

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
2nd Edition

P L A N E

S C A P E™

ADVENTURE

FIRES of DIS



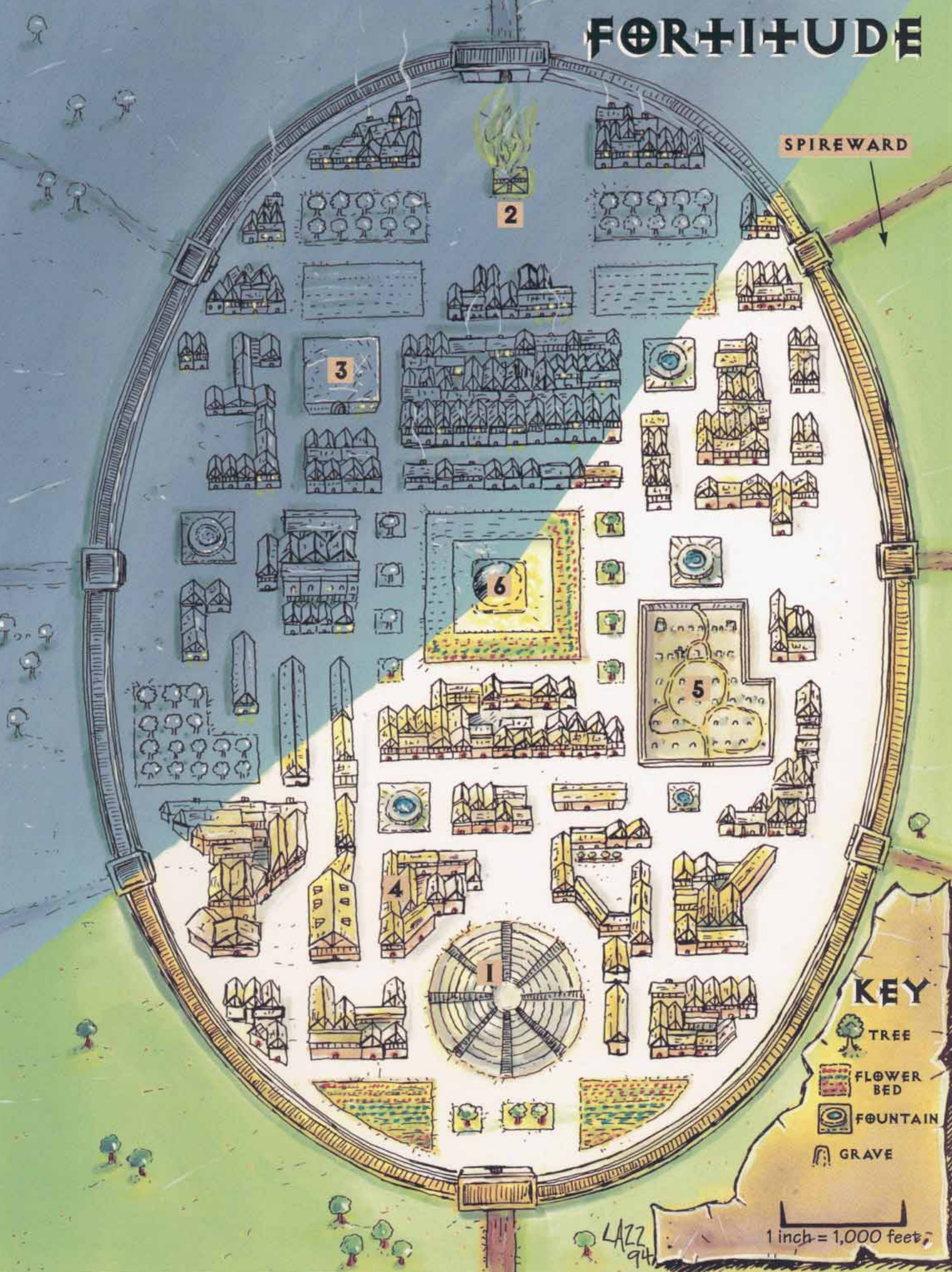


FIRE[★]S ⊕ F DI[★]S

ADVENTURE

FORTITUDE

SPIREWARD



KEY



TREE



FLOWER BED



FOUNTAIN



GRAVE

1 inch = 1,000 feet

Lazz
94

RIBCAGE

SPIREWARD

STEAM GATE

RIGUS GATE

MAIN GATE/
SPIRE GATE

KEY

MOUNTAIN

DOOR

STATUE

WELL

HOT SPRINGS

1 inch = 1,000 feet

150 ft.

100 ft.

50 ft.

50 ft.

100 ft.

150 ft.

LAZ 294



AVERNUS

THE WASTELAND

THE STIGMARIS
MOUNTAINS

DARKSPINE

HERE THERE
BE FIREBALLS

Kobolds
Goblins

THE RIVER STYX

HERE THERE
BE FIENDS

ROAD OF GOOD INTENT

FOOTHILLS

GATE FROM RIBCAGE



GATE TO DIS



RUINS



FIREBALL



CLIFFS IMPASSABLE



PILLAR OF SKULLS

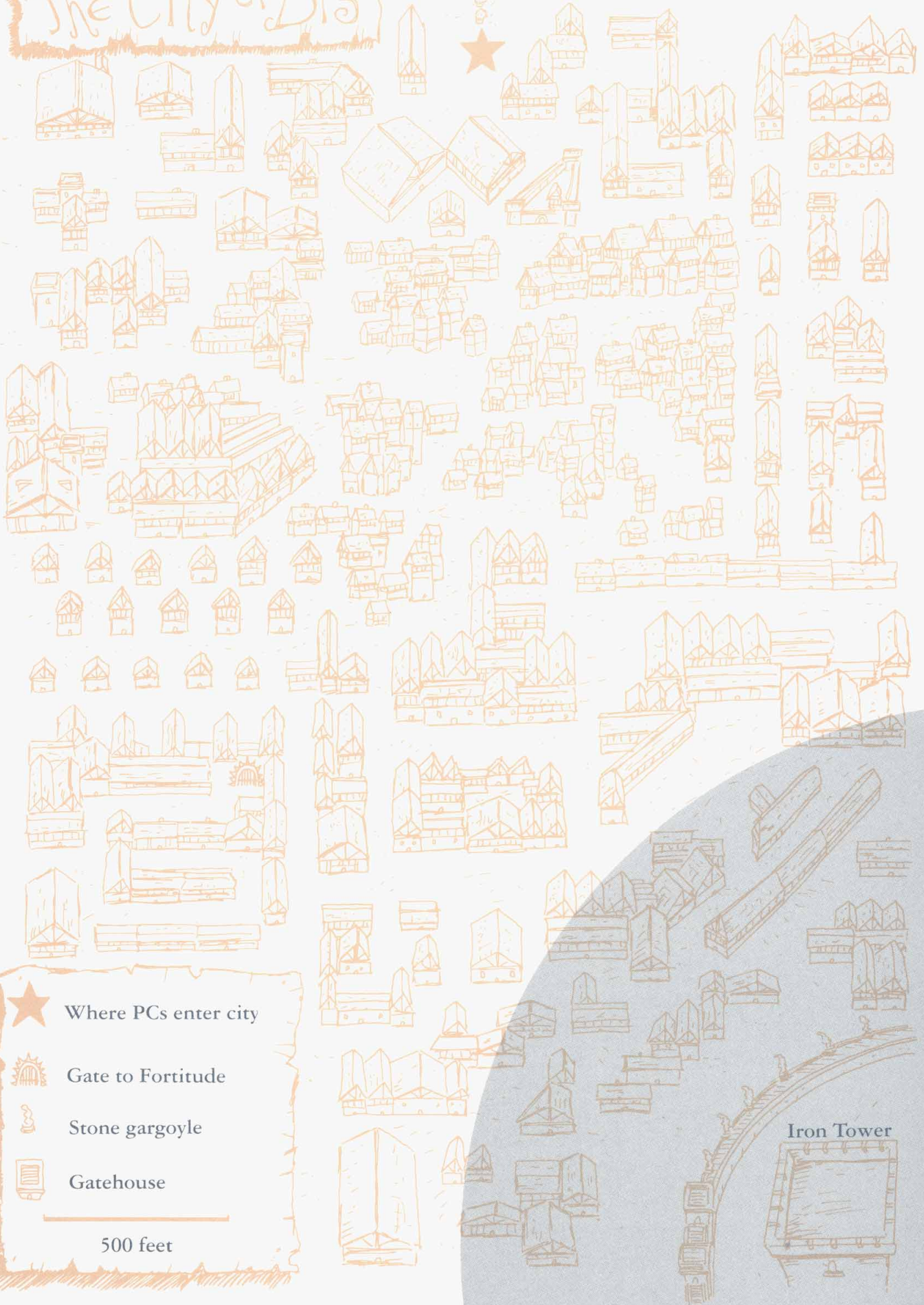
HERE THERE
BE

MA

JAMAT'S LAIR



The City of Dis



Where PCs enter city



Gate to Fortitude



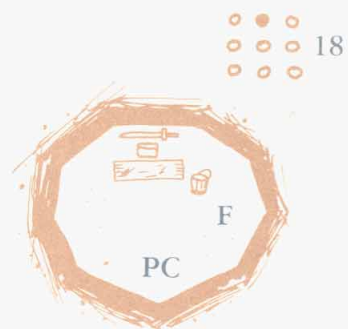
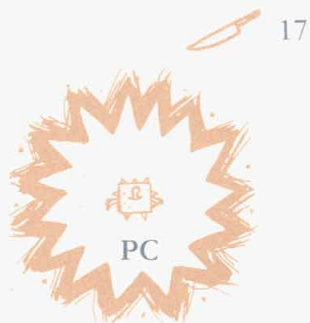
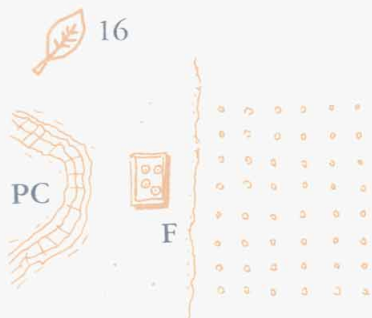
Stone gargoyle



Gatehouse

500 feet

Iron Tower



The Maggot Pit AND TIAMAT'S LAIR



Maggots



Foliage



Greed pool



Cursed treasure



Acid pool



Fear aura



Boulder

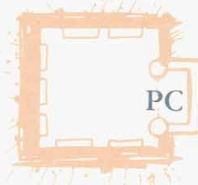
350 feet

The Iron Tower

∞ 1



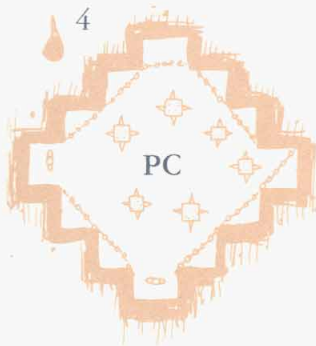
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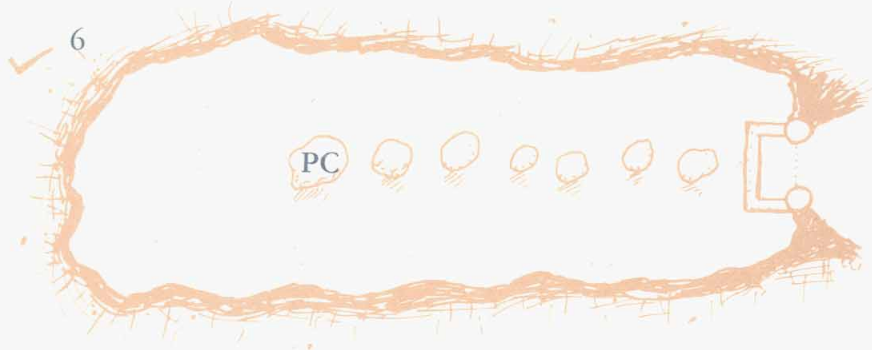
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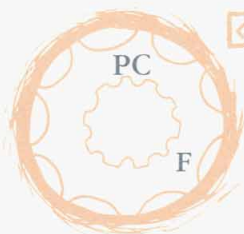
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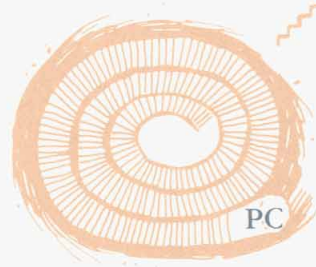
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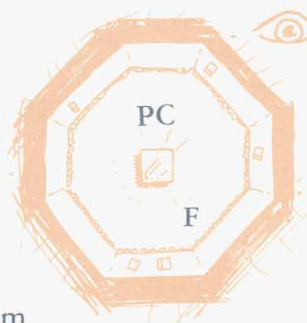
8



9



10



11



12



PC Where PCs enter room
F Where fiend enters room



Bones



Prisoner



Iron block



Tank



Table



Balcony



Floating rock



Mirror



Flowers



Bucket



Wall hanging



Stairs



Giant skull



Hill



Sword



Torture device



Bookshelf

Fleshy ground



Chair



50 feet

◆ FIRES OF DIS ◆

CONTENTS

AN INTRODUCTION	2
<i>Including the Background of our story, a Summary of the adventure, notes for Preparing to Play, and an overview of the Factions and Nonplayer Characters that may become Involved.</i>	
CHAPTER I: THE SYING	6
<i>In which a Paladin is beset by Fiends, and the Heroes are charged with recovering a dear Object that has been Lost.</i>	
CHAPTER II: UNDER THE RIBS	14
<i>In which the Heroes may seek Aid from the citizens of Ribcage to ease their Passage through a dark and Evil plane.</i>	
CHAPTER III: RED JOURNEY	22
<i>In which the Heroes must cross the Perilous wasteland of Avernus in search of the Doorway to Dis.</i>	
CHAPTER IV: A CITY THAT BURNS	34
<i>In which the Heroes find the Scorching city of Dis to be as great a Menace as its Inhabitants.</i>	
CHAPTER V: THE LORD OF DIS	46
<i>In which the Heroes seek and find the Object of their Quest within the treacherous Iron Tower of Dispater.</i>	
CHAPTER VI: HEARTS AND MINDS	56
<i>In which the Heroes restore the lost Object to its owner and must Resolve the differing Fates of a cunning Fiend, a faithless Paladin, and a shifting Gate-town.</i>	
AN APPENDIX: ON BAATOR AND THE BAATEZU	64
<i>Including the dark of Magic on Baator, the considerable Powers of the Fiends found there, and the Ways by which they may suffer Harm.</i>	

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A dastardly plot's hatching in Dis, a chance for the hordes of ultimate evil to strike a hammer-blow against the forces of good. It'll take cutters with brains as sharp as their swords to journey into fiery Baator itself and try to put things right. But look out, berk, 'cause there's plots on top of plots, and it's hard to see the dark of things when you're caught in a fiendish peel!

AN IN+R+DUC+I+ON

BACKGROUND

The plane of the Outlands is theoretically shaped somewhat like a ring, and along its outer edge lie sixteen gate-towns, so named because they were built around or near gates leading to the sixteen surrounding Outer Planes. For the most part, the attitudes and beliefs of the folks in each town mirror the nature of the plane the burg's associated with. So the town of

Plague-Mort, for example, built around the gate to the Abyss, is about as chaotic and evil a gate-town as a body'd ever want to see. Excelsior, on the other

hand, poised at the base of Mount Celestia, is a town that literally glows, full of sods so pleasant they might drive a visitor barmy. Fact is, if the folks in a gate-town get so worked up that it

becomes *too* much like its next-door plane,

the whole place goes sliding right off the Outlands and becomes *part* of the plane.

Well, berk, the chant is Fortitude's finally ready to make the big leap into Arcadia. The Harmonium — the faction with the strongest influence in the gate-town and the plane as well — has been whipping the folks of Fortitude into a fevered pitch of order, harmony, and good, hoping to push the town's alignment to the point where it'll start to slide. What few know, though, is the dark of the faction's zeal: They want to make up for land they *lost* from Arcadia. See, they brought chaotic types into the lawful plane to turn them into "proper citizens," but the influx of chaos caused a whole layer of Arcadia to slip into another plane.

To usher Fortitude into Arcadia, the faction's planned a sparkling ceremony — dubbed the *Harmonious Ascension* — and they've arranged for a much-venerated paladin from Arcadia to preside. This paladin, known as Daneel the Smiter of Fiends, has cut such a noble swath through the forces of evil with his famous *holy avenger* sword *Guardian* that he's practically the living embodiment of law and order. With a bit of luck, his presence and guidance at the ceremony'll stir up the citizens of Fortitude just enough to push the town over the edge.

THE FIEND IN +HE +IN+MEN+

Daneel's legendary campaigns against evil have earned him a few enemies, not the least of which is the archduke Dispater, ruler of Dis on the plane of Baator. Practically a power, Dispater could kill the paladin easily enough — if that's how the baatezu went about their business. However, the lawful fiends prefer to outwit their enemies and ensnare them in subtle traps.

Dispater's got just such a trap laid out for Daneel. From Anarchist spies who've wormed their way into the ranks of the Harmonium, Dispater learned that Daneel's making a trip to Sigil to meet with Factol Sarin just a few days before the Ascension. The archduke's arranged for a gang of baatezu to waylay the paladin, lift his prized holy sword, and bring it back to the Iron Tower on Dis. When righteous bashers come after the sword, Dispater'll let 'em have it back without too much fuss — primarily because the sword'll be tainted by then, inscribed with a secret *gate* spell designed to open a path between the planes.

A blood can probably guess what'll happen next. The *holy avenger*'ll be returned to Daneel, and the Hardheads'll start the Ascension just as quick as they can. But as soon as Fortitude starts to shift, the sword'll open a gate to Dis, allowing the spirit of a fiend to come through and take control of Daneel. The fiend'll make

Y+U CAN'+
CHANGE A BERK'S MIND
WITH A S+ICK.

I+ +AKES
A HAMMER, A+ LEAS+.

— HARMON+UM
PROVERB

the poor sod spill innocent blood and turn stag on his faith in front of the whole town. Daneel's career as a paladin'll be cut short, and he'll spend the rest of his days in base humiliation, if he ain't killed outright. What's more, the sight of such a respected hero of legend abandoning his noble ideals'll be enough to disillusion the gathered masses and make the Harmonious Ascension grind to a spirit-shattering halt.

Fact is, it's a pretty clever scheme, and all it'll take to work itself out is a bunch of cutters brave enough, greedy enough, or *addle-coved* enough to venture into Baator and steal the *holy avenger* back from Dispater's Iron Tower. . . .

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The player characters (PCs) begin the adventure in Sigil, the City of Doors, milling about the Great Bazaar and soaking up the exotic flavor of goods from a hundred worlds.

In *Chapter I* the PCs get the chance to save Daneel from a baatezu attack. Depending upon their actions, they're either hired or forced by the Harmonium to retrieve the stolen sword and bring it to Fortitude for the Ascension. Ideally, they take a portal from Sigil to the gate-town of Ribcage, but PCs in a hurry may try to go directly to stinking Baator itself.

If they take the portal to Ribcage, in *Chapter II* the PCs arrive just outside the town, in the mountain range known as the Vale of the Spine. In Ribcage they can find a guide that'll lead them through Baator, a pass of safe conduct to fend off the fiends of the plane, and perhaps even a cover story to help them bluff their way through hazardous encounters.

In *Chapter III* the heroes arrive on the endless, red plain of Avernus, the first layer of Baator. They must make their way across the wasteland – braving dangers from the terrain and the inhabitants alike – in order to reach the lair of Tiamat, queen of evil dragonkind, which contains the gate leading to Dis.

In *Chapter IV* the PCs find themselves on Dis, the second layer of Baator, near the infinite city of the same name. They must travel to and through the burning city – full of enslaved petitioners forced to continually destroy and rebuild the scorching roads and structures – and gain entrance to the mutating Iron Tower of Dispater.

In *Chapter V* the cutters may use a new magical item to explore the tower and recover the stolen *holy avenger*. Eventually confronted by the avatar of Dispater (and a few dozen other fiends), the PCs learn that the archduke's only too glad to let them have the sword – for a small price. But whether they barely escape from the tower or leave with Dispater's blessing, the PCs still must deal with a pit fiend who attempts to twist the situation to his advantage.

In *Chapter VI* the PCs deliver the sword to the Harmonium in Fortitude and witness the seeming corruption of Daneel at the ceremony of Ascension. They must stop the ensuing campaign of evil, defeat the fiend controlling the paladin's body, and, through their actions or inactions, decide the ultimate fate of the town.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

First of all, the Dungeon Master (DM) should read *Fires of Dis* before running it, to get a sense of how the adventure should unfold. The DM should also be familiar with the PLANESCAPE™ *Campaign Setting*, the boxed set that introduces the majesty of the planes, in order to get the most fun out of *Fires of Dis* and run a campaign rich with planar flavor and feel. In addition, a DM may want to expand his or her knowledge of the planes with the *Planes of Law Campaign Expansion* boxed set, which includes a 32-page sourcebook on the nine layers of Baator, and the PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® *Appendix*, which reveals in full the dark of the baatezu and their powers.

