeing from the castle having made deadly enemies. There is no set outcome, but rather an innumerable variety of endings, most of which may lead on the further adventures.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Foiling Cardwein's plans or killing him is worth 200 XP, and defeating Mosmendil is worth 300. A Demon warrior summoned by the Thaumaturgist carries an XP reward of 70, and each of the two main demons are worth 300 XP. Points should also be given if Mosmendil or Cardwein are forced to flee (100 each), the Eorl is not slain (500), or the rebellion is foiled (1,000). Additional points may also be given - up to 1,000XP - as rewards for particularly outstanding pieces of deduction and detective work.

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

Once Eorl Gadwulf is dead, a civil war may be inevitable, as the border nobles have already been stirred up against the King, and now regard the Eorl's death with grave suspicion. Even if the player characters claim that the Eorl died in a demonic plot, how are

these nobles to know that they tell the truth? Rumors circulate that the King had Gadwulf killed, even without Cardwein's lies adding weight to the story, and the poorer lords rise up.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

If the player characters uncovered Cardwein's plot, and prevented him from implicating them in the Eorl's death (e.g. by killing him or somehow exposing his plot), there may be rumors that they are agents of the King. As such stories spread, they also come to be suspected of attacking Ilech Vale, either on the King's orders, or to steal the magic sword. If Cardwein succeeded in blaming them for the murder, and the demons engineered their escape, then these rumors are confirmed by Cardwein.

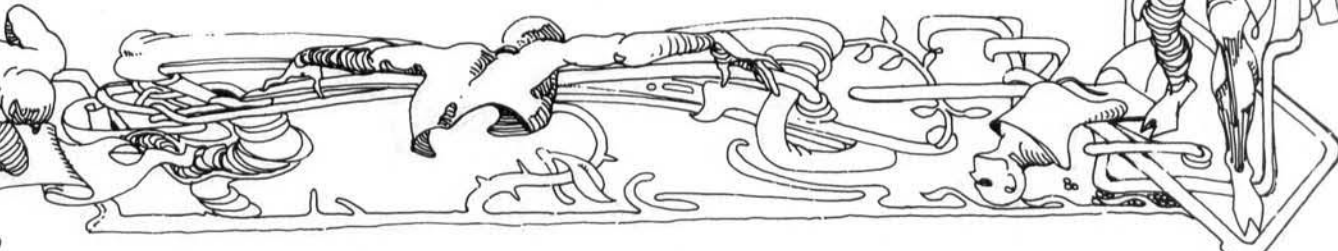
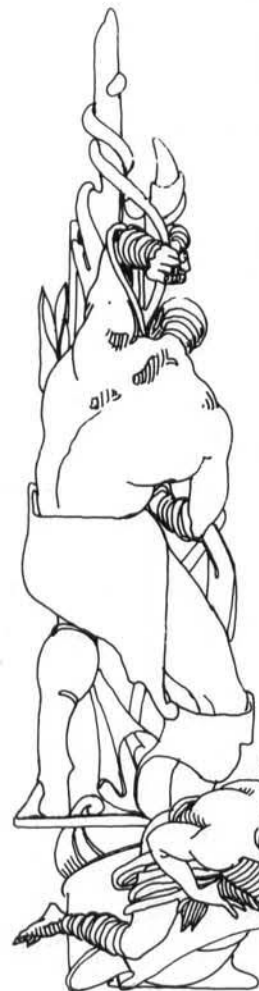
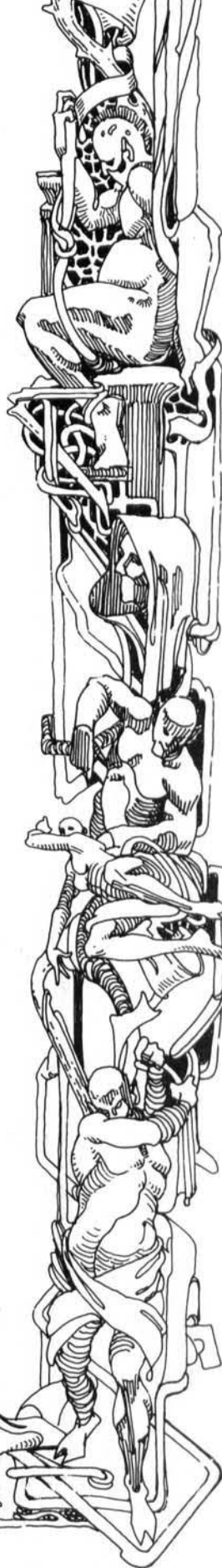
In the war to come, then, they may find themselves forced to back the rightful King, or some other imposter, as the border nobles no longer trust them. However, cunning characters may find work with these rebels, and even get close enough to Cardwein to reap revenge, if they wish, by offering to "defect" from the service of the King to a border noble.

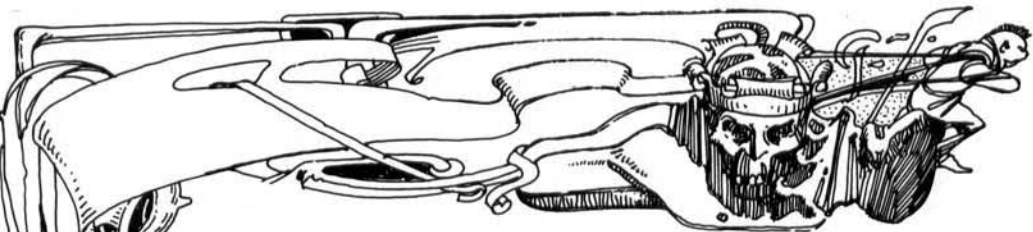
The following section explains the objectives of the rival political forces in the Kingdom. If GMs have set the preceding adventures in an already-detailed area of their campaigns, these names and other details may be altered to suit any requirements.

THE POLITICS

The King, ALFRETH, has a small personal army, but is largely dependent upon the support of his Eorls.

Eorl CARDWEIN (or whoever replaces Gadwulf, if Cardwein is dealt with by the player characters), is committed to the rebellion, but needs the support of other nobles.





Eorl GERENADD is a noble from the borders, poor but brave, and with a great following amongst the lesser nobles and Clans in the mountains. He resents paying taxes to the King, and so supports a rebellion, but he is shrewd enough to distrust Cardwein and ambitious enough to realize that he might make himself King.

Eorl SEYWICH, by contrast, sees no virtue in treason, and no profit either, and intends to back his King unless the war is clearly a lost cause.

Eorl AETHELSTEN is a cultured, educated man, who dislikes the border lords, and particularly despises the illiterate Gerenadd. However, he feels that his rich farmlands are too heavily taxed by the present King, and may ally with Cardwein if promised lower taxes. However, he is deeply pious and would not traffic with anyone who deals with demons, instead supporting a "compromise" candidate for the throne, such as the trustworthy Seywich.

Eorl ERSWEIN does not wish to lose his meagre estates by backing the wrong side in any conflict, and so remains neutral, allowing anyone to recruit or hide on his lands, but opposing any army which attempts to march through these estates.

Eorl IVAN GROFBURT holds many lands on the coast, where his people settled from another land. He has many kin abroad, and reacts to the war by bringing many fighters across from his homelands. He hopes that when they have helped to win the war these immigrants will be given lands in the Kingdom, and that his people's influence will thus grow here. Perhaps he plans a later insurrection, in which he brings in yet more foreign knights to make himself King. Which side he actually supports depends upon what lands are promised to his people by each, although he is slower to trust the border nobles.

The native MERCHANTS of the Kingdom are generally a loyal bunch, nominally supporting the King, but actually doing little to anger either side. Foreign merchants, however, actively support

whichever contender offers them the lowest taxes upon becoming King, supplying food, foreign mercenaries and arms. Most favor the cosmopolitan Grofburt or the educated Aethelsten as monarchs, but are nothing if not adaptable.

The CABAL, meanwhile, rallies behind Mosmendil's faction, whichever that might be, except for one or two Anti-Traditionalists, who quietly work to undermine his position. Other Guilds and associations of thieves, assassins and wizards might back other contenders, as might various priests and temples.