Throughout *Fires of Dis*, the DM will find *italicized* text in amber, meant to be read to or paraphrased for the players. Items marked with amber diamonds (◆) are meant for the DM's eyes only. Special **DM NOTES** also appear throughout the adventure, providing extra information or advice on handling situations.

Fires of Dis is designed for a party of four to six characters of 5th to 9th levels. However, it can be adapted for play by larger or more experienced parties by pumping up the strength of the opposition. The DM can replace some of the fiends encountered with more powerful types of baatezu. What's more, the DM can make full use of the baatezu's ability to *gate* other fiends into a fight, and any baatezu that appear can try to *gate* in still others.

The DM may wish to reduce or eliminate the baatezu's use of the *gate* ability for parties that are less powerful or less experienced. Assume the fiends know of Dispater's ultimate goal and don't wish to kill the PCs (or that they simply prefer to teleport to safety rather than continue to fight).

Course, any cutters that try to hack their way through this adventure will hit the blinds, or find themselves in the dead-book. The PCs will run into many situations where swordplay is not the best solution to the problem. Remember, berk – a PLANESCAPE campaign is about ideas, not just beast-bashing. Reward player characters for thinking as well as for using their weapons.

A WORD ABOUT FACTIONS

This adventure doesn't assume that the PCs belong to any particular faction; any cutter of any philosophical bent can participate. Only the Harmonium, the Mercykillers, the Revolutionary League, and the Free League have a high stake in the events. However, a PC who belongs to any other faction may receive reasons to go or stay from her headquarters in Sigil, but she won't be commanded one way or the other.

THE HARMONIUM

Of all the factions, the Hardheads are the most dedicated to retrieving the sword: They *must* have it back for the Harmonious Ascension to go over as planned. Besides, the sodding fiends attacked a respected member of their faction right in the mean streets of Sigil! That kind of spit in the eye of the law can't be tolerated. The baatezu'll just have to learn the hard way to toe the Harmonium's mark.

THE MERCYKILLERS

These bashers think along the same lines as the Harmonium, but the Mercykillers are more keen on *punishing* the fiends than anything else. The multiverse can't become perfect until every lawbreaking berk is cleansed by the mighty hand of justice. And right now, there ain't a group more in need of cleansing than the thieving baatezu who jumped the paladin.

THE REVOLUTIONARY LEAGUE

The Anarchists want the sword kept *out* of the hands of the Harmonium; fact is, their spies helped the baatezu steal it in the first place. The Hardheads use the law like a chain around the neck of oppressed bodies everywhere – trying to push Fortitude into Arcadia is a prime example – and a successful Ascension'll just help them pull the links even tighter. Truth is, *all* structures of power have to be smashed into bits, and the Harmonium's house is a ripe place to start.

The Revolutionary League has no fixed headquarters in Sigil and no factol. An Anarchist PC might join the quest just to see if he could stop the Hardheads from getting it back.

THE FREE LEAGUE

As soon as enough Indeps hear about the stolen sword, they'll head into Dis and try to reach it *first*. They'd probably just sell the thing to whoever (or whatever) offered them the most jink, barring the Harmonium. Fact is, all jink aside, the Indeps'll get the most pleasure just from denying the Hardheads their prize – they've got no love for bashers who'd deny a body her own free will.

Like the Anarchists, the Free League has no faction headquarters and no factol. Indep PCs might not agree with the rest of the party on what to do with the sword once it's been recovered.

OTHER FACTIONS

THE ATHAR: This faction sees the theft of a holy weapon by dirty fiends as just more proof that there ain't any "gods." However, a trip to Baator might be interesting, just to pry into the smoke and mirrors behind all the nonsense about powers.

BELIEVERS OF THE SOURCE: The Godsmen believe that all beings are being tested, all the time; the theft of the sword might be a golden opportunity for the right cutter to prove herself worthy.

THE BLEAK CABAL: Bleakers just don't see the point – there's no meaning to the planes, so one sticker more or less ain't going to make much difference. A Bleaker PC might go along just to revel in the folly of it all.

THE DOOMGUARD: This faction wants to hasten the natural, inevitable decay of the multiverse. While the baatezu might use the stolen sword to help it all crumble, the Doomguard feel they could do a better job of it.

THE DUSTMEN: The Dustmen think everyone's dead already and see Baator as a place that most closely embodies their view of the multiverse – a wasteland, full of pain and cruelty. Going there might give a cutter another step up on the ladder of Truth.

THE FATED: Hey, if Dispater was able to snatch a *holy avenger* sword from a paladin, he should be entitled to keep it. 'Course, any PC quick enough to turn the tables on the archduke should get to claim the sword herself.

THE FRATERNITY OF ORDER: The key to controlling the multiverse is understanding the laws that govern existence, and a trip to Baator could provide a peek into the dark of the fiends. If the Guvners can master the laws of Baator, then they'll master the baatezu as well.

THE SIGN OF ONE: Each Signer considers herself to be the center of the multiverse and makes up her own mind about what to do.

THE SOCIETY OF SENSATION: The Sensates believe that life must be experienced in full in order to be understood. The layers of Baator are cruel and dangerous, but without knowing such despair, how could a body truly hope to know kindness and beauty?

THE TRANSCENDENT ORDER: A PC who belongs to this faction shouldn't have to ask anyone what to do. Ciphers move on the moment, without letting thought cloud their judgment or their actions.

THE XAOSICTS: Chaos, not order, is the natural state of the multiverse. A PC of this faction'll be glad to go after the sword, if only to bring a bit of chaos to the lawful fiends of the plane.

NONPLAYER CHARACTERS (NPCs)

DANEEL, SMITER OF FIENDS

Male human planar
13th-level paladin, Harmonium; lawful good

STR	18	INT	15	HP	74
DEX	15	WIS	14	AC	-2
CON	16	CHA	18	THACO	8

EQUIPMENT: Field plate armor +2; long sword +5, holy avenger.

SPECIAL: Daneel's Strength gives him a +1 bonus to hit and a +2 bonus on damage; his Charisma gives him a -7 bonus on reactions; and his Dexterity gives him a -1 bonus to Armor Class (already added in). His high level allows him two attacks per round.

Daneel's a tall, strapping man with the perfectly chiseled features and noble bearing of a marble statue come to life. Raised in Fortitude, on the legends of fearless dwarven raids on the forces of evil, Daneel trained to become a paladin at a young age and now serves Marduk, a greater power on the first layer of Arcadia.

Daneel spends most of his time leading his warband in fierce assaults onto the Lower Planes. His powerful *holy avenger* sword *Guardian* was made especially for his use by the dwarves of Mount Clangedin in Arcadia, and together Daneel and *Guardian* have approached legendary status.

DM NOTE: When role-playing Daneel, be sure to use a stilted vocabulary and sentence structure, as in this sentence: "Well met, friends; thy quick steel and good hearts hast truly saved me from a fate most gruesome."

FLAMEN THERMA

Female tiefling planar
4th-level fighter / 5th-level cleric, Dustmen; lawful evil

STR	16	INT	10	HP	32
DEX	8	WIS	12	AC	4
CON	11	CHA	12	THACO	17

EQUIPMENT: Studded leather armor +2; mace +4.

SPECIAL: Therma's Strength gives her a +1 bonus on damage. She has the following spells memorized: *bless*, *cure light wounds* (x2), *flame blade*, *hold person*, *protection from fire*, and *slow poison*. As a tiefling, she also possesses the special abilities of that race.

Therma's one of the most trusted members of the Flamen family of Ribcage, a group of clergy related not by blood but by their devotion to the baatezu. Its leader, Flamen Pontifus, allows Therma to take supplicants onto Baator to worship the fiends there, and she looks forward to such excursions onto her beloved plane.

If the PCs disguise themselves as supplicants and hire Therma to lead them into Dis, she lectures them on the ways of the baatezu and counsels the party to make the proper obeisance. 'Course, supplicants must submit to whatever abuse the baatezu wish to inflict. If the PCs seem reluctant, Therma first doubts their strength of will and eventually begins to suspect they're not true supplicants at all.

HERFIK THE SILENT

Male githzerai planar
8th-level thief, Fated; chaotic neutral

STR	12	INT	12	HP	36
DEX	17	WIS	9	AC	5
CON	10	CHA	8	THACO	17

EQUIPMENT: Scale mail armor, short sword +1, ring of invisibility.

SPECIAL: As a githzerai, Herfik has an innate plane shifting ability, though he'll use it only if about to lose his life. He also has a magic resistance of 40%; his sword and ring have permanently escaped being rendered inert.

Herfik received his satirical nickname from his current employer, Barius Sharpsplinter of Ribcage, because the gloomy githzerai can't ever seem to shut his whining bone-box. Herfik's paid to lead travelers into Baator, but he's not particularly pleased about working for Sharpsplinter — memory of his race's enslavement by mind flayers makes him overly sensitive to taking orders.

If the PCs go to Ribcage and hire Herfik as a guide, the thief'll do his job. However, he doesn't feel he's paid well enough to fight earnestly at their side as well. If the PCs are strongly challenged by baatezu, Herfik does what he can to save his own skin.

KRI'IK

Pit fiend
THACO 7; #AT 6; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d6/1d6/2d6/2d4 (+6 Strength bonus); AC -5; HD 13; hp 84; MV 15, Fl 24 (C); SA fear, poison, tail constriction; SD regeneration, +3 weapons to hit; MR 50%; SZ L (12 feet tall); INT genius (18); AL LE; ML fearless (19); XP 21,000.

EQUIPMENT: None.

SPECIAL: In addition to the magical abilities inherent to all baatezu, Kri'ik has the following spell-like powers: *detect magic*, *detect invisibility*, *fireball*, *gate*, *hold person*, *improved invisibility*, *polymorph self*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, *wall of fire* (all once per round), and *symbol of pain* (once per day). Kri'ik's already used his one *wish* spell for the year. His *gate* ability lets him automatically summon two lesser baatezu or one greater baatezu.

Kri'ik serves the archduke Dispater in the Iron Tower on Dis, but he's been disappointed with many of his lord's actions of late. The fiend sees the theft of the *holy avenger* as a grand opportunity to embarrass the archduke, and he plans on assisting any adventurers who come looking for the sword. 'Course, he'd prefer to keep the powerful weapon for *himself*, and secretly plots to twist any agreement he makes to his own advantage.

Dispater knows this and is, in fact, counting on it. He's led Kri'ik to believe that the fiend could actually turn stag on a Lord of the Nine and get away with it. Dispater's kept Kri'ik in the dark as to the truth behind the theft and return of *Guardian*, hoping the ambitious pit fiend's machinations will ensure that a party makes it to the tower and recovers the sword.

CHAPTER I: THE STING

At the beginning of *Fires of Dis*, the player characters are browsing through the Great Bazaar in Sigil when they're bobbed by the fiends sent to steal the *holy avenger* from Daneel. Whether the PCs rush to the

paladin's aid or leave him to his fate, the Harmonium gets wind of their involvement and convinces them – with garnish or muscle – to retrieve the stolen sword. The party must then tumble to the workings of a nearby portal to Ribcage or hunt down a dangerous drop right into Baator. However, before they leave the Cage, they find that a few other folks have *different* plans for the sword.

DM NOTE: Feel free to invent any reason for the party to be wandering through the stalls of the Great Bazaar. 'Course, shopping for basic equipment to replenish lost stock or rations is always a good idea, especially if the PCs have just returned from another planar adventure. A party new to Sigil could be pulled in by magical items floating through the streets around the bazaar, which cajole passersby into sampling the fine wares of their owners' stalls.

THE FIENDISH PLOT

Thanks to the chant passed their way by the Revolutionary League, the baatezu know that the paladin Daneel's arrived in Sigil, and that the *holy avenger* is at his side. The fiends plan to lure Daneel into an alleyway, where they can deal him a few satisfying blows and wrest the hated sword from his grasp. Here's how: A gelugon'll use his *polymorph self* ability to assume the form of a wrinkled female elf, and an abishai'll play the savage attacker. When Daneel spies the scene he's sure to rush to the elf's defense, and all the fiends'll jump the righteous sod.

The baatezu also want witnesses for the attack. Remember, berk, the fiends *want* some cutters to come to Baator and take back the sword; besides, they'd hate to pass up an opportunity to embarrass or humiliate the paladin.

THE GREAT BAZAAR

The Great Bazaar! The kind of place that'd drive even a Sensate barmy, with so many things to sample from so many different worlds that it'd take ten lifetimes to try them all. This whole part of Sigil's swamped in a sea of caravan tents and breakaway stalls, topped with flags, draped with banners, festooned with hangings of every color and design. Here, the merchants of a hundred planar and prime worlds set up their carts, offering food, drink, rugs, pots, clothing, rope, stoneware – anything that a visitor to the City of Doors might want or need. And since just about every berk and blood in the multiverse tromps through the Cage at some point or other, it's a bet that the merchants here have something to meet every taste.

The DM should allow the PCs to buy any basic equipment they might need – within reason, of course. This is a common, open-air market where visitors can find necessities, comforts, and odd trinkets, *not* a place to pick up magical items hand over foot. It could be fun to have a stall offer items from the home world of one of the characters, but remember that a lot of the stuff for sale just ain't going to be for human (or even humanoid) consumption.

Possible goods and services to help a DM spice up the marketplace might include:

STEP RIGHT UP,
CUTTERS —
BE THE FIRST ON YOUR WORLDS
TO BUY
A PIECE OF THE PLANES.
AT THE RATE
THEY'RE GOING,
THESE DEALS WON'T LAST
FOREVER!

— A MERCHANT TRYING TO
BOB PRIMES IN
BUYING LAND IN LIMBO

- ♦ spirit candy — hardened bits of various sweet meads that are said to contain the spirits of beings from far-flung prime worlds.
- ♦ a wriggling sack of larvae from the Lower Planes, offered by a hideous night hag to a glabrezu as fodder for the endless Blood War.
- ♦ black, foul-tasting mushrooms said to be dug from the roots of Yggdrasil, the plane-spanning oak.
- ♦ a stoppered glass bottle, “guaranteed” to be filled with air from the peak of Mount Celestia that’ll purify the evil right out of any berk who gives it a whiff.
- ♦ sedan chairs carried by teams of stone giants, offering rides through the streets in style.
- ♦ light bowls, forged out of rock from the Elemental Plane of Fire, that, when lit, burn with bright flame until snuffed out.

The DM should let the PCs role-play and haggle with merchants as long as they’re having fun. As soon as they’re ready to leave the marketplace, run “The Pickpocket.”

DM NOTE: While the PCs are mulling over the market’s goods, they’re being watched by the second-in-command of the team of baatezu sent to steal the *holy avenger*. This fiend, a gelugon, has used his *polymorph self* ability to pose as a wiry male tiefling. He’s sizing up the crowd for possible witnesses to their crime. After a bit of observation, the fiend decides that the PCs are promising candidates.

Any player characters who indicate that they’re on the lookout for trouble should be allowed to make a Wisdom check. If they succeed, they spot the gelugon — a wicked-looking humanoid in a dark green tunic — staring at them through the crowds. A second later, the stranger vanishes into the mass of beings, and the PCs can no longer find him.

THE PICKPOCKET

Read or paraphrase the following to one of the PCs before the party leaves the bazaar:

You feel a body bump up against you from behind. With the crush of beings in the marketplace, you don’t pay it much mind. Then again, this ain’t exactly the safest part of Sigil.

Repeat the occurrence until the PC decides to check his or her possessions, at which time a valued object turns up missing. Still in the form of the tiefling, the gelugon has lifted an item from the PC — anything that can be stolen easily and looks like it’ll be sorely missed: a purse or pouch of gold, a gem-studded dagger, a wand, or any small object. The DM can feel free to make any item be the target, but he or she should be certain it’s something the PCs won’t take kindly to losing. The gelugon wants to be chased.

When the PCs scan the crowd for the thief, read the following:

You see a lean humanoid with pointed ears moving quickly through the crowd, away from you. He gives a look back, and the wicked gleam in his eye seems to pale a bit when he notices you’ve spotted him.

DM NOTE: If any member of the party previously spotted the polymorphed gelugon, he or she should recognize the thief as the berk who was peering at them earlier.

THE CHASE

The PCs will probably chase after the gelugon. If they seem reluctant, the DM should encourage pursuit by noting that the tiefling’s having a hard time slipping through the crowds (perhaps hampered by a slight limp).

When the party comes after him, the gelugon leads them down a street heading away from the marketplace and around a corner, running past the alley where the rest of the baatezu are attacking Daneel. He runs slowly enough to keep the party interested, but quickly enough so they don’t actually catch up. ‘Course, the PCs should think the thief is doing his level best to give ‘em the laugh.

Once the gelugon has led the pursuers near the alley, he rounds a corner, uses his *teleport without error* ability to pop to the nearest portal to Baator, and goes through to the wasteland of Avernus, where he waits for the rest of the team. The stolen object goes with him, though the players might find it again in the Iron Tower on Dis.

DM NOTE: With the gelugon’s speed and head start, the PCs can’t physically catch up to him, and his high magic resistance (50%) and saving throws (based on 11 Hit Dice) means spells probably won’t work either. But if the party does manage to stop or trap the fiend, he simply teleports away, making it look as if he’s using a ring or other magical item to get away. The DM should then run “The Fiends’ Peel” as soon as the PCs walk down any street away from the marketplace (do this also if the party refuses to chase the gelugon at all).



THE FIENDS' PEEL

When the PCs pass by the putrid alley, they see the rest of the baatezu party — a gelugon and three abishai — attacking the paladin Daneel.

A large man in chain mail is being savaged by a handful of hideous creatures — a 12-foot-tall insectlike beast and three shorter monsters that look like gargoyles rip at him with their razor-sharp claws and tails, dancing around him as if toying with a rat. Though dazed and bloodied, the man swings repeatedly at the fiends with a long sword that glows brightly in his right grip.

If the PCs join the fray, the baatezu — who expected the party to pass the alley — act as if the cutters' appearance is an unwelcome development. The abishai move forward to attack the PCs, blocking them from reaching Daneel and the gelugon. Under orders not to kill the PC witnesses, the fiends restrain themselves from using their full powers, but gleefully inflict nonfatal damage upon the party.

After a few rounds of battle (or if any fiends are actually in danger of being killed or captured), the gelugon brings the fight to an end with its tremendous 18/76 Strength. Rather than cause itself pain by touching the hated *holy avenger*, the gelugon simply takes Daneel's whole arm:

The towering, insectlike fiend lunges toward the man and grabs his right arm, which grips the glowing sword. With a powerful yank, the fiend tears the arm off at the shoulder; the sword's light dies, though the gloved hand refuses to relinquish its grasp on the weapon. The man slumps back against the razorvine-covered wall of the alley, on the verge of fainting.

The tall fiend issues a raspy command to the others: "Forget the meat! We've got Dispaten's prize!"

The gelugon and the abishai then use their *teleport without error* ability to escape to the sewer portal and return to their plane. Daneel — battered, confused, and gravely wounded — swings his remaining fist a few times at the party until calmed. He mutters the word "Guardian" a few times before collapsing at the party's feet.

DM NOTE: During the fight, the baatezu won't try to *gate* in reinforcements, so that ability is not detailed in the statistics below.

SKIPPING THE FIGHT

If the PCs chase the thief instead of stopping to fight, they round the next corner and find no trace of him. Meanwhile, the baatezu toy with the wounded paladin for another 1d3 + 2 rounds, but if at least one PC doesn't return to the alley by then, the fiends simply take the sword and return to Baator, figuring that they've been seen, and that's good enough.

GELUGON: THACO 9; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4/1d4/2d4/3d4 (all with +4 Strength bonus); AC -3; HD 11; hp 63; MV 15; SA tail freeze, fear; SD regeneration, +2 weapons to hit; MR 50%; SZ H (12 feet tall); INT genius (18); AL LE; ML champion (16); XP 19,000.
Spell-like abilities: *detect invisibility* (always active), *detect magic*, *fly*, *polymorph self*, and *wall of ice*.

GREEN ABISHAI (3): THACO 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4+1; AC 3; HD 5+2; hp 35 each; MV 9, Fl 12 (C); SA poison, dive; SD regeneration, +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ L (7 feet tall); INT average (9); AL LE; ML average (10); XP 8,000.

Spell-like abilities: *change self*, *command*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, and *scare*.

WHAT, +HIS?
'TIS BU+ A SCRA+CH!

— DANEEL,
SMITER OF FIENDS.
IUS+ BEFORE
PASSING OU+

ENTER THE HARDHEADS

One way or another, the Harmonium's going to get involved in the recovery of *Guardian*. However, the PCs can handle the situation in a number of ways:

STRAIGHT TO THE BARRACKS: If the PCs take a close look at Daneel, they notice the symbol of the Harmonium on his breastplate — a light blue shield, split by a sword with a glowing handle. As Daneel is unconscious, bleeding, and probably poisoned, the party should get the idea to take him to the City Barracks, the headquarters of the Harmonium. Proceed with "The Barracks," below.

NOT MY PROBLEM: If the PCs leave the paladin lying in the alley, or never joined the battle at all, Daneel's racked body is found 2d4 turns later by a Harmonium patrol. They take him to the Barracks for rest and healing, and intimidate the populace until a few folks report having seen the PCs near the alley. Troops of six Hardheads each fan out across the city, looking for the party. Proceed with "Scragged," on page 13.

A SHORT DETOUR: If the PCs drag Daneel anywhere but the Barracks, he comes around in 1d6 turns and desperately asks to be taken to his faction headquarters. Though too weak to answer many questions along the way, Daneel can spill the dark on the following:

- ◆ He came to Sigil to meet with Factol Sarin before something called "the Ascension."
- ◆ He tried to stop a fiend from attacking an old elf, but was set upon by several more of the evil creatures.
- ◆ The baatezu took something from him called *Guardian*, and he must retrieve it at all costs in time for "the ceremony."

If the players further press Daneel on these or any other points, he apologizes for his weakness and asks them to wait until they reach the faction headquarters. Run "The Barracks," below, with Daneel conscious but unable to do more than mumble a few words now and then.

THE BARRACKS

This part of town seems much more still than some of the others you've seen today. Fact is, after the teeming chaos of the marketplace, these streets look almost peaceful, with lone passersby here and there, and little noise wafting out of the few taverns and inns in the area.

And then, there it is, like a gargantuan slab of stone crushing the streets of the Cage: the City Barracks. Outside, the rectangular building looks dull, heavy, and impenetrable, with a single, guarded entrance opening onto this street. Four warriors stand in front of the arched doorway, chatting, but they snap to their guard as you approach: "What's yer business?"

A true accounting of the fight with the baatezu — and Daneel's shocking condition — should be enough to convince the guards (Pl/♂ var/F2/Ha/LN) to bring the PCs inside. Any player characters who belong to the faction should also be able to help get the party inside.

The guards take the group into a small, featureless room containing only a few stone benches, telling them to wait there while they fetch a high-up.

A TALE OF TWO

After a few moments, Tonat Shar (Pl/♂ h/F9/Ha/LG), an assistant to Factol Sarin, enters the room. A human in red leather armor, Shar's as tall as a normal man, but as bulky as a dwarven warrior. After confirming that the paladin is, indeed, Daneel the Smiter of Fiends, he summons guards to take him to a room where they can tend to his injuries. Then Shar turns his attention to the rest of the group.

"You berk's'd better tell me everything you know about what's happened to the paladin, and I mean every detail. Now."

After the PCs tell what they know of the attack, Shar asks the whereabouts of *Guardian*. Once he realizes that the PCs aren't sure what he's talking about, he explains:

"Daneel's had his holy avenger sword Guardian at his side for — well, 'bout as long as I can remember. Many's the night I've spent in Fortitude or Arcadia listening to bards spin tales and songs of Daneel's brave assaults on the forces of evil. Together, Daneel and Guardian've been a powerful force for good in the planes."

"Course, if fiends've snatched the sword, it could be anywhere by now; stashed away somewhere in the Cage, rotting in one of the nine layers of Baator, even floating in the Ethereal — that is, if the sodding baatezu haven't already found a way to smash it to pieces!"

If the party says the baatezu mentioned Dispaten's name, Shar identifies the villain as a Lord of the Nine, figuring that Daneel's history of onslaughts against the fiends must have engendered this attack. In any case, he grills the PCs firmly about their purpose in Sigil and their part in the battle, trying to find out if they know more about the sword than they've already told him. However, he won't answer any questions about the Ascension (or any other bits of the chant they may have picked up from Daneel).

Once satisfied that the PCs don't have the sword, Shar thanks them for assisting Daneel and calls guards to escort them out the door. He asks the party to stick around Sigil for a day or so, in case he's got any more questions for them about the incident, and gives them a gem worth 50 gp as an incentive.

DM NOTE: If any cutters volunteer to help recover the sword, Shar turns them down: "The Harmonium handles its own affairs." Even PC members of the faction are rejected, since a large enough force can be put together from the warriors in the Barracks.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTERS

After delivering Daneel to the Barracks, the party's got a day or so to kick around Sigil before being summoned back to see Tonat Shar (see "Back to the Barracks," below). During that time, the DM can run some or all of the following encounters (or others of his or her own devising):

THE REVOLUTIONARY LEAGUE: An Anarchist spy in the Barracks (disguised as a Harmonium guard) heard Shar's talk with the party. Four Anarchists (Pl/var humanoid/F3/RL/CN) confront the PCs in the street, telling them to stay out of affairs they don't understand. They intend to merely bully the party but fight if provoked, willing to give their lives for their cause.

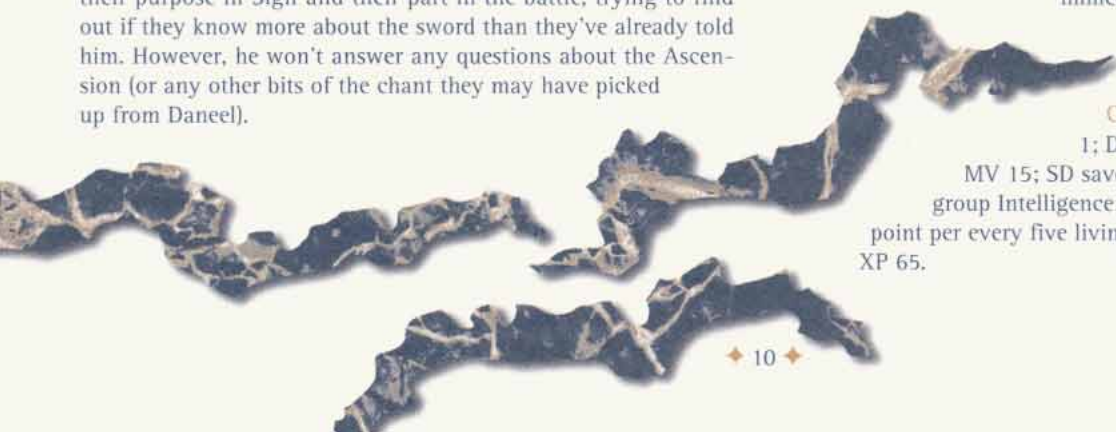
ANARCHIST (4): THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 + Type L poison (dagger); AC 7 (ring mail); HD 4; hp 13, 22, 27, 29; MV 12; SZ M (5 feet tall); INT average (10); ML fearless (19); XP 175.

A BIT O' CHANT: A passerby (Pl/♀ he/0/At/LE) who observed the PCs carrying Daneel through the streets approaches the group to find out what they know about the paladin and the Harmonium's plans. For a small fee (10 gp), she tells the PCs the rumors she's heard about the Harmonious Ascension (just the basics), sneering at the idea of any power caring where one town or another lies.

ROAD CREW: 2d4 dabus (see page 10 of the *Monstrous Supplement* in the *PLANESCAPE Campaign Setting* box) are resetting cobbles in a street damaged by a recent fight (not Daneel's). Through symbols that appear in the air, they ask the PCs for information about the brawl that caused the destruction, but the party must decode the DM-devised rebuses to understand the silent questions. The single-minded dabus don't speak with the PCs about any other topics. A friendly translator (Pl/♀ b/0/Be/N) offers to interpret the symbols should the party require assistance.

RATS IN THE CAGE: Thirty-six cranium rats (with a collective Intelligence of 7) lurking in a nearby bundle of trash cast a *grease* spell under the party's feet. Any PCs that fall are immediately attacked by the swarm of rats, who hope to make off with the group's rations.

CRANIUM RAT (36): THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; AC 6; HD 1; hp 5 each; MV 15; SD save as creature of Hit Dice equal to group Intelligence; SZ T (6 inches long); INT var (1 point per every five living rats); AL NE; ML unsteady (7); XP 65.



BACK +@+HE BARRACKS

A day or so after the encounter with Tonat Shar at the Barracks, the party is contacted by a Harmonium guardsman (Pl/♀ d/F1/Ha/LG). She tells the party that Shar's got a few more questions for them, and escorts them to the Barracks. Once there, they're taken into a meeting room where Shar sits with a dark-visaged dwarfish smith introduced as Grimbrech Stonehammer (Pl/♂ d/F5/P6/Ha/LG) of Mount Clanggedin in Arcadia.

SHAR'S STORY

"I'll get right to the chant. You brought us Daneel — minus the holy avenger. Well, we sent a storm of bashers into Baator to get it back, ready to tear the blasted plane apart, fiend by fiend, to recover Guardian."

"They returned only a few hours ago — the few that came back at all, that is. They were just too sodding obvious, all loud and brash and stomping everywhere they went. The baatezu took 'em to pieces without breaking a sweat."

"One of the survivors confirmed what we'd thought. A pit fiend bragged about mounting the sword — and Daneel's arm — on the wall in Dispater's Iron Tower. The baatezu're no doubt waiting for us to try again, but we figure getting the sword's going to take sneakier bloods — cutters who can bob and peel as well as fight."

"Fact is, we're ready to offer you a deal: Bring us the holy avenger, and we'll see that it's worth your trouble."

The DM should allow the PCs to interrupt Shar at any time with questions or comments. When he's finished, he offers a purse of 10,000 gp upon turnover of the sword, which must be brought to the gate-town of Fortitude. Shar adds that the dwarves of Mount Clanggedin are prepared to give each party member the pick of any magical object from their fabled armories.

What's more, Shar offers to pay the party's expenses for the trip by giving them a bagful of rubies and emeralds, each worth about 100 gp. The whole bag totals 4,000 gp, and whatever they don't use they can keep as part of the reward.

DM NOTE: Both of the amounts — the purse and the operating expenses — are negotiable, especially if Shar earlier turned down an offer of help from the PCs. Shar's willing to go as high as 10,000 gp in expenses; the DM should feel free to set the upper limit of the purse according to the specifics of the campaign.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

If the PCs ask, Shar provides them with information on the following subjects:

TRAVELING TO BAATOR: The Hardhead raid landed directly in Avernus, the first layer of Baator, and the baatezu were ready for 'em. Pure fact is, as a lawful plane, Baator's open to visitors, as long as a body's got a good reason to be there. The Harmonium bashers didn't — at least, not as far as the fiends were concerned.

Shar counsels the PCs to start in the gate-town of Ribcage, where it's said a visitor heading for Baator can pick up a pass of safe conduct to show the fiends, and maybe even a guide who knows the plane pretty well.

GETTING TO RIBCAGE: Shar gives them directions to the Sill, an inn not far from the Great Bazaar in the Market Ward. He instructs them to ask for the fourth room on the second floor.

Hinting that he's worried about spies in the ranks of the Harmonium — after all, the baatezu shouldn't have known where or when to find Daneel — he says no more about the inn, beyond reminding the party to get the specified room.

RETURNING THE SWORD: The *holy avenger* must be brought to Fortitude, where it's needed for use in a "special ceremony." Shar says he can give the PCs a gate key that'll let them travel there directly. As for finding a gate, Shar knows of traders who've come to Fortitude from Dis; merchants in Dis should be able to direct the PCs to a gate.

THE GEMS: The PCs might have to deal out some garnish along the way, and the baatezu prefer gems to standard junk. The bag'll be waiting for the PCs in Ribcage, at a bathhouse called the Gymnasium of Steam. If they don't go to Ribcage, they don't get the gems.

DANEEL: The paladin's too weak to join the quest. He's recuperating in the realm of his power Marduk, on Arcadia.

THE HARMONIOUS ASCENSION: If the PCs ask about "the ceremony" or "the Ascension," Shar hesitatingly gives the basics of the plan (as described in the "Background" section on page 2). However, he doesn't mention the layer of Arcadia that was lost due to Hardhead bungling.

He asks the PCs to keep the nature of their quest as quiet as possible. If folks in Fortitude hear that Daneel's been attacked and *Guardian* stolen, they might begin to lose faith in the paladin, the *holy avenger*, and the faction itself, which could endanger the plans for the Ascension.

Shar also explains about the Ascension if the PCs ask why the dwarves of Mount Clanggedin in Arcadia would care enough about the loss of the *holy avenger* to offer magical items as a reward for its recovery.

SWEETENING +HE DEAL

The dwarfish smith Stonehammer's come with magical items that might prove useful to the PCs in their journey, offered one at a time (possibly in trade for items the PCs already have), if the party seems reluctant to go after the sword.

The dwarfish smith's bag contains:

- ◆ A *scabbard of holding*, an item similar to a *bag of holding* but one that accepts only swords. When a sword's placed inside, the *scabbard* shrinks to the size of a dagger sheath. Right now, it won't accept any sword but *Guardian*, but if the party is successful, the dwarves will remove this limiting enchantment.
- ◆ An *arrow of direction* currently set only to find the sword. As with the *scabbard*, if the party is successful, the dwarves will remove the restriction.
- ◆ An *iron rod of beguiling* with four charges. The dwarves will replace it with a fully-charged wand if the party brings back the sword.
- ◆ Two *rings of fire resistance* enchanted to work only on the plane of Baator.

DM NOTE: The magic in each of Stonehammer's items comes from schools that aren't altered on Baator, so the PCs can use the items there without any cross-planar reduction in power (see pages 15–17 of *A DM Guide to the Planes* in the *PLANESCAPE Campaign Setting* box for more information).

ACCEPTING THE OFFER

If the PCs agree to retrieve the *holy avenger*, Shar maps out their course: Head for the gate-town of Ribcage; take a gate to Aver-nus, the first layer of Baator; find a gate into Dis, the second layer; retrieve the sword from Dispater's Iron Tower; bring it to the Harmonium's headquarters in the gate-town of Fortitude.

Shar also gives the PCs a small, steel chain with links joined to form a circle, almost like a bracelet. He explains that it's a special gate key that'll open *any* gate to Fortitude. However, the PCs can only use it once – it's consumed when brought through a gate.

A persistent party can also convince Shar to advance them up to 500 gp worth of gems as a show of faith. 'Course, any such advancement is deducted from the larger collection of gems that'll be waiting for the PCs in Ribcage.

DM NOTE: If the party refuses the offer, Shar reveals the basics of the Ascension and *Guardian's* important place in the ceremony (if he hasn't done so already). He pleads with the PCs to recover the sword, which'll redeem Daneel and assure Fortitude's slide into Arcadia.

If necessary, Shar also threatens that the Harmonium can make life *very* difficult for the PCs, and even hints at long jail sentences for berks who might have had a hand in *helping* the fiends assault the paladin.

THE FREE LEAGUE

It turns out that a few bodies in the Cage know about the sword's loss after all; not all of the Harmonium members are as tight-lipped as Tonat Shar, and the Anarchists posing as Hardheads are glad to spread the chant. One berk who's found out is Karris, a wizard in the Free League. He's formed a loose band with six other Indeps to capture the *holy avenger* themselves; they hope to sell it to the highest bidder and don't want anyone mucking up their scheme.

At some point before the PCs leave Sigil, they're spotted and approached by Karris.

You almost don't even notice the slight man in the stained, tight-fitting tunic until he's right next to you, close enough to trod on your boots. He's wearing the colors of the Free League and a half-toothless grin. "Ho there, bloods," he calls out. "So you're the tough cutters who're gonna track down the enchanted poker. Well, ol' Karris just might be able to help you out."

Karris plays the friendly rube while feeling out the party, trying to determine how much they know and what their plans are. He casts an *ESP* spell on the first PC to respond, switching to another PC each round (the DM can roll saving throws and determine what, if anything, is learned).

Karris pretends to have apprenticed to a mage who traveled regularly to Baator for rare spell components, and he claims to know the dark of giving fiends the laugh. However, his intention is to confuse the PCs with lies and delay their departure from the

Cage to give his own group time to get ahead. If challenged, he sticks to his story and leaves in a huff; if attacked, he tries to escape with his *boots of speed* or a *wraithform* spell.

KARRIS (Pl/♂ H/W6/FL/CN):

THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 + 2 (*dagger* +2); AC 4; HD 6; hp 22; MV 10; SZ M (5 feet tall); INT exceptional (16); ML average (10); XP 975.

Magical items: *boots of speed*, *bracers of defense* (AC 4), *wand of lightning* (10 charges).

Spells (4/2/2): *alarm*, *burning hands*, *ESP*, *hold portal*, *knock*, *monster summoning I*, *sleep*, and *wraithform*.

THE SILL

Once the PCs are ready to head for the Sill, read or paraphrase the following:

You follow Tonat Shar's directions to the Sill – a two-story building of greenish limestone, only a few blocks from the shouts and buzz of the Great Bazaar. Twists of razorvine cover the front of the inn-like ivy, even obscuring part of the sign over the dark wooden door.

The owner of the Sill's named Cedlic Marr (Pl/♀ tf/0/Fa/LN), and her kip's aimed mainly at shoppers and merchants in the Great Bazaar. The dark of it, though, is that the windows in the second-floor rooms are one-way portals to the Outer Planes. Lodgers who tumble to this fact can take a trip out of Sigil; those who don't simply catch a night's rest in their room. Tonat Shar knew about the portals, and he directed the PCs to ask for the fourth room on the second floor – the one with the window leading to Ribcage.

If the PCs ask Cedlic for the specified room, she charges them 50 gp per night, and hands them a key made of bone. In addition to being a standard key for the door, it's also a gate key for the window portal to Ribcage. A PC who carefully examines the key can make an Intelligence check to see if he recognizes it as being made of *rib* bone. If asked about the key, Cedlic shrugs off most questions: "That's just the way it is."

The party's room is sparse – two cots, a table, a few wall lanterns, and a window with a view of the Great Bazaar. If they believe that Tonat Shar sent them to the inn to wait for a contact, the PCs may sit for a while before realizing that no one's coming. They might also decide to eat, drink, or talk with other guests in the common area on the ground floor.

If the PCs sit in the common area or wander through the inn, Cedlic notices them after 1d4 turns.

The owner comes over to you with a quizzical look on her long, thin face. "Is everything satisfactory with your room? I couldn't help but notice that you haven't used your key."

If the players don't seem to understand, Cedlic repeats her statement more forcefully. However, she's not going to spill the dark to the party – if they're not smart enough to tumble to her hint, she figures they probably shouldn't know about the portals at all. She'll excuse her "mistake" and leave them alone.

With or without Cedlic's hint, the PCs should eventually figure out what they have to do and return to the room. The first PC to go through the window must carry the key, or he'll fall to the ground 20 feet below, receiving 2d6 damage from the fall. When a PC steps through the open window with the key, the frame crackles with white light, and the PC disappears.

There's no time to waste: Each member of the party must go quickly through the portal, which closes in two rounds (the crackling light fades away). If any PCs don't make it, they'll have to see Cedlic again – activating the portal caused the key to

return to its wall hook behind the innkeeper's counter. Cedric gives them the key again, but she charges another 50 gp for the room.

Once all PCs have gone through the portal, they'll appear just outside the burg of Ribcage. Move on to Chapter II.

DM NOTE: If the PCs wander around the inn before tumbling to the portal, throw in a few encounters with other guests for atmosphere.

- ♦ A gnome asks them for directions to someplace in Sigil while his partner, a 1st-level halfling thief, tries to pick the PCs' pockets.
- ♦ Visitors to the Great Bazaar, who feel they were bobbed by a merchant there, loudly share their gripes with the PCs.
- ♦ A githyanki mage, wise to the portals, asks the party where they're headed, then shuts his bone-box upon realizing the PCs don't know the chant.
- ♦ A cloth merchant tries to interest the party in "special discounts" on his goods.

SCRAGGED

The DM should run this encounter only if the PCs left Daneel lying in the alley after the baatezu attack or passed up the fight in the first place. A patrol of six Harmonium guards finds the PCs sooner or later, most likely in a public area; if the party's retired for the night in an inn, they're awakened by a pounding on the door.

The commander of the patrol steps toward your group. "We heard you're the berks who spied a big bust-up near the marketplace awhile ago," he says. "A bloody fight between a paladin and some fiends. Well, there's some high-ups at the Barracks that'd like to pick yer brain a bit to find out what it's all about."

The commander's using his *ring of human influence* as a *charm person* spell to get the party to accompany him peacefully (affecting up to 21 Hit Dice levels of the PCs, with a -2 penalty on their saving throws). What's more, the guards make no threatening moves — at least, not until they see how the party reacts.

If the PCs go along with the guards, they're escorted to the Barracks, where events transpire as they do in "The Barracks" and "Back to the Barracks" (without Daneel's presence, of course).

Hopefully, even if the player characters resist the ring's influence, they won't fight the guards. If they do, the other patrols searching the streets converge on the scene of the battle, a new group arriving every 1d6 rounds until the PCs surrender or escape.

If the PCs surrender or are overpowered, they're dragged to the faction headquarters; again, events transpire as in "The Barracks" and "Back to the Barracks." 'Course, in this case Tonat Shar gives them a simpler choice: Get the sword or rot in prison for the rest of their miserable lives. They still get the bag of gems for expenses and a smaller reward, but no magical items.

If the PCs manage to escape from the battle, the Harmonium won't rest until it has found and captured them. The streets of the Cage'll swarm with Hardheads, and the player characters should get the idea that their best chance is to surrender. (In this event, Shar still pays their expenses for the mission but offers no reward at all.)

PATROL COMMANDER (PL/♂ H/F8/HA/LG):

THACO 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); AC 2 (field plate); HD 8; hp 59; MV 10; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT high (12); ML fanatic (18); XP 1,400.

Magical items: *ring of human influence.*

PATROL GUARD (5) (PL/♂ H/F4/HA/LN):

THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (battle axe); AC 4 (bronze plate); HD 4; hp 28; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT average (9); ML elite (14); XP 120.