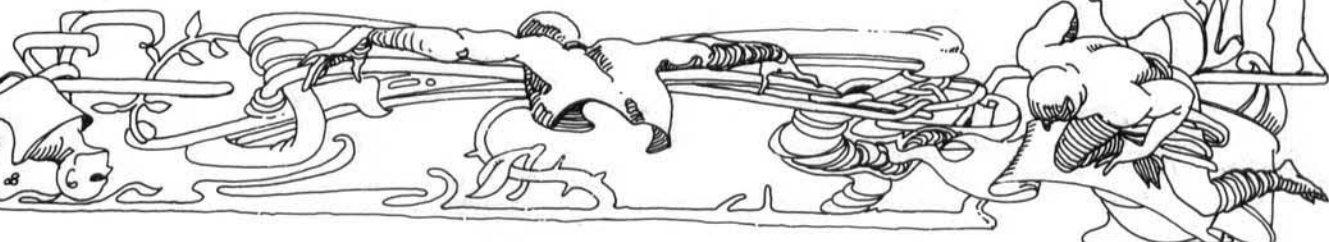
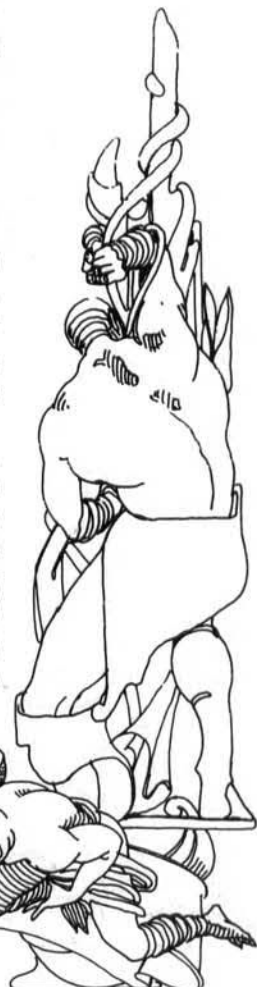
THE INFERNUS

Seducers of many spheres flock to the land during the war. Gusion and Forneus continue to work together, sending Seducers and Warriors to ensure that the war continues for as long as possible, with as many treacheries and betrayals as possible throughout its course. Opportunistic demons also appear, spreading cruelty, brigandage, false religions, and any other sin which mortals might easily commit at times of great upheaval.