S+RAIGH+ +@ BAA+@R

After observing the baatezu vanish from the alley, the PCs may tumble to the fact that the fiends teleported to a portal to Baator. If the party seems determined to find this portal, the DM should let them try.

Fact is, the baatezu popped over to a little-used street in the Hive Ward, a sprawl of the most depressed slums and sods in the Cage. Appearing over an open sewer hole, the fiends quickly dropped down through the hole (the portal). A couple of bubbers stumbling nearby were spooked out of their wits by the whole thing.

If the PCs think to nose around the Hive, asking questions about the portal or the fiends, sooner or later they run into one of the drunks (PL/♂ Hc/O/S²/CG). He offers to show them the hole "fer jes' a bit o' jink fer some bub," though he takes a few wrong turns along the way.

'Course, the key's another story — it can be anything the DM wants. Also, if the group hasn't already been warned by Tonat Shar about going to Ribcage first, a Hiver wise to the chant points out that the sewer portal could be a quick drop into the dead-book.

DM NOTE: If the PCs go through the portal to Baator, skip Chapter II (Ribcage) and proceed with the party landing on Avernus in Chapter III.



AL+ERNA+@ S+AR+@S

MY PALADIN PAL: The party can encounter Daneel in the Great Bazaar, striking up a conversation or even helping the paladin locate a needed item. They leave the marketplace together and all stumble into the baatezu trap at the same time. This method provides the PCs with a stronger connection to Daneel, but lacks the drama of the gelugon's pickpocket bait.

HEY, YOU'RE ME: Instead of luring the party away from the Great Bazaar as a pickpocket, the gelugon can use *polymorph self* to appear as one of the PCs — they'd almost certainly chase a double. The gelugon could even try this if the pickpocket ruse fails.

CHAPTER II: UNDER THE RIBS

The player characters start this chapter in the mountainous Vale of the Spine, just outside the gate-town of Ribcage. After they gain entrance to the town, they're free to parley with folks and drop in at different locations, picking up information that might help them in their quest. Ideally, they'll secure a cover story and a guide to help them navigate the treacherous terrain of Baator, and then convince the high-up Lord Paracs to send them through the gate. The cutters may also discover that their trip's more of a race than they thought, and that in Ribcage, berks who ask too many questions are likely to get squashed.

DM NOTE: If the PCs managed to find the sewer portal to Baator in Sigil, skip over this chapter and continue with the party landing directly on Avernus (Chapter III).

ARRIVAL

Having jumped through the portal-window in the Sill, the player characters emerge in the Vale of the Spine, the mountain range that encloses the burg of Ribcage.

You find yourself standing, somewhat uncertainly, on slanted, rocky ground. The rock slopes upward before you to form a hill – no, a mountain. In fact, all around you are giant, pointed peaks of stone that shoot upwards into the sky, towering above you like monstrous fangs. There don't seem to be any flat paths to follow.

The DM should let the PCs wander through the base of the mountains for 1d3 turns before reading the following:

About a hundred yards to your left, you spy a collection of mountains that look odd: facing ridges of long, slender peaks that curve up and inward, like bony fingers or ribs. The faint buzz of civilization seems to come from beneath the peaks.

Ribcage is tucked within the curving peaks. The residents have blocked off gaps in the mountains with a 20-foot-tall iron wall, but the PCs'll find a towered gate near their end of the valley (the Spire Gate).


Berks who got themselves lost dangle from the crossposts over the iron gate, hand-lettered signs around their necks announcing their crimes. The town doesn't seem to look too kindly on knights of the cross-trade. A guard in the wall tower over the gate yells down to you: "Welcome to Ribcage! It's 10 gold to enter!" Just then, two more armored guards appear at the gate. "These men'll take yer jink," says the guard in the tower.

The easiest path for the PCs is to simply pay the guards 10 gp per party member; each PC is then given a carved piece of stone called a "chunk," a pass good for one week's stay in Ribcage, and allowed through the gate.

FIGHTING: If the PCs fight the guards, the tower sentry shoots arrows at the party. A troop of five more foot guards and a captain appear every third round, trying to either kill the PCs or force them into the mountains. If the party successfully fights their way into Ribcage, the DM can still take them through many of the encounters in this chapter. 'Course, they're constantly hunted by guards (leading to more fights), and Lord Paracs demands they make "suitable amends" before he allows them to pass into Baator (the DM can choose the method of atonement).

USING ANOTHER GATE: The PCs may try to snoop around the mountains for another entrance to town; if they follow the iron wall, they'll eventually find the Rigus Gate and the Steam Gate (see the map of Ribcage on the outside of the gate-fold screen). However, the DM should require each PC to make one Dexterity check at some point during the trip to see if any tumble (25% chance of suffering 1d4 damage from sharp rocks).

TOLD SERGEAN+
BRUSS+UCKLE
+HA+ HIS BU++ONS
LOOKED +ARNISHED.
— SIGN AROUND +HE NECK
OF A DEADER
HANGING OVER
+HE MAIN GATE



SNEAKING IN: The party might try to climb over the wall at an unguarded point. Even if they get in, they're in the burg without chunks. The first time a body's caught without a current chunk, it brings a fine of 100 gp. The second time, the poor sod's usually enslaved by the guards. The chunk changes every week, but permanent residents of the burg have specially carved chunks that never change (a generous DM could allow the PCs to somehow steal permanent chunks, or buy some from a thief for a heavy price).

DM NOTE: The guards in Ribcage belong to a variety of factions; however, most are members of the Athar, the Fraternity of Order, the Harmonium, or the Mercykillers.

GATE GUARD (3 OR VAR) (Pl/♂ H/F2/VAR/LE):

THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword or short bow); AC 6 (scale mail); HD 2; hp 12; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT average (9); ML steady (11); XP 35.

GUARD CAPTAIN (1 PER TROOP OF REINFORCEMENTS) (Pl/♂ H/F4/VAR/LE):

THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (scimitar); AC 4 (banded mail); HD 4; hp 27; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT very (12); ML elite (14); XP 120.

THE FLAVOR OF RIBCAGE

The blood-red stone roads of Ribcage are clean and straight, usually meeting at right angles to form orderly blocks of dwellings, alehouses, and markets. Most of the buildings look cold and hostile, made of gray or black stone, but some exteriors are more fancifully decorated with drapes, garlands, family crests and other ornaments to trumpet the status (or jink) of the owners. However, there's little greenery or vegetation of any kind. Instead, the burg's crammed with towers and keeps, and packs of soldiers in black and gold meander in the streets — maybe to end trouble, maybe to start it. But everywhere you go, those huge, curved peaks looming over the whole town make you feel like a beetle crawling in a colossal skeleton.

Tieflings make up most of the town's population, and everywhere the PCs go, the natives watch 'em with peery eyes. The folks in Ribcage are always suspicious, constantly on their guard, and never too open with the chant or a friendly hand. 'Course, part of that's because the town's ruled over by Lord Quentill Paracs, and his personal militia — the Blackguard — usually takes a strong interest in any berk who rattles his bone-box too easily or too often. Paracs does allow five powerful families to have some influence in different sections of the town, with each family keeping tabs on its ward with its *own* band of bashers. Each family controls its own piece of the pie, too: The Ivlum are the porters of the town, the Fiqesh are the civil servants, the Dilfar are the builders and quarrymen, the Shan control most of the trade, and the Flamen make up the clergy.

DM NOTE: For more information on Ribcage, refer to pages 46–50 in *Sigil and Beyond* in the PLANESCAPE Campaign Setting box.

ANY FRIEND
OF THE FIENDS
IS NO FRIEND
OF MINE.
— LORD QUENTILL
PARACS

MAJOR LOCATIONS

Refer to the map of Ribcage on the outside of the gatefold screen; it can be shown to the players. Below are descriptions of the numbered locations in the burg that the PCs'll most likely visit, though the DM can add sites of his or her own.

1. THE CITADEL: The home and headquarters of Lord Paracs (also known as the Baron), this walled complex rises out of the middle of town, its shiny obsidian putting the heel to the ramshackle kips and cases that account for most of the burg. A large statue of the Baron himself — a fat old tiefling — stands in the central courtyard. Elite members of the Blackguard constantly man the steel portcullis leading into the yard, and patrols sweep the grounds to round up any stray berks who creep in to spy or take a stab at Paracs. As the Baron's the only high-up in town who can hand out passes into Baator, the PCs'll have to deal with him sooner or later — especially since the gate to the infernal plane's walled up *inside* the Citadel.

2. COUNCIL QUARTERS: Each of the five wards of the city has one seat on the Council, but the fact that Paracs stuck the group in this glorified outhouse just beyond the Citadel's walls tells a body what the Baron thinks of

the sods. Sure, this place has all the shells and trappings of power — fancy meeting rooms and lounges, opulent quarters, personal guards, bold portraits of the five senators — but the Council's little more than a tool, made up mostly of puppets whose strings run right back to Paracs.

3. THE GATE MARKETS: These open bazaars are the best spots to pick up imported goods that're hard to come by in Ribcage. Considering that the burg's stuck in the middle of the Vale of the Spine, imports include just about everything that can't be made from rock. Fresh fruits and vegetables, spices, meats, ale, cloth — enterprising cutters from across the Outlands join the stalls clustered near the main gates to sell their wares.

4. THE BARON'S MARKET: Merchants who've worked or garnished their way into Lord Paracs's favor get to sell their wares at a special market just outside the Citadel entrance. Paracs, his household, the senators, and members of the town's five families usually shop here. Goods at the Baron's market tend to have a higher price, but the merchants take the risks that come with being under the nose of the town's nobility.

5. THE SHRINE OF DARK SECRETS: Even though Ribcage is the gate-town to Baator and a lawful evil burg, Lord Paracs does his best to keep the baatezu out — after all, he doesn't want to lose his town to the fiends. His biggest political enemies on this issue are the members of the Flamen "family," a sect of clergy that worships the Lords of the Nine and the powers of Baator. The Flamens congregate in the Shrine of Dark Secrets, a spired temple of gray rock presided over by Flamen Pontifus. Grinning shapes of greater baatezu are carved into the outside walls of the temple. Fact is, Paracs would've razed the place long ago if he didn't fear reprisals from the dark powers.

6. THE GYMNASIUM OF STEAM: As a body might guess, the best spot in town for relaxation *isn't* in the town at all. On the slopes outside the Steam Gate are a bundle of resorts that offer hot mineral baths; the best of the lot's a place called the Gymnasium of Steam. Plenty of visitors head there to soak in soothing waters or have a parley away from the ears of the Blackguard, who tend to stay within the walls of the city.

OTHER LOCATIONS

About 35,000 bodies are jammed into the city under the ribs, which means the DM can fill out other blocks in town as he or she sees fit. 'Course, since Ribcage ain't exactly a popular pick for tourists, the burg doesn't offer much in the way of services. Most of the taverns and inns around town are the cheapest kind of kips, places where few bubbers'd share a drink or a chat with strangers.

All plot-related encounters are described later in this chapter. However, while the PCs are making their way around the city, they should run into some or all of the following:

- ✦ Five soldiers of the Blackguard (all 4th-level fighters) try to shake down a merchant in one of the Gate Markets for "taxes." If the PCs intervene, the guards demand that the party cough up the jink instead, fighting if not paid.
- ✦ A 1st-level thief tries to sell the party chunks for 1 gp each. Unfortunately, he bobbed them from other visitors over a week ago, and the chunks are no longer valid.
- ✦ A small band of clergy from the Flamen family stirs up a crowd's anger by proclaiming the superiority of the baatezu.
- ✦ Two of the five senators pass by, each escorted by his or her personal guard. One senator is controlled by Paracs, one is not; they argue over an upcoming vote in the Council.
- ✦ A young boy hired by the Ivlium family darts through town, nailing up small posters that threaten a food delivery strike unless their terms are met.

GETTING THE CHANT

What with the Blackguard scragging sods for looking at them the wrong way, and five different legions of bashers trying to protect the five families of the town, it's a bet that most folks in Ribcage'll keep a tight lid on their real thoughts. Those that do pass on the chant do so sparingly, since many bodies that ask questions are really guards looking to net malcontents. If the PCs try to get information in a typical tavern, they're likely to hit the blinds. At some point, however, they should be pointed to where they *really* need to go.

You feel about as welcome in this place as an aasimon in the Abyss. Customers eye you warily and busy themselves with their drinks. The whole kip seems wound as tight as a spring, as if a bust-up might erupt any minute. The barkeep calls you over and speaks in a hushed tone: "Look, I dunno what you want, but I don't want no trouble here. 'Fyou came to drink, okay. 'Fyou came to talk, take it someplace else, like the Gym."

The barkeep (PI/♂ e/O/At/NE) is a bit taken aback if the PCs don't seem to know about the Gymnasium of Steam, but he briefly describes the resort and tells them how to find it.

IF YA AIN'+ GOING +
MIND YΘUR ΘWN BUSINESS, BERK.
+HEN I GUESS I'LL JUS+ HAVE +
MIND I+ FΘR YA.

— PΘG BRUSS+UCKLE,
+Θ A SΘD CAUGH+
ASKING QUEST+IONS

FOOTPRINTS

The wizard Karris and his band of Indeps have already been through Ribcage. They left Sigil before the PCs did, taking a portal from the Great Bazaar that opened into a tent in one of the Gate Markets here. The Indeps asked questions of the townsfolk, stopping in at various taverns, market stalls, and the Gymnasium of Steam before paying Lord Paracs enough garnish for a pass through the gate to Baator.

A few times while in town, the PCs should run into bodies who remember the Indeps and make comments like "Funny, those *other* bashers were nosin' around about that, too." A merchant or resident could probably even describe Karris well enough for the PCs to realize he's the same berk they met in the Cage.

Course, only Lord Paracs (or a Blackguardsman who was with him at the time) could reveal that the "other bashers" have already made their way into Baator. The Indeps told him they wanted to recover the corpse of a friend from Avernus before the blasted fiends defiled it any further.

BLACK AND GOLD

After a short while of poking around town, the party's going to come to the attention of the Blackguard, especially if the PCs are asking "dangerous" questions in public.

As you pass down a crowded street, you notice that folks seem to clear out of your way like they see the Lady of Pain herself. Then a voice from behind you spits "Hold it, berks!" You turn around to see seven guards wearing sleek black armor decorated with gold buttons and sashes — Lord Paracs's dreaded Blackguard. The one with the most gold trim steps forward. "Let's see your chunks!"

If each member of the party shows the sergeant — a fighter/wizard named Pog Brusstuckle — a chunk valid for the current week, he grudgingly acknowledges their right to be in town. However, he warns them against sticking their noses where they don't belong, and threatens to scrag 'em if they keep "making trouble."

Brusstuckle gives the PCs a harder time if they have useless chunks or none at all. They'll have to pay him 100 gp each or be enslaved; even after paying the fee, a chunkless

sod's got to visit a town gate and pay another 10 gp to get one. Any response from the party that Brusstuckle can consider "resistance" is met with verbal abuse and threats of lifetime enslavement. Course, the sergeant's willing to accept a small gift to *forget* the whole incident: a garnish of 200 gp.

If the PCs ask to see Lord Paracs, Brusstuckle demands to know the dark of it first. Telling the truth or acting as Dermont's



merchant scouts (see "The Merchant of Ribcage," page 19) does the job. However, the party *won't* be taken to the Citadel if they're pretending to be supplicants of Baator (unless Flamen Therma's with them — she's brought groups to the Baron before; see "Dark Secrets," page 19).

Any hostile act brings an attack from the Blackguardsmen, who try to subdue the party and drag them before Paracs in chains. The PCs might choose to go along with this in order to see Paracs. Brusstuckle first tries to cast a *sleep* or *web* spell on the party, followed by *magic missile* attacks. If two of his men are killed, Brusstuckle blows a whistle that summons a new unit of 1d4 + 2 Blackguard to the scene every 1d3 rounds.

POG BRUSSTUCKLE (Pl/♂ H/F6/W4/At/LE):

THACO 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (one-handed bastard sword); AC 6 (cloak of protection +4); HD 6; hp 32; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT high (13); ML elite (13); XP 975.

Spells (3/2): *Hypnotic pattern*, *magic missile*, *shocking grasp*, *sleep*, and *web*.

BLACKGUARDSMAN (6) (Pl/VAR HUMANOID/F2/VAR/LE):

THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); AC 4 (chain mail and shield); HD 2; hp 16 each; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT very (11); ML steady (11); XP 35.

GETTING HELP

Ribcage has a few folks that can help the PCs get through the gate to Baator and survive the trip through that evil plane.

- ◆ In "Taking a Bath," below, the PCs can obtain a pass through the gate and the services of Herfik the Silent as a guide.
- ◆ In "The Merchant of Ribcage" on page 19, the PCs can take a job as merchant scouts and thus be granted a valid reason for traveling through Baator — in other words, they get a cover story to fool the fiends.
- ◆ In "Dark Secrets" on page 19, the PCs can obtain a different cover story, a pass through the gate, and the services of Flamen Therma as a guide. Although this solution seems the most complete, it's also the most dangerous — the PCs must maintain the guise of supplicants of Baator, who worship fiends.

TAKING A BATH

More than likely, the PCs'll visit the Gymnasium of Steam to pick up on the burg's latest chant. The large common springs are always full of folks lolling about and talking, and many of the smaller pools are often occupied by higher-ups (or any blood willing to pay a bit more for some privacy). A body can also dry himself out in one of the lounges, or parley with his cutters in a meeting room.

But a customer'd better bring his jink. The Gym's owner, Shandrala (Pl/♀ tf/P(sp)7/FO/LE), doesn't let any berk just walk around for free. Private meeting rooms cost 50 gp per group, a soak in a common spring costs 100 gp per person, and magical springs that cure skin diseases run 1,000 gp or more. If the party chats with folks in the common springs, they're likely to hear any

of the following bits of information (the DM can also include any other chant that the PCs need to pick up):

- ◆ The gate to Baator's in the Citadel, guarded at all times by vicious baatezu — Paracs only pretends to hate the fiends. (Not true, though the gate *is* in the Citadel.)
- ◆ A baatezu invasion force is poised to storm into Ribcage and drag the burg kicking and screaming onto their plane. (Not true.)
- ◆ A merchant from Faunel needs some bashers who'll take something to Dis for him. (True; the teller saw a public poster, but doesn't remember all the details.)
- ◆ There's a bard named Sharksplendor who soaks in a private bath every afternoon. He helps travelers get to Baator. (True; the teller's referring to Barius Sharp-splinter.)
- ◆ Some barmies think paying respect to the fiends'll get 'em wishes and other rewards. (True, though the best the fiends usually do is let such supplicants retain their lives.)
- ◆ The high-up at the Shrine of Dark Secrets often sends packs of supplicants onto Baator so they can worship the fiends close up. Some of 'em even come out again. (True; the teller's referring to Flamen Pontifus.)

DM NOTE: Tonat Shar arranged to have the party's expenses for their quest — the bag of gems — waiting at the Gymnasium. Shandrala initially denies knowing anything about the gems, hoping to turn a small profit out of the deal instead. However, if pressed, she agrees to hand the gems over, but only if convinced the PCs are who they say they are.

SURE, I CAN GET YOU A PASS
ON+ BAA+OR.
I CAN EVEN GET YOU A GUIDE.
BUT NOT TILL I'M DONE
WITH MY BATH.

— BARIUS
SHARPSPLINTER,
AT THE GYMNASIUM
OF STEAM

MEETING SHARPSPLINTER

If the PCs drop some garnish on Shandrala or otherwise persuade her that they need to meet with Sharpsplinter, she'll tell them when the tiefling bathes and in which spring they can find him. If the party returns at the appointed time, read the following:

Shandrala directs you down a curved hallway: "Try the last spring room on the right." As you walk down the hall, the air seems to get hotter and wetter, the walls more stained by steam.

Once the PCs open the indicated door, continue:

Inside is a small, roundish spring of bubbling water, ringed with multicolored stone tiles. The pool's just big enough for the tiefling relaxing in its waters. He watches you calmly but care-

fully, as if he's expected you all day. "Close the door already — you're letting out all my steam."

Bashers who simply demand that Shardsplinter (Pl/♂ tf/B8/S²/NE) help them get into Baator get nowhere. The tiefling wants to know the dark of their purpose, and, though he accepts most any story, the truth works best — he knows that Lord Paracs likes anything that works against the baatezu. Fact is, Paracs allows Shardsplinter to run his little operation in return for a split of the take.

Course, this means that the price is high: 1,000 gp for a pass, and another 500 for a one-way guide to lead them to a particular spot (Shardsplinter raises it to 1,000 if the party tells him they're after the *holy avenger*, figuring he might have to replace his guide soon).

If the PCs pay, Shardsplinter tells them to return to the spring room at the same time the next day. At that time, he'll introduce them to their new guide — Herfik the Silent — and take them to the Citadel, where they'll get a pass and go through the gate.

DM NOTE: If the PCs are pretending to be supplicants of Baator (see "Dark Secrets"), Shardsplinter, who hates fiends, won't help them. He *will* help, though, if they're acting as scouts for Dermont (see "The Merchant of Ribcage," below).

THE MERCHANT OF RIBCAGE

If the PCs haven't already heard about it, they spy a public poster while walking through the town: A spice merchant from Faunel's looking for cutters who'll help him expand his business onto Baator for a share of the jink. The handbill says to inquire at the green-and-blue canopied tent in the Gate Market near the Rigus Gate. Many tents there look similar, and the party might stop at the wrong stall a time or two (and have to endure the pitches of the other merchants) before finding the blood who placed the ad.

The air under the canopy's filled with the strong scents of dried fruit, mints, and smoldering leaves. The balding, plump salesman cheerfully concludes a sale with another customer before turning to your group. "Dermont of Faunel at your service, friends. Care to sample some freshly ground onion?"

If the PCs indicate that they've come in response to his ad, Dermont (Pl/♂ h/O/Fa/N) tells his assistant, a young half-elf, to handle the crowds while he pulls the party toward the back of the tent.

"You can see for yourself, friends, my little enterprise pulls in jink by the handful. I'm the only trader in this market with spices from the jungles and plains of the Beastlands, and the deprived folk around here can't get enough. Even the few fiends who come through town leave with a jar or two of Dermont's. Fact is, I'm ready to set up another tent, and I'd like to do it on Baator."

Dermont explains that Avernus, the first layer, is too barren to support trade, but the city of Dis on the second layer has its own booming marketplace, frequented by planars and fiends alike. If the PCs take samples of his wares to Dis and negotiate for him to establish a presence there, he'll cut them in for 5% of the profits from the first year of business.

He gives them a letter of introduction and asks that they bring him a signed letter of authorization from the bloods who run the markets in Dis. Dermont assures them they'll be "*as safe as Sigil*" on the excursion, as the baatezu don't often interfere with traders. (He *doesn't* tell the party that the two previous scouts he sent never came back.)

DM NOTES: The PCs can persuade Dermont to give them a 15% share, but only if they agree to stay on with him and help run the spice stall in Dis. In any case, lawful members of the party may wish to hammer out the details of how the PCs can fulfill their agreement to return with a letter of authorization — after all, the cutters are supposed to head straight to Fortitude after recovering the *holy avenger*.

If the party reveals their plan to steal the sword from Dispa-ter's Iron Tower, Dermont wants to back out of the deal, worried that they'll be toasted for sure. The PCs must do some quick talking to convince him otherwise.

DARK SECRETS

The party might get the idea to head for the Shrine of Dark Secrets in any number of ways: a random encounter with priests of the temple, a tip passed in the Gymnasium of Steam, or the bright idea to seek help from those in good with the baatezu.

In any case, the PCs find the temple open to any bashers eager to worship the powers of Baator or the Lords of the Nine. Ten-foot-tall statues of pit fiends, with wings unfurled and arms outstretched, stand guard on either side of the entrance; the statues are frightening, but nothing more.

As you enter, the sudden darkness envelops and blinds you until your eyes adjust to the dim candlelight. The room is spacious and high-ceilinged, with rows of benches facing a plain but colossal altar, and small doorways running the length of the room on both sides. A few of the devout sit scattered through the benches, and two men in white robes rub the tall sides of the altar with cloth.

The doors along each wall open into small rooms where adherents of Baator can privately flagellate themselves in the name of the powers they worship. While the PCs are in the temple, various berks go in and out of the rooms, and cries of pain and joy issue from within.

DECISIONS. DECISIONS —
SHOULD I FLOG MYSELF
IN THE NAME OF FURCAS
OR IN THE NAME OF
ZIMIMAR?
— A WORSHIPER
AT THE
SHRINE OF DARK SECRETS



GETTING HELP: One of the clergymen wiping the altar is Flamen Pontifus (PI/♂ tf/P10/Du/LE), leader of the temple. He's received instructions from the pit

fiend Kri'ik to cooperate with anyone who asks about the *holy avenger*. Pontifus hopes to wrangle a promotion out of the deal and helps the PCs if they reveal their quest, but obediently sends a message to Kri'ik about the party.

Pontifus dresses the PCs in the red robes of supplicants of Baator, who believe the baatezu'll grant their wishes if they abase themselves and promise eternal fealty. The party's warned that they'll have to do whatever the baatezu say to maintain their cover — no resistance and certainly no attacks.

Pontifus asks the PCs to return at dark, when he'll have a guide ready to escort them through the plane. If the party returns, they're introduced to Flamen Therma, who'll take them on a one-way trip to any particular spot. Pure fact is, Therma thinks the party's an authentic bunch of supplicants, and she'd turn the berks over to the fiends in a minute if she knew they were impostors. Around her, the party must maintain its cover carefully.

DECEIVING PONTIFUS: Any worshipers or other clergy that the PCs talk to'll eventually refer them to Pontifus, so the party has to deal with him if they want any help from the temple. If the PCs hide their true quest from Pontifus, their only other option is to convince him of their desire to pay respects to the powers of Baator — specifically, Dispatser. If he believes them, he'll dress them as supplicants and provide Flamen Therma as a guide.

DM NOTE: Flamen Therma asks the PCs how much they know about Baator. As the party probably knows little, she tutors them in a few basic points that she feels every worthy supplicant of Baator should know. First of all, she provides them with the names of the Dark Eight, the powerful pit fiends who coordinate the Blood War: Furcas, Baalzephon, Zimimar, Zapan, Zaebo, Corin, Dagos, and Pearza. Then, she gives them the names of the nine layers of Baator: Avernus, Dis, Minauros, Phlegethos, Stygia, Malbolge, Maladomini, Cania, and Nessus.

The DM may wish to have Flamen Therma drill the PCs on the names of the Dark Eight and the nine layers until they get them all right.

INTO THE CITADEL

Once the PCs have finished their business in Ribcage, the next step is to head into the first layer of Baator. To do this, they've got to visit Lord Paracs in the Citadel, give

him a good reason for going through the gate, and get a pass of safe conduct through the plane.

Course, the first problem is just getting past the Blackguard at the Citadel's entrance. Depending on their actions while in town, the PCs can get inside in a number of ways:

- ◆ Barius Sharpsplinter and Herfik the Silent can escort them (the PCs may also be sponsored by Dermont).
- ◆ Flamen Therma can escort them (the PCs are dressed as supplicants in this case).
- ◆ The Blackguard can arrest the party and drag them before Lord Paracs.
- ◆ The PCs can try to sneak past the guards and find their way through the mazelike Citadel to the gate (DM's discretion). However, even if they make it to the gate, the Blackguard on duty there try to capture them and bring them before Lord Paracs.
- ◆ The PCs can simply ask the guards for an audience. If their reasons for travel seem likely to upset the baatezu (and the cutters pay some garnish), they'll get in. However, one PC's held at the entrance during the meeting to ensure that the others don't try any funny business while inside.

THE BARON

However the PCs enter the Citadel, they're immediately brought to see Lord Paracs (Pl/♂ tf/F13/W15/At/LE). The DM should emphasize the difficulty of a body finding his way through the halls on his own — the place is like a maze, mainly as a defense in case any baatezu pop in through the gate.

Soldiers of the Blackguard flank your group on both sides as they march you through the obsidian hallways of the Citadel. For a long while, the plain corridors twist and cross in a mazelike fashion that seems designed to get berks lost. Then, the walls begin to sport clusters of embedded gems that form glittering mosaics of the Baron, and sequential wall hangings depict the various stages of his ascendancy to the throne.

Finally, you're brought into an open office area where a round, hunched tiefling in chitinous armor addresses a dozen more guards — something about setting fires. As you enter, the guards jump to their feet, hands reaching for their swords. One of your escorts speaks: "Soils to see your lordship, sir."

Obviously, if the PCs snuck into the Citadel or were dragged in as prisoners, Paracs is piked off. It takes some mighty fast talking on the PCs' part to be allowed through the gate, and the price for the pass is doubled: 2,000 gp. On the other hand, if the party agrees to perform some service for him first, Paracs may charge a more standard fee of 1,000 gp (the DM's free to specify the task — stir up trouble in a rival family's ward, spy in the Gymnasium of Steam, etc.).

Assuming that the PCs entered the Citadel by more legitimate means, they're now in one of the following situations:

MERCHANTS: If the PCs explain their business arrangement with Dermont and show their letter of introduction, Paracs chuckles.

"The Rule of Three, eh? Well, perhaps your spice peddler will find luck this time."

He's referring to Dermont's previous two scouting parties that never returned from Baator, but he won't tell the party that. For a "new business fee" of 400 gp, he'll give the party a pass and have a guard escort them to the gate. If the PCs go back to

Dermont, he agrees to pay half the fee.

If Barius Sharpsplinter is with the group, the PCs can protest the fee, arguing that they've already paid Sharpsplinter. If so confronted, Paracs waives the fee and simply takes his cut from Sharpsplinter.

SUPPLICANTS: Paracs gives the party a hard time if they're masquerading as supplicants, disparaging the powers of Baator in an attempt to anger and provoke the group. However, he still gives them a pass, eager to rid his city of the fiend-lovers — few who enter the plane ever come back out. As Flamen Therma's a respected member of the Shrine of Dark Secrets, the pass is free (she doubts its worth, anyway).

OTHER: If the PCs tell the truth about their quest for the *holy avenger*, Paracs is glad to help, just to put the screws to the baatezu. He'll charge a reduced pass fee of 500 gp, then make plans to ambush the PCs when (or if) they return and snatch the sword for himself.

If the PCs give Paracs some other cover story as to why they want to enter Baator, he's less impressed (DM's decision), and charges them a full 1,000 gp for a pass.

In either case, though, if the group's escorted by Barius Sharpsplinter, Paracs is willing to drop the fee (as above).

THROUGH THE GATE

Once the PCs have received a pass from Lord Paracs, he orders a crew of Blackguard to escort the party to the gate.

"It drops you on the first layer," says the tiefling. "You'll love the place. Light up before you go through."

The guards take the PCs back through the maze of hallways, eventually reaching the room with the gate.

After a few moments, you step into a spacious room that's empty except for a large, walled-up area in the corner, guarded by four more black-and-gold soldiers.

"Up and over," says one of your escorts, shoving you toward the walled-up corner. The stone walls seem to be about 12 feet high, with a small space between the top of the wall and the room's ceiling. A strange red glow issues out from the top of the enclosed space.

The guards stand by and watch as the PCs climb over the top of the wall — using ropes, standing on each other's backs, etc. The guards won't help, but they won't leave the room until the whole party's gone through to Baator. Once the PCs climb over the wall, they're right next to the gate.

A tall pillar of crimson light spins in place in the middle of this area, bits of silver cascading throughout the red. The whirling glow is almost hypnotic.

As Paracs hinted, the key to the gate is a lit flame, no matter what the size or source. If a body steps into the pillar without one, he's tossed back out with whirlwind force, suffering 1d10 points of damage from hitting the stone walls. Once a body carries a flame in, the gate stays open for two rounds, and the PCs can pass into Avernum.

DM NOTE: If Flamen Therma or Herfik the Silent's been assigned to guide the party, he or she goes with them to and through the gate.

BLACKGUARDSMAN (VAR) (Pl/VAR HUMANOID/F2/VAR/LE):

THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); AC 4 (chain mail and shield); HD 2; hp 15 each; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT very (11); ML steady (11); XP 35.

CHAPTER III: RED JOURNEY

The party starts this chapter having just landed on Avernus, the first of Baator's nine layers. They appear in the ruined

gate-town of Darkspine, and from there the goal is simple: Get to the gate that leads to the second layer, Dis. 'Course, on this dangerous wasteland, that's easier said than done. During their journey, the PCs stumble across sights both strange and hideous, and there's no lack of fiends, planars, and petitioners

that'd love to kill the sods or trap 'em in a dark bargain they just can't wriggle out of. Cutters can try to parley their way through, but they'd better be ready to back up their words with brains — or with steel.

DM NOTES: If the PCs took the sewer portal from the Hive straight to Baator, the DM can plant a different gate somewhere in Darkspine from which they emerge. The new gate still falls under the watch of the cornugon Montelado (see "The Guard," below). The DM can also drop the party at any other spot in Avernus, keeping in mind that they'll have no pass or guide.

For information on how magic is affected on Baator, the special powers of the baatezu, and the ways by which the fiends suffer damage, refer to the Appendix (page 64).

ROLE-PLAYING THE GUIDES

If the party's led by either Herfik the Silent or Flamen Therma, the guide may have specific reactions to different encounters, and these are noted in the encounter text marked **THE GUIDE**. Either guide also possesses the DM's map of Avernus on the gatefold screen, which can then be shown to the players. Full statistics and information for both Herfik and Therma appear in the Introduction to this adventure (page 5).

DM NOTES: If the party hasn't retained the services of a guide, the DM can allow a helpful (or hard-bargaining) body to provide the PCs with the map of Avernus (see "The Ruins of Darkspine," page 25, for one possibility). Otherwise, the players shouldn't be allowed to see the map.

Also, no two travelers to Avernus will have the exact same experience, as the wasteland changes depending on what path a body takes. The map of Avernus provided with *Fires of Dis* applies to the path taken by the guides in this adventure and may not reflect landmarks as depicted on other maps of the layer.

ROLE-PLAYING OTHER NPCs

The baatezu are, if nothing else, lawful: They follow rules and won't break their word once it's been given. However, they'll try to twist their words around so they can get what they want while still adhering to the letter of their agreement. And they're certainly able to lie whenever they think it'll gain them an advantage. While role-playing the various fiends encountered on Baator, the DM should try to keep the PCs on their toes with verbal trickery.

If the party obtained a pass of safe conduct from Lord Paraacs, it's technically worthless — only the Lords of the Nine can hand out true passes. Ironically, though,

WELL, YOU GOT
PAST THIS BLEAKNESS, HERE.
THEN YOU HEAD
THROUGH THE BLEAKNESS.
TAKE A LEFT AT THE GLOOM
DOWN THAT WAY, AND KEEP ON GOING
UNTIL YOU REACH THE BLEAKNESS.
YOU CAN'T MISS IT.
— A SOD IN DARKSPINE,
GIVING DIRECTIONS
THROUGH AVERNUS

the fake pass does the bearer some good: Lesser baatezu respect it in case it's genuine, and greater baatezu're often amused enough by it to let the bearer go. However, travelers caught without a pass – even a fake pass – must cough up some heavy garnish or pay the music.

A plausible cover story is just as important; visitors to Baator need a reason to be there. Ribcage offered the party two possible "legitimate" missions: establishing a trade franchise for the spice merchant Dermont, or traveling the plane as supplicants to worship the baatezu. In either case, depending on how the PCs present themselves, the fiends and other NPCs encountered might react differently; the **MERCHANTS** and **SUPPLICANTS** sections of encounters provide the possible influence of each cover story.

'Course, the party might come up with its own cover for being on Baator, and the DM can determine what kind of reactions the story would get.

THE GUARD

As you emerge from the gate, you find yourself standing in the ruins of a town that looks like it was decimated in a fireball battle between two wizards. The blackened buildings that still stand are punched with jagged holes, and broken rubble fills the streets. Still, it looks somewhat familiar, as if it were a dark shadow of Ribcage.

"You – travelers!" From one of the small structures nearby steps a tall, winged fiend, covered with scales and brandishing a nasty-looking barbed whip. The creature struts toward your party confidently, swishing and cracking its whip. "What's your business here?"

The guard, a cornugon named Montelado, once served as a retainer to a pit fiend general in the Blood War, but was demoted to gate duty for two centuries after losing several battles to the tanar'ri hordes. He despises his new position and often lets visitors through, taking 500 gp in gems or one magical item as garnish to look the other way. If the PCs have a fake pass and a good cover story, the price drops to 100 gp. Hagglers are told to be glad Montelado's in a generous mood – he charged the *last* group of cutters a good deal more (he's referring to Karris and the band of Indeps).

Montelado knows nothing of Dispater's plan; if the PCs reveal their quest for the *holy avenger*, the cornugon laughs and warns them to turn back while they've still got their skulls. The garnish still gets them past, but the guard then sends a message to Dispater's palace, alerting him to the party's presence.

Without the bribe, Montelado refuses to let the party pass. If attacked or provoked, he fights until two PCs are killed, then gives the remaining PCs another chance to pay the garnish and be on their way. If reduced to half his hit points, Montelado tries to *gate* in reinforcements; if reduced to a third of his hit points, he teleports away.

MERCHANTS: Montelado asks about their spices; if the PCs offer to let him sample the quality, he lowers his fee to either 50 gp (if they have a pass and a story) or 400 gp (if they don't).

SUPPLICANTS: Montelado's seen plenty of similar groups come through before, and he expects the party to pay their respects. 'Course, that includes giving him the garnish without any complaints.

THE GUIDE: Both Herfik and Flamen Therma know that guards usually look the other way for the right garnish. Therma also bows and makes a grand show of obeisance to the might of the baatezu, and she encourages the party to follow her lead.

MONTELADO (PL/♂ FD/HD 10/LE):

THACO 11; #AT 4 or 1 + weapon; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4+1/1d3 or 1d3 (tail) + 1d6 (spiked whip) (+6 Strength bonus); AC -2; hp 63; MV 9, FL 18 (C); SA fear, wounding, stun; SD regeneration, +2 weapons to hit; MR 50%; SZ L (9 feet tall); INT exceptional (15); ML elite (13); XP 10,000.

Spell-like abilities: *detect magic*, *ESP*, *lightning bolt* (3 times per day), *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, and *wall of fire* (once per day).

Gate (each once per day): 2d6 barbazus (50%), or 2d8 abishai (35%), or 1d3 cornugons (20%).



THE RUINS OF DARKSPINE

Once the PCs have gotten past Montelado, they're free to roam about the ruins that stand around them. The blasted burg is called Darkspine, a former gate-town to Baator that stood on the Outlands until the baatezu were able to drag it into their plane. Over time, it's been gutted by raiders and exploding fireballs, but some of the original residents who've managed to survive still make shabby homes in the crumbling structures. It's safer than many spots on the plane — abishai still patrol the area, but the rampaging armies of fiends generally steer clear — and it's a place where the transplanted sods can hold onto a thread of their "old" life. Determined residents are even trying to organize a resistance movement against the fiends.

Darkspine's got no real shops, kips, or official businesses of any kind. It's just a small bundle of planars trying to stay out of the dead-book, huddling together and barricading themselves against the rest of the plane. They've pretty much given up hope of ever getting back to the Outlands, but a cutter who could help them out in some small way might get something useful in return — some food, a weapon, or a bit of the chant.

DM NOTE: Although there's little to be found in Darkspine, the player characters could meet a planar or two here. The DM's free to set up any such encounters and determine what, if anything, either side might get out of the meeting (the townsfolk *won't* leave the ruins). The PCs probably won't pick up any information about the plane that either Herfik or Flamen Therma doesn't already have. 'Course, a party *without* a guide might find the sods in Darkspine a bit more useful — they could even provide the map of Avernus on the gatefold screen.

A VIEW OF THE WASTELAND

Avernus, the first of the nine layers of Baator, is little more than an empty, blasted plain, so the PCs won't be able to see much from the ground level of Darkspine. If a body flies, levitates, or climbs atop a building that hasn't yet crumbled, he'll get a better view of the surroundings, such as they are:

Beyond the shattered town lies rocky wasteland, stretching out endlessly in all directions to the horizon, where it meets the spotless, blood-red sky. Far off in the distance you can make out another cluster of buildings, though it's impossible to judge whether the journey would take a few hours, a few days, or a few months. The air's lit by fireballs twice the size of a human head that careen across the landscape, ducking and rising before exploding like flaming flowers. Those bursts are the only sounds you can hear, apart from the occasional screams that seem to ring across the entire plain.

The rocks and the fireballs are two consistent dangers that PCs crossing Avernus face.

ROCKS: Sharp stones of obsidian and quartz litter the layer, making travel on foot difficult. A careful berk can pick his way through at $\frac{1}{2}$ his normal movement rate. But anyone moving faster must make a Dexterity check every round to see if he takes a tumble for 1d3 points of damage.

FIREBALLS: As the party crosses the layer, fireballs of various sizes might explode nearby. Each turn, there's a 10% chance that one explodes near the group, blinding each PC for 1d4 + 1 rounds unless he or she successfully saves vs. spell.

The DM can use fireballs for dramatic effect, to direct the

party's path of travel, to throw wild cards into a fight, etc. If the PCs are of high levels, the DM might choose to have fireballs explode near enough to cause damage if saving throws are failed. If so, the DM can:

- ◆ Roll 2d20 to determine the diameter (in feet) of the fireball's explosion.
- ◆ Roll 1d100 to determine the distance (in feet) from the center of the explosion to the party.
- ◆ Roll 1d3 to determine the number of d4 of damage to anyone caught in the blast (each victim can try to successfully save vs. spell for half damage).

CROSSING AVERNUS

The party's only goal on Avernus is to reach the gate to Dis, the second layer of Baator. Since most of Avernus is a wasteland, the trip is tricky *with* a guide, and nearly impossible *without* one. Both Herfik the Silent and Flamen Therma take the party on the path shown on the map of Avernus as the "Road of Good Intent." It leads from Darkspine to a succession of other wrecked cities, across the River Styx, and then straight to the Maggot Pit that borders Tiamat's Lair, where the gate is found.