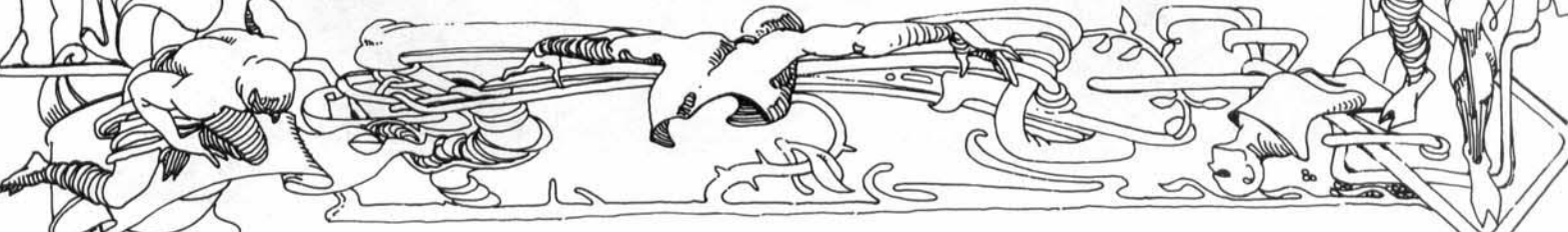
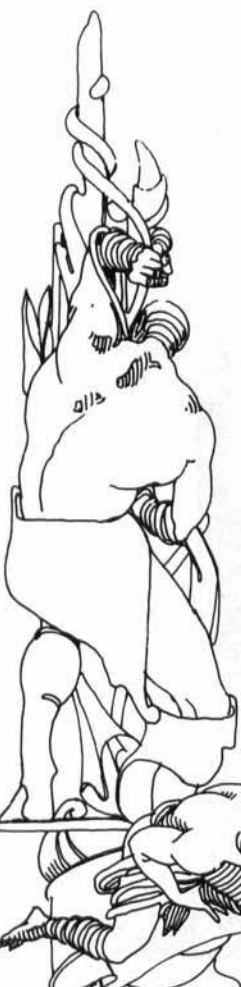
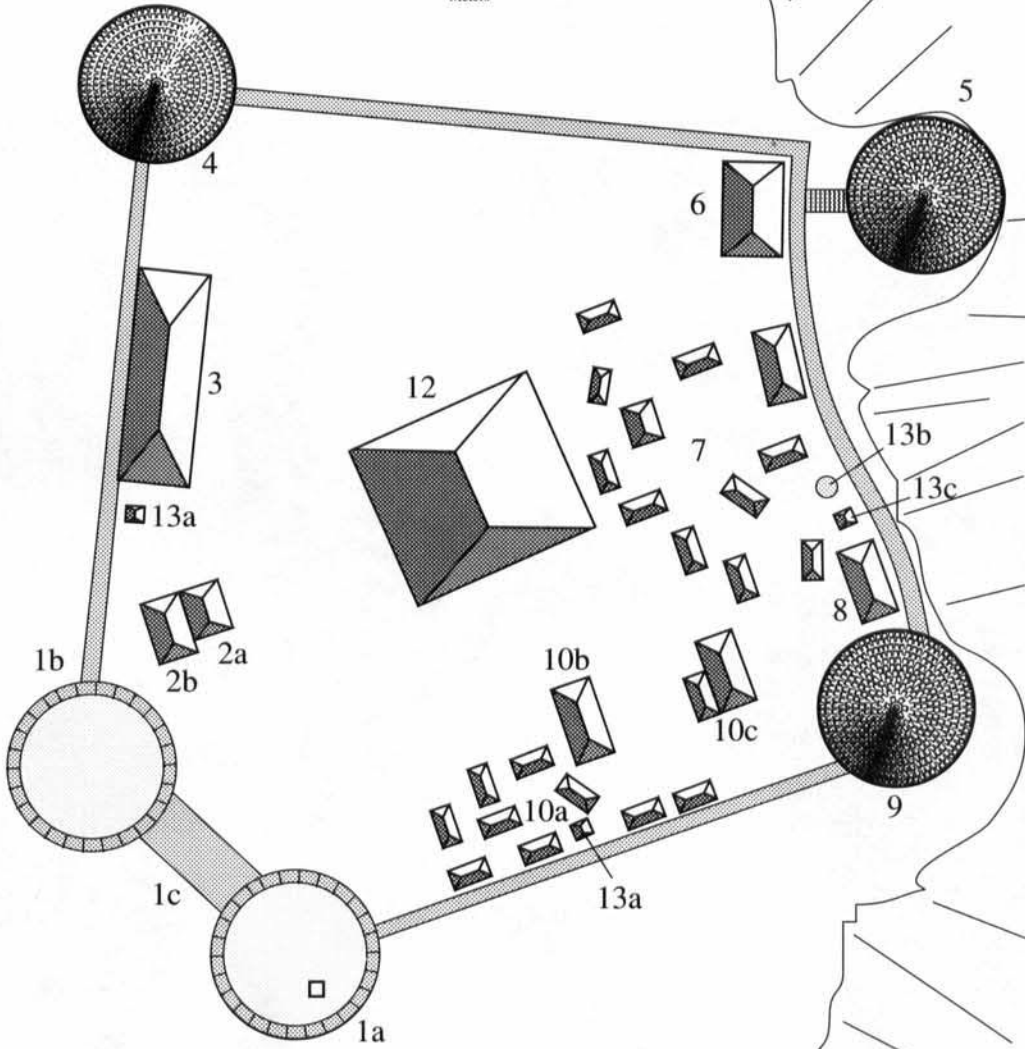
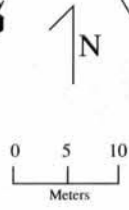
THE OUTCOME

It is up to each GM to decide who eventually wins a civil war (if there is one). Certainly, the player characters could play a major part in the subterfuge, diplomacy, or simply the fighting which abounds during this time.