However, if the PCs are without a guide, they'll have little to go on (except for whatever they might wring out of the sods in Darkspine). In that event, the journey takes much longer — maybe forever, unless they tumble to a way to get around. Encounters presented later in the chapter might point them in the right direction, but there's other ways a blood can figure it out:

- ◆ The ruins of previous gate-towns are strung out in a more-or-less straight line between the gate and the River Styx, each burg in sight of the last. By following the ruins, PCs can reach the river — half the journey.
- ◆ The land slopes slightly downward from the gate (only a 1° slant), with the lowest part at Tiamat's Lair. Certain magical items might detect the slope, and on flat ground a round object rolls naturally toward the lair. On a successful Intelligence check, a dwarf or gnome can detect the slope.
- ◆ The arrow of direction from Grimbrech Stonehammer points toward Tiamat's Lair.
- ◆ Focusing on a destination ensures that a body'll get there, sooner or later. But any sod who just tries to wander around Avernus won't make any progress and'll get himself lost — in all senses of the word.

DM NOTE: If the PCs seem to need help, allow them to learn some of this information from the various NPCs they meet.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Baator's a lawful plane, and the hours and days pass in succession. Unfortunately, the sky never gets any darker or lighter, and it's got no sun or stars. The only way the PCs can mark the time is a rough one — by how often they get hungry, when they need to sleep, etc. It's especially important for spellcasters to keep track of time, so they know if and when they've rested long enough to relearn their spells.



GETTING DIRECTIONS

On most of the Outer Planes, typical compass directions ain't worth a bean. But on Avernus, the sheer presence of the power Tiamat, queen of evil dragonkind, orients a good deal of the action to her lair. So no matter where the party is on Avernus, if they head "south," they'll eventually end up at the front door to Tiamat's cavern — the Maggot Pit.

What's more, the fearsome mire of the pit causes lesser baatezu to scabble away from that area whenever possible. A PC who sees lemures and nupperibos flowing along the plain can backtrack their trail and usually end up at the pit (an encounter that's handled the right way might provide the party with this handy tip).

MAKING PROGRESS

Avernus is an infinite place, which means that its residents aren't going to be clustered within a few hundred yards of each other. The DM needs to provide the PCs with a travelogue as they make their way across the wasteland — just enough so that the cutters get a sense of how far they're going. In addition, the DM should throw in encounters as needed for pacing. The trip shouldn't get so bogged down that the PCs never get anywhere, but neither should they just slog through bleakness to the point of utter boredom.

FINDING FOOD

Hopefully, the PCs brought along enough rations to survive for several weeks on Baator (either guide would certainly insist on it). But they can also stay alive on fire fungus, the only local food source edible to nonbaatezu. It's a warm, wriggling, dull red growth usually found in patches recently hit by fireballs — which means it's all over the plane. The stuff's not tasty, but it's marginally nutritious.

Herfik or Therma both know the fungus is edible, as do the sods of Darkspine. The fiends know, too, of course, but whether they share that information with the party depends on how well the PCs handle encounters. The DM could also let the PCs observe nonbaatezu eating the growth, in order to help them get the hint.

LANDMARKS

The Road of Good Intent takes the PCs past certain landmarks that can help them chart their progress through the endless rocks and fireballs; some may also serve as backdrops for various encounters (DM's decision).

RUINED GATE-TOWNS

Ribcage isn't the first gate-town to Baator. Darkspine used to sit in the Vale of the Spine, but it got yanked into the plane by fiends who stirred up the populace enough to shift the burg. And

before Darkspine, there was *another* gate-town, and more before that. Fact is, four other ruined cities now lie between Darkspine and the River Styx (with each absorbed town, the plane kept growing, pushing its boundaries farther and farther from the river). Each is even more wrecked than the last, having been a target for fiends and fireballs for a longer period of time. But the structures still attract a few straggling bodies, as they're the only remnants of "normal" humanoid life on the wasteland.

THE PILLAR OF SKULLS

This grotesque tower's made of hundreds of living, disembodied heads, all squashed together to form a solid mass at least 10 feet around and 20 feet tall. A body'll usually *hear* the pillar before he gets close enough to get a good look at the vile thing, as the decaying heads flap their bone-boxes almost incessantly, talking, cursing, and arguing with one another — after all, what else've they got to do? Most of the heads are of human or humanoid

racess, but there's a few that even planars'd have a tough time giving a name to. If the

PCs get near enough to be seen, the heads all shout conflicting pleas to the party at once, offering information in exchange for some kind of service (DM's discretion).

THE RIVER OF BLOOD

A body can hear the din of the Pillar of Skulls before he gets there, but the first assault of this flow is its sickening stench. A slow river of warm, partially clotted blood streams down through the wasteland, its slippery, scabby banks pulling in any berk who comes too near (Dexterity check to avoid taking the plunge). Some spots are as shallow as a single foot, but the width never closes below 100 yards, making any crossing a long, unpleasant experience. Downstream, the river dumps into the black waters of the Styx. Upstream, it eventually leads back to its source — the Lake of Blood, a fetid body nestled in the Stigmaris Mountains.

THE RIVER STYX

This dark, rancid waterway cuts right through Avernus on its winding passage through the Lower Planes. A PC caught in the wasteland without drinking water might be tempted to ignore the foul stink and take a sip, but the oily liquid's got a *lot* more potency than just its smell. Drinking the water or touching it with bare skin means the PC loses all memory of his past life (successfully save vs. spell to lose only the memory of the last day). Both Herfik and Therma know the danger of the river.

The Styx is generally several hundred yards wide, but in some places bits of skeletal coral jut slightly out of the water, beckoning a traveler to leap from one to the next to get across. A PC must make a successful Dexterity check for each jump or fall in; the DM can allow Dexterity checks of other party members nearby to see if they grab their tumbling comrade.

DM NOTE: To avoid the campaign problem of PCs losing their entire memories, feel free to fudge saving throws so the most a cutter forgets is the past day. (Course, it's fun to make it *look* like the PC faces serious trouble by consulting books, rolling dice, etc.)



ENCOUNTERS

The next several pages present details of the baatezu, planars, and other creatures that the party may run into while journeying from Darkspine to the Maggot Pit. Unless specifically stated otherwise, these encounters can occur at any time and in any order – whatever the DM thinks is best for the pacing of the party's trip. If the PCs are led by Herfik or Therma, they should run into most or all of these encounters.

However, without a guide keeping them to the path, the party's sure to have *more* encounters than are given here. Every third round of travel without a guide, there's a 15% chance of a wandering monster attacking the party; the DM should first roll 1d6 to determine the type of creature encountered, and then roll the indicated die to determine the number of creatures.

DIE ROLL (1d6)	CREATURE(S)
1–2	2d4 lemures
3–4	2d6 nupperibos
5	1d3 spinagons
6	1d2 abishai

BEL'S LEGION

The pit fiend Bel sweeps across Avernus with his immense army of baatezu, repelling invaders and marshalling Baator's forces for the Blood War.

A large dust cloud appears on the horizon, and the low, rumbling thunder makes you thirsty for rain. But this is a different kind of storm. A huge, black mass emerges from the haze, streaming into thousands of distinct shapes – a scrabbling horde of baatezu. Seething masses of melted lemures and blobby nupperibos spill forward from the front ranks, spurred on by jeering, gargoylelike abishai. Toward the rear, army banners are hoisted by an honor guard of barbazu that surround a monstrous pit fiend. Overhead flies a small squad of a dozen or so black abishai.

As long as the PCs somehow conceal themselves from the swarm, they won't be attacked or even noticed. Bel's on a run of the plain, snatching up lemures for his armies. 'Course, if the party stands right out in the open or tries to slash their way through the horde, they'll be killed, no questions asked.

The flying black abishai get a good view of the legion's surroundings; they spot a poorly hidden party 50% of the time and a well-hidden party 20% of the time. One abishai per PC veers off from the army to pursue and attack the party, breaking off if they haven't caught the PCs in three rounds.

SAY, WHAT'S THAT HUGE
CLOUD OF DUST
RUMBLING THIS WAY?

— THE LAST WORDS
OF A BASHER

+++ CURIOUS
FOR HIS OWN GOOD

MERCHANTS/SUPPLICANTS: This army doesn't stop to listen to cover stories or inspect passes – they just shred any nonbaatezu they find.

THE GUIDE: As soon as he spots the swarm, Herfik tells the party to take cover and uses his *ring of invisibility* to hide himself. Therma also counsels the PCs to hide but she remains with them, weeping in awe at the sight of the glorious horde.

BLACK ABISHAI (1 PER PARTY MEMBER):

THACO 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4+1; AC 5; HD 4+1; hp 25 each; MV 9, Fl 12 (C); SA poison, dive; SD regeneration, +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ L (8 feet tall); INT average (9); AL LE; ML average (10); XP 7,000.

Spell-like powers: *change self*, *command*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, and *scare*.

Gate (once per day): 2d6 lemures (60%), or 1d3 abishai (30%).

THE HUNTERS

Avernus is a wide-open stomping ground, a perfect field for greater baatezu to amuse themselves by hunting prey. Sometimes fiends release an especially feisty petitioner or captured paladin, and sometimes they just chase down any berk or beast unlucky enough to be roaming about. One of the latter type of hunting parties – four yeth hounds driven by an amnizu – spots the PCs while crossing the plain.

The sudden, chilling howls seem to tear your spine from your body, a baying unlike any you've heard before. Silhouetted against the crimson sky are four feral, wolflike shapes, twice the size of ordinary prime wolves, wingless but still somehow slicing through the air. Spotting your group, the hounds land and gallop toward you, gnashing and growling. Close behind them follows a short, stubby, winged fiend, gleefully driving the pack with manic shouts and gestures.

The amnizu, Grafscatz, follows the rules of the hunt: hunters may fly only if the prey flies; prey that can't be seen or smelled by the hounds is deemed to have escaped and thereafter ignored; the hounds attack first, with hunters joining in only if the beasts are defeated; and the hunt stops once the first trophy (in this case, one PC or the guide) is captured or killed.

Grafscatz won't listen to anything the PCs say while the yeth hounds are attacking, but afterward he can be stopped from making his own attack by being shown the pass or bribed 500 gp in gems.

MERCHANTS: Grafscatz laughs at the foolhardiness that'll soon make them either rich or dead, sneering that they'll enjoy the Cave of Greed – perhaps.

SUPPLICANTS: The amnizu insists that fighting the hounds doesn't show the proper respect to a baatezu of his station.

THE GUIDE: Herfik stays back and won't fight a hound unless directly attacked. Therma, however, does fight, and can successfully argue that by putting up a good battle they've proven their respect – by giving Grafscatz an exciting hunt.

GRAFSCATZ (Pl/♂ HD/HD 9/LE):

THACO 11 (treat nonmagical armor as AC 10); #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; AC -1; hp 59; MV 6, Fl 15 (C); SA energy channel, forget; SD +2 weapons to hit; MR 50%; SZ M (4 feet tall); INT exceptional (16); ML elite (14); XP 11,000.

Spell-like abilities: *fireball* (3 times per day), *imprisonment* (once per day).

Gate (once per day): 2d10 abishai (50%), or 1d8 erinyes (30%).

YETH HOUND (4): THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; AC 0; HD 3+3; hp 18, 20, 22, 26; MV 15, Fl 27 (B); SA fear; SD silver or magical weapons to hit; MR 10%; SZ M (5 feet tall); INT low (6); AL NE; ML fearless (19); XP 975.

OSYLUTH PATROL

Twin raspy voices shatter the silence of the wasteland: "Serve the Eight! Serve the Eight!" Two humanoid fiends creep rhythmically toward you on long, spindly legs, their scorpionlike tails twitching in the air behind them. At least nine feet tall, they'd almost be walking skeletons if not for the thin film of sickly, rotting skin covering their bony frames. Close behind, a larger group of scaly, clawed fiends grumble and scuffle along, tugging at their snaky beards and threatening one another with stained, saw-toothed glaives. The whole group reeks of spoiled meat.

This patrol's scouring the layer for lawbreaking baatezu — especially deserters of the Blood War. The bony osyluths police all of Baator with broad disciplinary powers granted by the Dark Eight, and these two currently command a violent batch of 2d4 battle-bred barbazus.

No matter what the party's cover story, the osyluths — Kerdel and Brack, who always speak in eerie unison — demand to know every detail of their excursion. At first, the fiends challenge any pass of safe conduct in order to gauge the party's reaction, but eventually accede if the PCs adamantly defend their rights as passholders.

If the PCs have no pass, the osyluths — charged with enforcing the law — won't accept any bribes. However, several of the barbazus seem eager to take the gems, which may lead to bickering and even blows within the patrol, though the osyluths quickly restore order.

MERCHANTS: Kerdel and Brack interrogate the cutters about who hired them, where they're going, and what they're carrying, and demand that the PCs impress them with their knowledge of spices (involving the players in some off-the-cuff role-playing).

SUPPLICANTS: The osyluths test the party's knowledge of Baator, asking the names of various other layers and the names of the Dark Eight. Unanswered questions or incorrect answers invite hostility from the patrol.

THE GUIDE: Herfik protests he's just a hired hand and doesn't want any trouble; Therma's able to answer any questions about the plane that the party can't (though she always waits for them to venture an answer first).

KERDEL / BRACK (PL/♂ FD/HD 5/LE):

THACO 15; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d8/3d4; AC 3; hp 28, 32; MV 12; SA fear, poison; SD +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ L (9 feet tall); INT very (12); ML steady (12); XP 7,000.

Spell-like abilities: *fly*, *improved phantasmal force*, *invisibility*, and *wall of ice*.

Gate (once per day): 1d100 nupperibos (50%), or 1–2 osyluths (35%).

BARBAZU (2D4): THACO 13; #AT 3 or 1 (weapon); Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d8 or 2d6 (glaive); AC 3; HD 6+6; hp 36 each; MV 15; SA glaive, disease, battle frenzy; SD +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT low (5); AL LE; ML steady (11); XP 6,000.

Spell-like abilities: *affect normal fires*, *command*, *fear* (by touch), and *produce flame*.

Gate (once per day): 2d6 abishai (50%), or 1d6 barbazus (35%).

LOST PETITIONERS

As you round a hill, you come face to face with a ragtag band of short, smelly humanoid creatures, their amber, scaly skin and tiny white horns bringing one thought to your mind: kobolds. They yelp and shrink back from your group, crouching close to the ground, covering their heads with their lanky arms.

If not attacked, the kobolds rise, point, mutter, and push a representative forward: Jackbok, who asks for directions to Nibellin, a warren in Draukari — the underground realm of the kobold power Kurtulmak. Long ago, the kobolds left the realm to fight off an invasion of gnomes and've been unable to find their way back since. They've wandered Avernus for what seems like centuries, with fiends and fireballs whittling their once hundred-strong pack down to barely more than a dozen.

Jackbok asks for weapons, armor, or magical items to help them fend off the fiends as they trek through the waste-

'MAYBE NIBELLIN'S
JUST OVER THE NEXT HILL,'
'MAYBE NIBELLIN'S
JUST OVER THE NEXT HILL' —
THAT'S ALL WE'VE HEARD EVERY DAY
FOR THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS!

— A DISGRUNTLED
KOBOLD PETITIONER,
+ JACKBOK

land, taking whatever the party cares to give. Being petitioners, the kobolds have no need of rations, and they refuse to travel far with the party,

adamant on finding their long-lost home. The only thing they offer is information gleaned from years of traveling across Avernus (whatever the DM thinks the party needs to know, and only if first paid for with items the kobolds consider useful).

If attacked or cheated, the kobolds fight with the only equipment they still carry: spiked clubs. Jackbok, however, also attacks with a *ring of the ram*. If the PCs let down their guard, the kobolds try to steal equipment and flee, fighting to the death if caught.

MERCHANTS: The kobolds've met plenty of merchant scouts and caravans during their exile on Avernus, and can probably direct the party toward the River Styx.

SUPPLICANTS: As the kobolds fear the baatezu, they naturally hate PCs who claim to worship the fiends, making a kobold attack more likely.

THE GUIDE: Neither guide knows the way to Draukari. Herfik pushes the small kobolds around, while Therma compliments them for sacrificing so many of their tribe to the beloved baatezu.

DM NOTE: If any of the PCs are gnomes, the kobolds attack the bashers on sight, stopping the assault only if half their number are slain.

JRACKBOK (PE/♂ KOBOLD/0/-/LE):

THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (club) or 1–3d6 (ring); AC 9 (tough hide); HD 1/2; hp 4; MV 6; SZ S (3 feet tall); INT average (10); ML steady (12); XP 15.

Magical items: *ring of the ram* (5 charges left; 1d6 damage per charge used in attack, up to 3).

KOBOLD (14): THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (club); AC 10; HD 1/2; hp 3; MV 6; SZ S (3 feet tall); INT average (8); ML average (8); XP 7.

FIENDHERDERS

Most of the greater baatezu don't bother gathering the lemures and nupperibos they need for their armies. They leave that task to spinagons – small, cowardly fiends eager to be promoted for good service. At some point, the party should come across the following scene:

Dozens of disgusting creatures – fat, fleshy blobs, more like decomposing worms than humanoids – are being poked and prodded into a herd by several short, spike-covered fiends with military forks. Some of the jellylike shapes moan and bellow, others are strangely silent; all squish and collide, seemingly mindless, in the growing herd. One of the stray worm-things spies your group, and suddenly a small cluster breaks from the herd and scrambles toward you.

Five lemures and two nupperibos head for the party, but after one round the entire herd swarms toward the PCs. These no-brain baatezu attack the party in wave after writhing wave until destroyed or forced back under the spinagons' control (the DM should describe the attack in the most sickening terms possible.)

As the herd attacks, one of the three spinagons panics and flies away immediately. The other two stay and try to rein in the herd, flitting about and jabbing with their forks, shouting “Stop! Back!” and “Don't kill the stock!” They'll be grateful to any PCs who help them round up the herd, giving directions or advice (whatever the DM wants the players to know).

On the other hand, if the party kills more than half of the stampeding fiends, the two spinagons try to fly away. If cornered, they'll plead for freedom, wailing loudly about the gruesome punishment that awaits them for losing the stock, and offer information in exchange for their lives (again, the DM decides what they reveal). The spinagons fight only as a last resort.

MERCHANTS: In exchange for their freedom, the spinagons offer to put in a good word for the PCs with King Hejj, the powerful tiefling who controls most of the market trade in Dis. They offer to fly one jar of spices ahead to the king. However, unless the PCs hammer out a carefully worded agreement, the spinagons taint the spices with Type J poison before delivering the jar.

SUPPLICANTS: The spinagons act less cowardly, expecting obeisance from the party – in fact, the spiked fiends each demand 300 gp in gems from the group.

THE GUIDE: Herfik turns invisible to hide from the onrushing mass of lemures and nupperibos; Therma tries to round up the mindless fiends instead of fighting them, and she gladly lets the two spinagons go.

SPINAGON (3) (PL/VAR FD/HD 3+3/LE):

THACO 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d6 (military fork); AC 4; hp 15, 19, 24; MV 6, Fl 18 (C); SA flame spikes; MR 15%; SZ S (3 feet tall); INT average (8); AL LE; ML average (8); XP 3,000.

Spell-like abilities: *affect normal fires, change self, command, produce flame, scare, and stinking cloud.*

Gate (once per day): 1–3 spinagons (35%).

LEMURE (18): THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; AC 7; HD 2; hp 10 each; MV 3; SA battle drive; SD regeneration, immune to mind-affecting spells; SZ M (5 feet tall); INT semi (3); AL LE; XP 120.

NUPPERIBO (20): THACO 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1d2/1d2; AC 9; HD 1; hp 6 each; MV 6; SD regeneration, immune to mind-affecting spells; SZ M (5 feet tall); INT non (0); AL LE; XP 120.

Spell-like abilities: *cause fear* (only if 10 are commanded to attack the same target).



AN UNSEEN FRIEND

Sticking out of a large rock formation nearby are the legs and feet of an armored warrior, a poor sod who seems to have materialized half inside the solid stone. More bodies – just the bottom halves, actually – adorn the small foothills around you. A few jut impossibly out of boulders, while dozens rise from the hard-baked soil like tombstones in a graveyard.

If the party examines the bodies, they find eight loose enough to be pulled up from the ground; most are humans, with a few dwarves. Once unearthed, the muddy but intact corpses can be seen to wear the markings of the Harmonium. (The bodies are remnants of the invasion force originally sent by Tonat Shar.)

“Really, it's a pity they weren't better prepared,” gurgles a voice from nowhere. “You bashers might prove better suited to the task. Maybe we could help each other out.”

The voice comes from the pit fiend Kri'ik, using his improved invisibility power to remain unseen. If Flamen Pontifus sent Kri'ik a message from Ribcage, the fiend already knows the PCs are after the *holy avenger*; if not, Kri'ik merely sees the PCs as candidates to help him carry out his plan to embarrass Dispa-ter. In either case, he introduces himself as “a friend” and offers to reward the PCs if they steal the sword back from the archduke's Iron Tower.

Refer to the following during the encounter:

- ♦ Kri'ik admits to no knowledge of what happened to the Hardheads, but bemoans their failure to achieve their task.
- ♦ In return for stealing the sword, Kri'ik offers the PCs "something you mortals understand – great wealth." For now, he won't be any more specific than that.
- ♦ Kri'ik admits wanting to embarrass Dispater and perhaps even seize command, hinting that his ascendancy to the throne would give the PCs a powerful ally in Baator – one who'd be "indebted" to them.
- ♦ Kri'ik won't become visible unless forced by magical means; cutters who concentrate on spotting him can save vs. spell at –2, with success meaning they glimpse a shimmering outline of his huge, winged form.

No matter how the PCs react to his suggestion, Kri'ik says he'll contact them again before they reach the city of Dis, when he'll bring along something to help them survive in the tower. They can hammer out the specific terms of their agreement then. For now, though, Kri'ik leaves the party with a test:

"I hope you don't mind if I see how tough you cutters are," says the voice. "I've got to make sure you can handle the job."

Kri'ik pulls eight Hardhead corpses out of the ground (unless the PCs have done so already) and uses his *animate dead* power to turn them into zombies that attack the party. He also *gates* in two barbazus to join the assault, and then teleports away (the barbazus fight to the death and try to *gate* in further baatezu, if necessary).

MERCHANTS/SUPPLICANTS: If the PCs pose as merchants, Kri'ik wonders aloud if they'll be strong enough to handle the job; if the PCs pose as supplicants, Kri'ik tries to command them to accept his offer (even if he knows they're not *true* supplicants).

THE GUIDE: Herfik doubts that anything invisible in Baator can be any good; Therma rejects the idea of stealing the sword from Dispater.

DM NOTE: If any PCs successfully glimpse Kri'ik and attack him, their rolls suffer a –6 penalty (as he's fast and barely visible). If attacked, Kri'ik tries to use *hold person*, *suggestion*, or *wall of fire* to restrain the attacker, but teleports away if necessary.

ZOMBIE (VAR, UP TO 8): THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; AC 8; HD 2; hp 12 each; MV 6; SD immune to poison and cold-based attacks; MR immune to *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, and death magic; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT non (0); AL N; XP 65.

BARBAZU (2): THACO 13; #AT 3 or 1 (weapon); Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d8 or 2d6 (glaive); AC 3; HD 6+6; hp 45 each; MV 15; SA glaive, disease, battle frenzy; SD +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT low (6); AL LE; ML steady (12); XP 6,000.

Spell-like abilities: *affect normal fires*, *command*, *fear* (by touch), and *produce flame*.

Gate (once per day): 2d6 abishai (50%), or 1d6 barbazus (35%).

RETURN OF THE FREE LEAGUE

This encounter should take place after the PCs cross the River Styx, but before they reach the Maggot Pit.

The wizard Karris and his band of Indeps have been one step ahead of the party the entire adventure. However, their trek across Avernus has been slow, and the PCs catch up while their rivals are eating. One of the Indeps has already been put in the dead-book; they now number only five plus Karris, and none wear recognizable faction colors.

Not far ahead, a cluster of bodies sit cross-legged on a small, rockless mound, with a guard standing watch. The group mutters and passes meager rations around until the guard alerts them to your presence. Jumping to their feet – six in all – they draw weapons, tense for a moment, then visibly relax after peering at you carefully. "Can't be too careful with fiends about," says a thin man in a plain brown robe. "Good to see fellow travelers."

Karris recognizes the PCs; he's already warned his band about a possible fight with the party, and they're ready to attack on his signal. Although he's tried to alter his physical appearance with different clothing and facial markings, the smartest PCs can make Intelligence checks to see if they recognize Karris as the "apprentice" they met in Sigil. If recognized, Karris tries to talk his way out of trouble; if attacked, he directs his band to fight.

If the PCs don't recognize Karris or attack, the Indeps invite the party to join "our poor feast," promising to share both rations and information. The Indeps try to find out as much about the party's quest and progress as possible, claiming to be in search of a fallen comrade's corpse. If need be, the Indeps try to bind the PCs and extract information by force.

If a fight breaks out, Karris immediately casts a *monster summoning I* spell, which brings 2d4 nupperibos within one round. Since the creatures are mindless, they attack all in sight until destroyed – PCs and Indeps alike.

MERCHANTS: Unless the PCs have disguised themselves in some way, Karris isn't fooled for an instant, but he plays along.

SUPPLICANTS: Karris takes a bit longer to mark the PCs in their robes – perhaps enough time for the cutters to recognize him and attack first (DM's decision).

THE GUIDE: Herfik, weary of the journey, is only too glad to sit, eat, and rest; Therma tries to sell the Indeps on the glory of the baatezu.

DM NOTES: General statistics are given below for the six Indeps, but the DM's free to customize the bashers, making one a bariaur fighter, one a githzerai priest, etc.

KARRIS (Pl/♂ U/W6/FL/CN):

See page 12 for full statistics; current hp 20.

INDEP (5) (Pl/VAR HUMANOID/F6/FL/N):

THACO 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword); AC 4 (banded mail); HD 6; hp 41; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT average (10); ML average (10); XP 270.

NUPPERIBO (2d4): THACO 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1d2/1d2; AC 9; HD 1; hp 5 each; MV 6; SD regeneration, immune to mind-affecting spells; SZ M (5 feet tall); INT non (0); AL LE; XP 120.



THE MAGGOT PIT

Once the party's made it across the bulk of Avernus, they'll end up at the Maggot Pit, a baatezu breeding ground that blocks the entrance to Tiamat's Lair. From a distance, the lair appears to be a small rock formation, but up close it seems infinitely huge (refer to the map on the inside of the gatefold screen).

The crater in front of you is easily a thousand feet across and many thousands of feet wide, filled to the lip with a writhing mass of ooze and maggots. As you watch, fresh lemures and nupperibos emerge from the goo and crawl onto the land, stumbling around blindly, seemingly oblivious to your presence.

The pit abuts a sheer rock wall that stretches across the plain and rises into the sky as far as you can see. A single, large mouth at the base of the wall opens into darkness within.

If the PCs attack any creatures or try to cross the pit, the guardian – a red abishai – confronts the group:

"Suddenly, a hulking abishai bursts from the writhing soup, scattering clumps of putrid goo in his wake. "Hands off my pit!" He flies over and lands with a groundshaking thud next to you, hundreds of maggots still clinging to his vermillion scales.

The abishai, Arraka, busies himself with sending the fresh lemures and nupperibos off into the wasteland and supervising the emergence of new spawn (formed from the spirits of lawful evil planars and primes). He won't attack the PCs unless they try to harm him or the spawn, but he does offer his services to those who ask about crossing the pit. However, *no one* goes across unless the group has a pass.

For one magical item or 300 gp in gems, he'll agree to fly one body across the pit to a narrow ledge at the mouth of the cave. Obviously, this arrangement could be costly if the whole party (plus the guide) needs a lift, but the greatest danger comes from poorly worded deals: Arraka adheres to the letter of an agreement, but tries his hardest to break its spirit. A simple command of "Take me across the pit" doesn't compel Arraka to leave the transported PC at the cave mouth; the abishai just takes him across, then flies him back to where they started. The charge "Take me *over* the pit" allows Arraka to fly halfway across, then drop the poor sod into the wriggling slop. If any PCs get peeled in a bad deal, they can try again – for another fee (after all, Arraka *did* fulfill his end of the bargain).

Arraka can also order the squirming masses to hold still long enough for the PCs to walk across the surface to the other side. This is by far the cheaper arrangement – only two magical items or 600 gp in gems for the whole group – but he won't suggest it unless the PCs refuse to be flown across. Again, the deal must be worded carefully to prevent Arraka from allowing any berks to get sucked into the rotting mire. The maggots won't support a body's weight unless commanded to do so by Arraka.

Another option for the PCs is to kill the abishai or drive him away, then cross the pit by their own magical means. If Arraka

loses 30 points of damage, he tries to *gate* in 1d3 more abishai; if he loses 40 points, he commands all spawn to destroy the PCs and then teleports away. Immediately thereafter, 3d8 lemures and 3d10 nupperibos emerge from the pit and swarm over the PCs, preventing flight or escape. Every other round, another 1d8 lemures and 1d10 nupperibos slop forth to join the battle. If the PCs ever reduce their ranks to ten or less (lemures and nupperibos combined), the cutters can try to flee or magically cross the pit.

SINKING IN THE PIT: If a PC gets dropped into the pit or tries to cross it without Arraka first making the slime hold still, he sinks into the mire (1d8 damage per round). The berk can pull himself free with a Strength check and move a yard or two, but faces the same problem the next round unless at the lip of the pit (DM's decision). If the PC doesn't

escape the pit in four rounds, he's pulled completely under, unable to struggle further (suffering 2d8 damage per round until rescued by the party or fully digested by the goo).

MERCHANTS: Arraka asks the party to throw half of their spice stock into the pit, just to see what kind of effect it might have on the spawning fiends (none). He won't help the PCs otherwise.

SUPPLICANTS: Arraka demands that they prove their devotion by letting him dangle them, one at a time, halfway into the writhing muck. Each PC gets dipped for one round, suffering 1d8 damage – those too weak can plead for a reduced time in the pit.

THE GUIDE: Herfik's been to the Maggot Pit before, and he knows to word agreements carefully; Therma clamors to be "cleansed" in the pit for a round or two.

ARRAKA (PL/♂ FD/HD 6+3/LE):

THACO 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4+1; AC 1; hp 46; MV 9, Fl 12 (C); SA poison, dive; SD regeneration, +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT average (10); ML steady (12); XP 9,000.

Spell-like abilities: *change self*, *command*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, and *scare*.

Gate (once per day): 2d6 lemures (60%), or 1d3 abishai (30%).

NUPPERIBO (VAR): THACO 19; #AT 2; Dmg 1d2/1d2; AC 9; HD 1; hp 4 each; MV 6; SD regeneration, immune to mind-affecting spells; SZ M (5 feet tall); INT non (0); AL LE; XP 120.

LEMURE (VAR): THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; AC 7; HD 2; hp 8 each; MV 3; SA battle drive; SD regeneration, immune to mind-affecting spells; SZ M (5 feet tall); INT semi (3); AL LE; XP 120.



IT'S NOT THAT
I MIND EATING
THIS FIRE FUNGUS.

IT'S JUST THAT
I WISH I'D STOP
MOVING SO MUCH.

— GLAMSHAW THE PICKY,
WISHING HE'D BROUGHT
MORE RATIONS WITH HIM



TIAMAT'S LAIR

Once they've crossed the pit, the PCs stand on a narrow ledge in front of the rough-hewn opening in the stone wall. The mouth leads into a 60-foot-wide tunnel carved through the rock that comes out into a colossal cavern (see the DM's map of the lair on the inside of the gatefold screen).

Standing in this monstrous hall of solid rock, you feel smaller and more insignificant than you've felt in a long time. Light from the sky outside barely reaches down the tunnel, casting a pale red glow over the black stone. You can see four other tunnels leading off in different directions.

One tunnel leads to the Cave of Greed and the gate to Dis. The others lead to Tiamat, the power of evil dragonkind, and her five dragon consorts — the most powerful male Great Wyrms of each chromatic color (red, black, green, blue, and white). Each consort resides in its own cave and revels in its own horde of treasure. The treasure hasn't been specified — the PCs shouldn't muck around with it — but the DM's free to fill the lairs with any coins or objects desired.

Currently, the red and green consorts are not on Baator, and only the black, blue, and white wyrms rest in their lairs.

Herfik and Therma know better than to disturb Tiamat, her consorts, or their treasures. If the PCs insist on picking a fight with Tiamat or the Great Wyrms, the DM should give them one chance to surrender and leave. Otherwise, the poor sods are decimated without much fuss.

1. RED CONSORT'S LAIR: *You feel like you've stepped into the belly of a volcano, or maybe right into the Elemental Plane of Fire. The cavern's clouded with a searing haze that seems to eat away at your exposed skin. All you can see is a shimmeringly hot pile of coins riddled with other stray items. However, it's hard to focus on anything except the boiling sweat burning your eyes and your rapidly rising body temperature.*

Each PC suffers 3d6 points of damage for each round spent in the cave after the first (successfully save vs. breath weapon for half). Touching any of the red-hot treasure horde causes 1d10 points of damage per round (the items won't cool down unless taken from the cavern for three days, with the PC sustaining damage during each round spent in contact with the object).

2. BLACK CONSORT'S LAIR: *Here the very atmosphere seems thick with poison, as sharp, corrosive air burns your lungs, your skin, and your armor. Just before your eyes snap shut at the stinging pain, you make out a large, clear pool in the middle of the cave, and what looks like a sculpted mound of coins resting at the bottom.*

Liquid and gaseous acid fills the home of the black dragon. For every round spent in the cave, all armor (even magical armor) permanently loses one class of effectiveness, and any magical weapons lose one plus (successfully save vs. acid to escape dam-

age). In addition, each PC suffers 2d8 damage from breathing the air (successfully save vs. poison for half). The pool of clear acid dissolves two levels of Armor Class per round, and causes 2d10 points of damage to bare skin. While in the cave, all PCs are unable to keep their eyes open.

The black dragon nesting in this cave won't stir unless the PCs approach the pool — in which case he'll warn them to leave and kill them if they ignore his advice.

3. GREEN CONSORT'S LAIR: *The rock in this tunnel softens under your feet, becoming more and more swamplike as you progress. It leads to a cavern so thick with luxuriant foliage that you can't see more than ten feet through the growth. The air's as heavy as a wet blanket draped around your head, and the droning buzz of insects seems to get louder and angrier.*

Every round after the first, hundreds of flying insects attack each PC, stinging and biting through everything but metal armor for 1d8 points of damage; only cold-based attacks fend them off. Also, the oppressive humidity cuts each basher's movement rate and number of attacks in half. The party won't be able to move very far through the swampy foliage (or find anything of consequence), and damage from the growing number of insects doubles each round.

4. BLUE CONSORT'S LAIR: *After winding away from the central cavern, the passage suddenly stops at the edge of a great, dark abyss that stretches below you endlessly. In the center of the pit is a mountain peak, rising up from the black depths, at least 500 feet from the edge where you stand. Nestled by the peak is a ponderous, deep blue dragon the color of water at the ocean's bottom. It stares balefully at you across the abyss, watching with unblinking, milky eyes.*

The blue dragon won't make a move unless the PCs try to cross the

abyss to its peak. It then takes to the air and attacks, trying simply to drive the intruders away, but the wyrm gladly slaughters any sods leatherheaded enough to stick around. If any PCs fall into the abyss, the DM should roll 1d6 to determine their rate of descent. On 1–2, they fall only a few yards per round and can be rescued by other party members; on 3–4, they fall at normal speed; on 5–6, they fall at double speed. Any berks who do plunge into the pit die of old age long before they hit bottom.

5. TIAMAT'S LAIR: As the PCs pass this cavern, a terrible aura of fear prevents them from approaching the dark entrance.

A freezing wave of fear washes over you, chilling your blood and raising goosebumps the size of gold coins all over your body. With the force of a hurricane, the aura pushes you away from the pitch-black cavern entrance, crushing you against the opposite wall.

The PCs must inch their way along the wall until they've passed the entrance to Tiamat's Lair and entered the tunnel leading to the Cave of Greed, at which point the aura of fear subsides. Any PCs who insist on entering the cave through magical or other extraordinary means face instant immolation, with no

saving throws and no chance to back out. Tiamat's a *power*, and powers can't be disturbed if they don't wish to be.

6. WHITE CONSORT'S LAIR: A smaller cave leads from Tiamat's lair to the cavern of her most favored consort – currently, the white dragon. However, to get there, the PCs'd have to march right past Tiamat's nose, and that ain't going to happen in this adventure.

7. THE CAVE OF GREED: As the party takes the southern branch out of the huge central cavern, the tunnel splits again, leading to the Cave of Greed and the gate to Dis.

As you make your way down the wide tunnel, you can see huge, iron doors set into the rock at the far end. Just to your right, though, another passageway opens into the tunnel, ruddy light spilling through from whatever lies on the other end.

If any PC enters the cave, read or paraphrase the following:

The ruddy light takes on a more golden glow in this cavern, emanating not from any torch or fire but from a glittering pile of coins – enough copper, silver, and gold to ransom a dozen kings. Sword hilts, goblets, tunics, and gems of all sizes and colors add to the mound. The only thing between you and the treasure is an oblong pond of dark, fetid water about 300 feet across that spans the width of the cavern.

Each visitor to the cave that sees the pile of treasure must make a Wisdom check; beings of evil alignment suffer a –2 penalty, those of neutral alignment roll at –1, and those of good alignment take no penalty at all. Any sod who fails the check is seized with greed and becomes determined to get to the other side of the pond, no matter what his companions say or do to stop him.

No flight, levitation, or teleportation magic works in the Cave of Greed, and no bodies and objects can swim or float in the pond. The only way to reach the treasure is to wade through the water, which has a maximum depth of five feet (a problem for short sods). A body in metal armor wades at $\frac{1}{2}$ his current movement rate; all others wade at $\frac{1}{2}$ their rate.

Here's the catch: Every round spent in the water saps one point of Wisdom from the wader (to a minimum of zero), and the drain goes unnoticed until the PC emerges on the opposite bank. A party member who sticks his hand in water to test it won't feel anything; the draining effect only occurs when a PC's fully immersed. However, the loss isn't permanent – the cutter's Wisdom returns at a rate of one point every two days.

Any PCs who reach the far side of the pond find that the treasure is, indeed, real. However, each item is cursed or suffers from a disastrous flaw: weapons hit at –3 or worse, goblets turn any liquid to poison, gems randomly burst into handfuls of spiders, etc. Even the coins bring woe to their taker – each weighs as much as one hundred similar coins, making it difficult at best to transport them away.

THE GUIDE: Both Herfik and Therma know that something's strange about the cave, but neither knows the dark of the sapping water or the troubled treasure (the cave worked differently the last time they came through).

DM NOTE: Feel free to specify the type and amount of all coins and items in the pile, tailoring the treasure to the particulars of the players and the campaign.

8. THE GATE TO DIS: As the PCs approach the end of the tunnel, they see the gate leading to Dis, the second layer of Baator.

The rocky tunnel comes to an end at a set of 20-foot-tall doors of rusty, gray iron, built into the stone. Each door looks warped with irregular bumps and protrusions, as if battered by something on the other side. Bolted halfway between the top and bottom of each door is a large ring handle.

The iron gate leading to Dis isn't guarded by baatezu – Tiamat and the fiends have somewhat of a strained relationship. The PCs need only pull open the doors by the handles, which requires a successful bend bars/lift gates roll. 'Course, since the handles're ten feet off the ground, few bashers can reach them without levitating (which ruins the leverage needed for pulling) or standing on another cutter's back (an unstable platform at best). Unless a PC figures out a way to stand solidly in front of the handle, all rolls for opening the doors are made at a –5 penalty. However, the doors can also be opened by a *knock* spell or similar means.

When the iron doors are finally forced open, they swing inward, toward the party, revealing only a cavernous passageway that leads forever into the darkness. A giant trap door spider hiding in a side tunnel 20 feet along leaps at the first PC to pass the camouflaged opening; the victim suffers –6 on a surprise roll. On a successful attack, the spider tries to drag the PC into its lair, where two other spiders wait. The victim can make no attacks, but can free himself by making a successful Strength check at –2 (or can be freed by companions whose combined Strength totals 20 or more). If the victim is not dragged into the lair, the two spiders within emerge to join the attack on the party. The lair contains four webbed and partially eaten humanoid corpses; their pockets hold a total of 125 gp.

Once a PC travels more than 30 feet past the opening to the side tunnel, a boulder on the ground growls: "Those who would enter Dis must crawl!" (The rock's under a *magic mouth* spell.)

To open the gate to Dis, the PCs must return to the iron doors and crawl through that opening on their hands and knees – the movement through the archway is the key. Any PCs who don't crawl simply stay in the tunnel. Read the following to PCs who make it through:

As you crawl forward past the open doors, a sudden rush of gray-green light blinds you for a few seconds. Squinting, you realize you're under an open sky again – smoky green this time – and that you're perched on hands and knees on the side of a mountain.

THE GUIDE: Both Herfik and Therma are sure that the iron doors are the gate to Dis. However, the last time either was here, the gate had a different key (DM's invention); they don't know about the crawling trick until they hear it from the boulder.

DM NOTE: Any PCs who ignore the boulder's advice and continue down the dark tunnel soon discover that it winds through the caverns without end.

GIANT TRAP DOOR SPIDER (3): THACO 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; AC 4; HD 4+4; hp 23, 25, 31; MV 3, Wb 12; SA poison, webs; SZ L (10-foot diameter); INT low (5); AL CE; ML elite (13); XP 975.

CHAPTER IV: A CITY THAT BURNS

In this chapter, the player characters must make their way to and through the searing city of Dis, eventually worming their way inside the mutating Iron Tower of Lord Dispat. But Dis is a

tricky place, even for Baator. The town's full of fiends and planars eager to bob or bully visitors out of their jink, and slave crews of the condemned endlessly destroy and rebuild everything in sight. What's more, a body who doesn't watch where he's going just might get burned — in more ways than one.

DM NOTE: Time works the same way in Dis as it does in Avernus, the only difference being that the changeless sky hanging over the layer is a pale gray-green instead of red.