But whoever eventually becomes King, the land will have been deeply scarred, with many dead, crops burnt, and animals slaughtered. False prophets roam the land, and demonic Cults proliferate amongst the starving people. The sins of revenge, murder, greed and brigandage are easily encouraged. Perhaps raiders have begun to spill into the Kingdom across the mountains.



Eorl Gadwulf's Castle



Half-Demon Random Generation Tables

ABERRATIONS AND ABILITIES

Strength (1D10)

- 1 Abnormal Wounds - Armor
- 2 Animal Features - Armor
- 3 Animal Features - Lethal Ability
- 4 Extra Teeth - Damage
- 5 Aura - Spell-like Power
- 6 Demonic Skin - Armor
- 7 Demonic Skin - Damage
- 8 Diabolical Touch - Damage
- 9 Inhuman Joints - Movement
- 10 Misshapen - Damage

Intelligence (1D10)

- 1 Aura - Sense of the Infernus
- 2 Parent's Eye - Mental Ability
- 3 Parent's Eye - Perception
- 4 Parent's Eye - Spell-like Power
- 5 Parent's Eye - Sense of the Infernus
- 6 Extra Eye - Perception
- 7 Extra Eye - Premonitions
- 8 Extra Eye - Sense of the Infernus
- 9 Diabolical Touch - Spell-like Power
- 10 Warp Nature - Spell-like Power

Insight (1D10)

- 1 Parent's Eye - Premonitions
- 2 Parent's Eye - Spell-like Powers
- 3 Parent's Eye - Mental Ability
- 4 Parent's Eye - Stealth
- 5 Distorted Reflection - Premonitions
- 6 Distorted Reflection - Sense of the Infernus
- 7 Distorted Reflection - Mental Ability
- 8 Perverse Motherhood - Armor
- 9 Disease Carrier - Premonitions
- 10 Warp Nature Sense of the Infernus

Dexterity (1D10)

- 1 Animal Features - Movement
- 2 Animal Features - Spell-like Power
- 3 Animal Features - Stealth
- 4 Inhuman Joints - Movement
- 5 Inhuman Joints - Spell-like Power
- 6 Inhuman Joints - Stealth
- 7 Demonic Skin - Stealth
- 8 Extra Teeth - Stealth
- 9 Misshapen - Movement
- 10 Warp Nature - Spell-like Power

Stamina (1D10)

- 1 Abnormal Wounds - Lethal Ability
- 2 Abnormal Wounds - Armor
- 3 Demonic Skin - Damage
- 4 Demonic Skin - Armor
- 5 Misshapen - Movement
- 6 Misshapen - Armor

- 7 Perverse Motherhood - Damage
- 8 Unnatural Hair - Spell-like Power
- 9 Unsettling Scent - Armor
- 10 Growths - Armor

Appeal (1D10)

- 1 Unnatural Hair - Spell-like Ability
- 2 Animal Companions - Spell-like Ability
- 3 Animal Companions - Mental Ability
- 4 Diabolical Touch - Damage
- 5 Diabolical Touch - Mental Ability
- 6 Disease Carrier - Mental Ability
- 7 Distorted Reflection - Perception
- 8 Parent's Eye - Mental Ability
- 9 Unsettling Scent - Perception
- 10 Warp Nature - Sense of the Infernus

DERANGEMENTS AND TEMPERAMENTS BASED UPON ABILITIES

Ability	Derangement	Temperament
Lethal Ability	Self-Deluding	Guilty
Mental Ability	Obsession	Malevolent
Perception	Weakness	Paranoid
Premonitions	Visions	Frightened
Sense the Infernus	Voices	Unclean
Spell-like Power	Moody	Plotting

DERANGEMENTS AND TEMPERAMENTS BASED UPON ATTRIBUTES

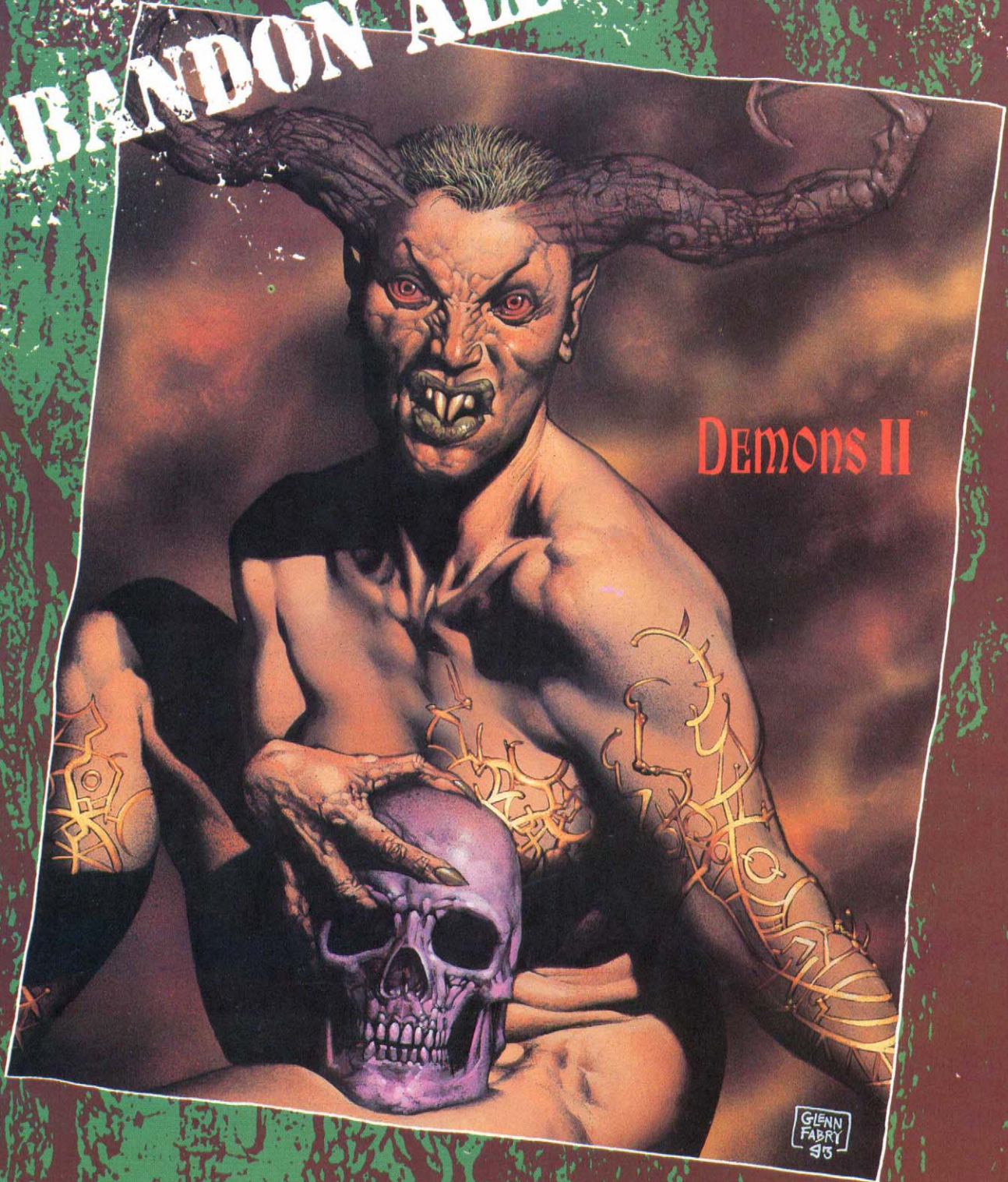
Attribute	Derangement	Temperament
Strength	Blood Lust	Monstrous
Intelligence	Obsession	Enigmatic
Insight	Visions	Malevolent
Dexterity	Weakness	Crawling
Stamina	Weakness	Aggressive
Appeal	Impotent	Plotting

RANDOM DERANGEMENTS (1D20)

- 1 Blood Lust
- 2-3 Follower
- 4 Impotent
- 5-7 Moody
- 8-11 Obsession
- 12-14 Self-Deluding
- 15 Split Personality
- 16 Visions
- 17 Voices
- 18-20 Weakness



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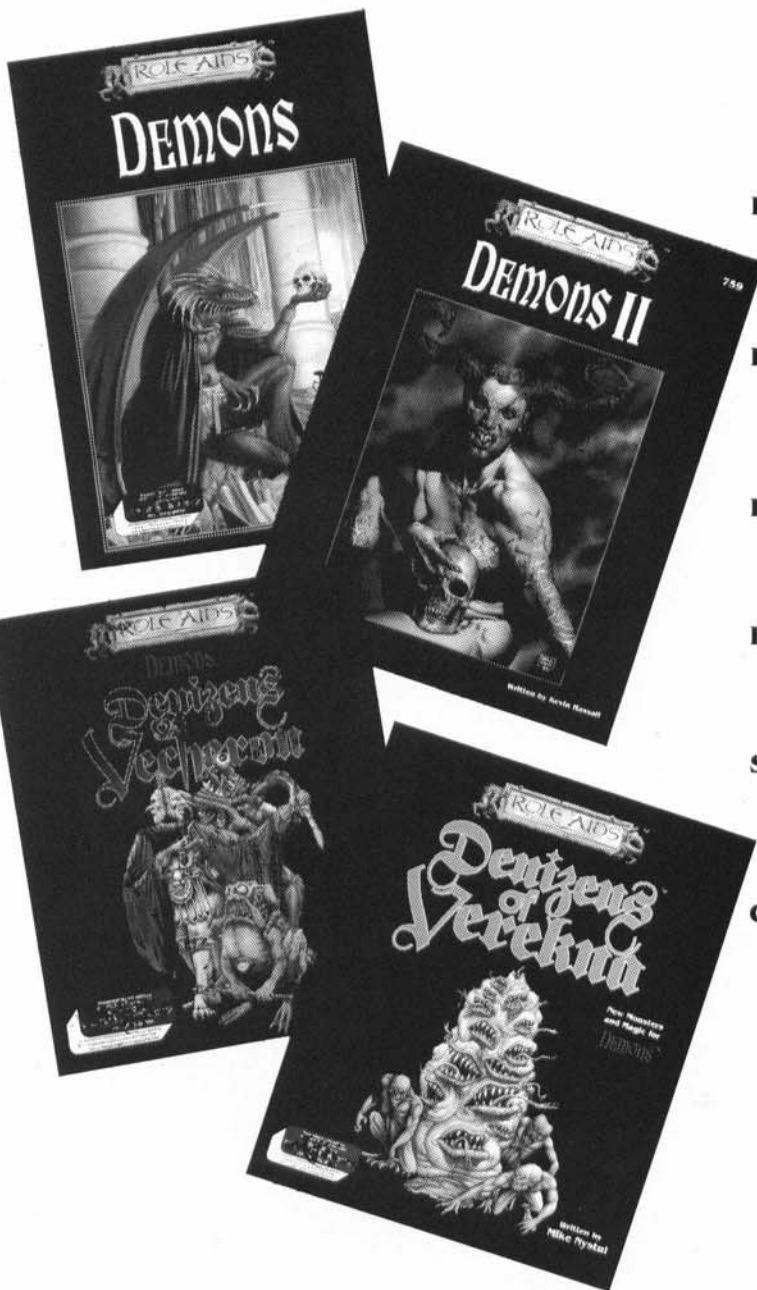


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No setting as detailed as the Infernus could be complete in one volume. Demons II swings wide the gates with further information on Slayers, Half-demons and the Cabal, and expands on the mythos with the addition of Cults and the Inquisitor character class.

Denizens of Vecheron (#755)

This folio features a complete roster of demons from the demi-plane of Vecheron, including complete statistics for all of the Marshals, Generals and Governors, and an overview of their Lieutenants and Thanes.

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- A new character class, the Inquisitor, his habits and techniques;
- Expanded information on Slayers, Thaumaturgists and half-demons;
- Descriptions of the Gates, the demons' pathways to the plane prime;
- Information on the ways of the demon-worshipping cults;
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Strike down the evil!



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