DOWN THE SLOPE

After crawling through the gate to Dis, the PCs find themselves halfway up one of the mountains that ring the infinite city also known as Dis.

From your vantage point on the mountainside, it seems like you can see forever. Maybe you can. Off in the distance sprawls an enormous city, dominated by a gray, parapet-choked tower that rises so far into the smoky green sky you can't crane your neck enough to mark the top of it. The tower seems to melt and reshape itself constantly; your poor brain just can't settle on what it looks like.

A ring of steep mountains surrounds all you see — your hill's part of the range — but the hike to the peaks on the other side of the city is unimaginable. From the base of your mountain, though, a white cobblestone path winds its way across the plain toward the city.

The iron doors leading from the caverns shut behind the PCs, refusing to budge from this side. If the party starts down the mountainside toward the path, they soon run into the gate guards.

One bright red and three swampy-green abishai crouch over the remains of a humanoid, so torn and chewed you can't even make out its race. The red fiend rises from the sickening meal and bows mockingly in your direction. "Welcome to Dis, brave fools." The other three fix their eyes on you, but continue to tear at the meaty bones.

The guards were warned by the pit fiend Kri'ik of the party's potential arrival; he commanded them to let the PCs by unmolested. The leader, the red abishai Jal'haya, makes a good show of checking the group's pass (if any) and questioning their intent, but eventually lets the PCs through.

If the PCs don't have a pass, Jal'haya suggests that he's open to "offers," and accepts no less than 200 gp in gems to let the party through. If the cutters attack or try to push their way through without paying the garnish, the fiends fight convincingly, but teleport away in false desperation after a few rounds of battle.

In any case, once the party goes on its way, Jal'haya informs Kri'ik of their arrival, setting the stage for the pit fiend's second meeting with the bashers (see "With Friends Like These," on page 35).

MERCHANTS/SUPPLICANTS: The abishai accept any plausible cover story, ready to allow the party through no matter what.

THE GUIDE: Herfik's surprised that the guards are so lax about letting them by; Therma points to the fallen fugitive as a moral about the folly of displeasing the baatezu.

IF I+ AIN'+
ESCAPING
AND I+ AIN'+ A
+ANAR'RI,
I+'S NØ+ MY |ØB
+Ø WØRRY ABØU+ I+.
— JAL'HAYA THE
ABISHAI,
GUARDING
THE GATE IN+Ø DIS

JAL'HAYA (PL/♂ FD/HD 6+3/LE):

THACO 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4+1; AC 1; hp 44; MV 9, Fl 12 (C); SA poison, dive; SD regeneration, +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT average (10); AL LE; ML steady (12); XP 9,000.

Spell-like abilities: *change self*, *command*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, and *scare*.

Gate (once per day): 2d6 lemures (60%), or 1d3 abishai (30%).

GREEN ABISHAI (3): THACO 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4+1; AC 3; HD 5+2; hp 33, 35, 39; MV 9, Fl 12 (C); SA poison, dive; SD regeneration, +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ L (7 feet tall); INT average (8); AL LE; ML average (8); XP 8,000.

Spell-like abilities: *change self*, *command*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, and *scare*.

Gate (once per day): 2d6 lemures (60%), or 1d3 abishai (30%).

THE ROAD TO DIS

As the PCs reach the base of the mountain, they find the start of the path they spied earlier.

What looked like white cobblestones from the side of the mountain turns out to be skulls, half-buried in the hard, flat ground so that only their tops poke out. The passing of many feet seems to have taken its toll on the skulls, some of which lie cracked and broken like hollow eggshells.

If the party chooses not to walk on the road, they'll travel and tire normally, but never pass any landmarks or make progress toward the city – Dis remains the same distance away no matter how long their journey. Flight and teleportation don't work, either; only by walking the skull path will they reach the city. Once they take the path, they'll notice they're moving forward (the DM can determine the length of time needed to reach the city).

You begin to pass outcroppings of dull iron that rise from the ground like blocky, metallic trees. At first, only a few dot the plain, but soon the landscape's cluttered with more than you can count – the path snakes through a thick forest of gray iron slabs. The metal seems to smolder with uncomfortable heat, strong enough to slow you down and drench you in salty perspiration.

The heat from the outcroppings is more than uncomfortable; contact sets cloth afire and burns exposed skin for 1d8 points of damage. The iron also heats metal armor, baking any PC within: The armor causes no damage the first round of contact, 1d2 points the second, 1d3 the third, 1d4 the fourth, 1d6 the fifth, and 1d8 the sixth and every round thereafter. Metal removed from contact with the iron continues to cause damage as it cools (the reverse of heating sequence).

Creatures with a natural Armor Class of 5 or better (which includes most baatezu) aren't burned by the hot iron, and certain magical items (such as a *ring of fire resistance*) can spare a victim from harm. However, magical cloaks that aren't specially treated against fire must successfully save vs. paralyzation or burst into flame.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

The pit fiend Kri'ik reappears to the PCs at some point during their journey along the skull path. Having polymorphed into a petitioner from a work crew in Dis, Kri'ik sits atop an iron outcropping a few yards from the path, unnoticed until he calls out to the party (PCs who specifically indicate they're keeping an eye on the spurs can make a Wisdom check to see if they spot him first).

"Made it this far, have you? Good, good." The cheery voice comes from a bruised young man wearing ripped slave rags, sitting casually atop a tall slab of iron near the road. "'Course, without my help you won't get out with all your organs still in place."

Introducing himself as "the friend from the wasteland," Kri'ik tries to get the PCs to agree to steal the *holy avenger* from the Iron Tower in exchange for a great prize: A glittering ruby the size of a maelephant's head. Note that the verb is important in this bargain; when referring to the party's procurement of the sword, Kri'ik only uses words such as "steal," "loot," "rob," etc., which allows him to ignore the agreement if the PCs obtain the sword by any other means. Kri'ik tries not to call attention to his special phrasing, hoping to casually trap the party in a poorly worded bargain.

He also offers the PCs a crystal sphere about one foot in diameter that contains a magical *flower of holes* – a black flower with closed petals (see page 47 for a full explanation of its use). Kri'ik says the party can use the flower's petals like *portable holes* to move around inside the tower, assuring them they'll "know what to do" with it once inside. Reluctant PCs are warned that they can't explore the tower without the flower, but Kri'ik doesn't force it on an unwilling party.

Kri'ik also offers the following information, if asked:

- ✦ He'll help the PCs get out of the tower and give them the ruby afterward.
- ✦ Getting to the tower's easy – "If you can see in the dark. Or think in it." As for getting *inside* the tower, he says only, "Depends what you believe in, really."
- ✦ The PCs can do what they like with the sword. What Kri'ik *won't* reveal is that he plans to "convince" them that what they'd like to do is hand the sword over to *him*.
- ✦ Kri'ik agrees to a pact of nonaggression: Neither side may attack the other unless attacked first.

If the PCs accept his offer, Kri'ik warns them to stick together in the tower and then teleports away.

If any PCs attack him, Kri'ik tries to use *hold person*, *suggestion*, or *wall of fire* to restrain the aggressor(s), but teleports away in the face of a continued assault. He won't do anything further to help the party, but still plans to take the sword from them if their mission turns out to be successful.

MERCHANTS/SUPPLICANTS: Kri'ik doesn't care if the PCs are merchants or not; however, he insists that supplicants should show their respect by doing him "this little favor."

THE GUIDE: Herfik wants no part of any deal to raid Dispater's tower – he'll guide the party to it, but that's all. As for Therma, negotiation by the PCs about stealing the sword convinces her that they're not true supplicants, and she secretly resolves to betray them once in Dis (cautious PCs may try to calm her suspicions or shield her from the meeting entirely).

DM NOTES: While in human form, Kri'ik retains the statistics for a pit fiend but loses physical abilities inherent to that form (such as flight and attacks from wings, claws, bite, and tail).

The PCs are unable to open the crystal sphere or harm it by any means short of a *sphere of annihilation* or a *wish* spell.

THE CITY OF DIS

Without warning, the road of skulls abruptly deposits the party deep within the city itself.

Here the plain is choked with more and more iron outcroppings, so many that a body couldn't squeeze between them without getting cooked. The road curves around a particularly tall spur, and as you pass the slab you suddenly find yourself standing in a long, narrow street, buffeted by rushing crowds of humanoids and fiends. Raw heat washes over you like a tidal wave as the temperature seems to triple, and a deafening orchestra of screams and collapsing buildings makes it difficult to hear your own voice. Welcome to Dis.

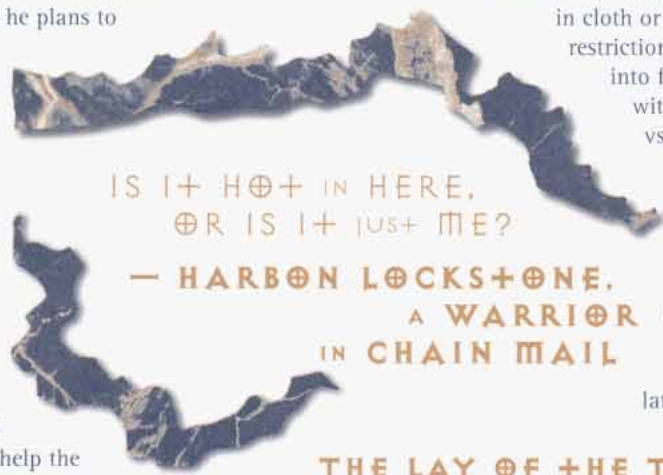
If the PCs look back, they see the outer wall of the city far behind them, though they didn't notice passing it before. Leering abishai perch and preen along the wall, swooping down to catch condemned slaves trying to flee their labors in the city.

The following sections give the DM enough information about Dis to imbue the PCs' stay with the proper trappings and flavor.

A WARM WELCOME

All of the buildings and walls in the city are made of the same hot iron as the outcroppings. The sheer amount of smoldering iron makes the temperature in Dis almost unbearable; PCs in metal armor move at half speed and suffer a –4 penalty to all attack rolls, damage, and Strength checks. PCs

in cloth or leather armor suffer no such restrictions, but their armor may burst into flame if it comes into contact with any iron (successfully save vs. paralyzation to avoid damage; leather armor saves at +4). Any exposed skin that contacts the iron suffers 1d8 points of burn damage. What's more, the narrow streets of Dis make it likely that the PCs brush up against some iron sooner or later (10% chance per turn).



THE LAY OF THE TOWN

Even though a body in Dis can see the mountains that surround the place, the city's infinite, or at least so far as anyone can tell. Much of the town's devoted to the fiends that make up most of the populace, and the dark structures that cater to such types just don't open their doors to nonbaatezu – period. Visitors usually find what they need in blocks that're near-perfect copies of places from the Prime Material Plane, kept alive by greedy planar entrepreneurs. While the familiar inns, shops, and markets offer travelers a brief respite from the terrors of Baator, they also keenly punctuate the suffered longings of those far from home. For example, most of the food's not real food at all, but ground or processed fire fungus.

One sure advantage to the prime-material businesses is that they provide a bit of relief from the heat: The walls and floors are covered with hangings and tarps to prevent burns to cloth or flesh. These coverings are really the flayed skins of lemures and nupperibos, smeared with incense so they reek strongly of jasmine and cinnamon as they smolder against the hot iron.

Looming massively above the entire city is the great Iron Tower, the palace of the archduke Dispater, Lord of Dis. It shoots unstoppably into the ash-green sky, seamlessly and endlessly mutating from one gigantic shape to the next – now a cone, now a spiral, now a starburst. The tower always looks as if it's just beyond the next block, but turns out to be forever out of reach to those in the dark – cross the block, and the blasted thing *still* looks a block away.

While the tower's shape constantly changes, the palace is really the only stable structure in town; all other buildings and roads are subject to construction or destruction at any given time (see "Getting Around," below).

DM NOTE: After crossing the wasteland of Avernus, the PCs will most likely want to rest and replenish their rations and equipment. Feel free to let them sleep and purchase basic supplies (in suitable establishments of the DM's devising), but remember that the prime-material shops of Dis just aren't as well stocked as their authentic counterparts, and that the price of an item depends on its worth in a city of searing heat.

FIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Visitors to Dis can expect to find a multitude of beings in the city. Most numerous are the fiends that walk and fly through the streets: hordes of lemures and nupperibos, a good many spinagons and abishai, and a smattering of other baatezu. Most of the humans and humanoids in town are traders, shopkeepers, or devoted supplicants — few nonbaatezu come to Dis without a compelling reason.

Wherever the PCs go in the city, the most common groups they run into are work crews of petitioners, all slaving away at torturous, meaningless labor designed to break body and spirit (see “Getting Around,” below). Most of the petitioners are lemures, but many nonfiends who worshiped the powers of Baator toil in the crews as well.

GETTING AROUND

Neither Herfik the Silent nor Flamen Therma can do much to guide the PCs through Dis, as the city changes minute by minute. Petitioner work crews ravage the streets, razing and building structures and roads in an endless cycle of blisters and rubble. The slaves scream and burn, laboring at their tasks without tools or protection. 'Course, the lemures naturally heal their wounds through regeneration, and Dis-pater's “kind” enough to allow nonfiend petitioners to heal wounds suffered from their toils as well (though his generosity doesn't extend to wounds caused by other means — like a sword).

At any time, a crew may start to erect a new building in the middle of a road, closing off travel down that street, or tear down an existing structure, thus opening up a new path. Roads, too, can be laid or destroyed, making the entire city a shifting maze wherein half the battle is just making it from one block to another.

The constant construction/destruction might lead a body to rule out walking as a means of travel, but in Dis it's the only way to go. Flight only attracts the attention of 1d3 + 2 black abishai guards, who arrive in one round to make sure the flyer isn't an invading tanar'ri, and then angrily pummel the berk back down to the ground — hard. Teleportation's no good, either, unless a mage doesn't mind taking her chances appearing inside the burning iron of a newly built structure or under the crushing rubble of a collapsing kip.

The map of Dis on the DM's screen presents the layout at the time the PCs first enter the city. As they make their way through the blocks and head toward the Iron Tower, the DM can roll 1d6 each turn and consult the table below to determine if and how the layout changes. 'Course, the DM can also devise his or her own method for altering the buildings and roads of the city.

DIE ROLL	RESULT
1	Road ahead torn up, becomes impassable.
2	Road ahead blocked by new construction.
3	Adjacent building razed, opening new path.
4	Adjacent road completed, allowing access.
5–6	No change.

BLACK ABISHAI GUARD (VAR): THACO 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4+1; AC 5; HD 4+1; hp 26 each; MV 9, Fl 12 (C); SA poison, dive; SD regeneration, +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ L (8 feet tall); INT average (8); AL LE; ML average (10); XP 7,000.

Spell-like abilities: *change self*, *command*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, and *scare*.

Gate (once per day): 2d6 lemures (60%), or 1d3 abishai (30%).

REACHING THE TOWER

The ponderous Iron Tower of Dispater soars up from the city of Dis like an oak growing out of an anthill, so painfully obvious that, for many residents, it just blends invisibly into the background of daily life. No matter which direction a body faces while in town, he's staring right at the tower — it seems to surround the city and sit in the center, all at once. More than one poor sod's gone barmy trying to hike to its front gates.

Fact is, the tower's sheer presence is what stops most folks from getting there. Baatezu can teleport inside, but others can't

even get *closer* to the tower through teleportation. There's really only two ways a non-baatezu can reach the place: by clearing his mind or closing his eyes.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THE TOWER'S
RIGHT BEHIND THOSE BUILDINGS!
HOW LONG COULD IT
POSSIBLY TAKE US
TO GET THERE?

— A VISITOR
NEW TO THE CITY



CLEAR YOUR MIND: The PCs must drive all thoughts of the omnipresent tower out

of their heads. Each player character must tell the DM specifically what else he or she is thinking about and then make a Wisdom check at –10; success indicates that the cutter's able to not think about the tower. After a successful check, a PC can then reach the tower in three turns of travel. 'Course, the mental concentration is so intense that a body's got to make a Dexterity check each turn or accidentally bump into a scalding structure, suffering 1d8 points of damage (successfully save vs. paralyzation for half).

CLOSE YOUR EYES: The PCs must find a way to travel without spotting the tower: closing their eyes, looking straight down, wearing strips of cloth as a blindfold, etc. They can then reach the tower in three turns of travel; no Wisdom check is needed. However, each PC still must make a Dexterity check each turn or suffer 1d8 points of burning damage (again, successfully save vs. paralyzation for half).

WHEN IT WORKS: Even by clearing their minds or closing their eyes, the PCs won't be able to reach the tower until they've already traveled a certain distance through the city. Refer to the map of Dis on the inside of the gatefold screen; once the PCs have entered the shaded area in the bottom right corner of the map, they can try to reach the tower.

LEARNING THE TRICK: The pit fiend Kri'ik already gave the party a clue about reaching the tower. Flamen Therma knows the secret, too, but she announces that the party must figure it out for themselves — it's a “test of faith.” If, after trying, they seem unable to get there, she provides hints but still refuses to divulge the answer.

Herfik's been to Dis before, but he's never led any groups to Dispat's tower and has no idea how to get there. A group led by Herfik (or no guide at all) must rely on the hints from Kri'ik, or bribe the answer out of a city resident (assuming the berk knows and is willing to tell the truth, that is).

DM NOTE: Trying to dispel illusions won't help a PC reach the tower, because there's nothing illusory *about* the structure – it is what it is, and that's all.

WORK CREWS

As the PCs move through the streets of Dis – whether they're trying to get to the tower or just looking around – they should see (and hear) a good number of petitioner work crews constructing or tearing down buildings and roads. They can also have any of the following encounters with such crews. Each crew below contains 1d10 + 10 lemures, and if so indicated, 1d6 humanoid shades, all driven by a spinagon foreman. In each case, the spinagon acts with great bluster and bravado unless he's on the losing end of a fight, in which case he tries to escape.

MERCHANTS/SUPPLICANTS: The laborers don't listen to a word the PCs say, though the foreman might, if properly approached and garnished.

THE GUIDE: Neither Herfik nor Therma are of any use in avoiding the work crews; Therma even refuses to fight the petitioners, as true supplicants of Baator aspire to become such creatures.

SWEEP+ AWAY

You hear a sound like a slurping wave of slime, and suddenly the street ahead of you becomes filled with lemures, as the molten, dripping fiends scramble toward you in a frenzied mass. Before you can react, they flow around and through your group, threatening to sweep you along in their fleshy rush.

Behind the crew, a spinagon with a military fork is driving the lemures to their next work assignment (the crew's movement rate is 5). Each PC must make a Strength check to attempt to remain where he stands; failure indicates that he's swept along with the crew for one round, at which time he can make another check to see if he breaks free. After three rounds, the crew reaches its destination.

PCs cannot attack the lemures while being swept along, but may if standing free. Any attack causes the spinagon foreman to direct the crew to swarm over the offender, but a garnish of 200 gp gets him to call them off.

MIS+AKEN IDEN+I+Y

As you pass a work crew composed of both misshapen and humanoid figures, you notice the spinagon foreman peering at you. "Oy!" he shouts, pointing at one of your group. "Back to work, bunky, and I mean now!"

The foreman believes that one of the PCs is a member of his work crew trying to slip away by blending into a pack of other humanoids. The DM should choose the most plainly dressed PC as the so-called escapee – the one whose clothing most resembles the poor garments of the toiling slaves.

The foreman demands the return of his worker; if

the PCs just try to walk away, the spinagon directs his crew to attack the party and capture the "escapee." If the PCs try to convince the foreman of his mistake, the spinagon refuses to listen, muttering, "*You berks all look alike to me!*" However, he does accept a payment of 300 gp in gems or one magical item in order to let the PC leave without incident.

BRINGING DOW+ THE HOUSE

You notice plumes of dust falling from the ceiling, and feel a bit of a tremble in the floor. Before you hear the first scream from outside, you know what's happening: A work crew has set upon the building, intent on tearing it apart stone by stone!

This encounter can take place in any building except the Iron Tower, and could prove particularly interesting if the structure targeted for demolition is an inn in which the party is sound asleep. If the PCs don't leave the building within three rounds, the place collapses around them, causing 1d10 points of damage to each.

A HOT+ TIME

As you walk down the street, a work crew of misshapen lemures slops toward you. They spread out and surround your party, but instead of attacking, start ripping up chunks of the road all around you, screaming from the pain of the hot iron.

Each PC must make a Strength check to see if he can push through the blobby horde; failure forces the sod to remain at "ground zero" for that round, suffering 1d4 points of damage from the jagged, scalding stones haphazardly torn up and tossed around. Party members who've broken free can stall the lemures' destruction by attacking the fiends, in which case the spinagon foreman directs the mass to respond in kind. On the other hand, a bribe of 200 gp would get the foreman to rein in his crew until all PCs caught within are able to move out of the way.

LEMURE (VAR): THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; AC 7; HD 2; hp 11 each; SA battle drive; SD regeneration; MV 3; SZ M (5 feet tall); INT semi (2); AL LE; XP 120.

HUMANOID SHADE (VAR): THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3 (hands); AC 10; HD 1; hp 3 each; MV 10; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT average (8); AL LE; ML unsteady (5); XP 15.

SPINAGON (1 PER WORK CREW): THACO 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d6 (military fork); AC 4; HD 3+3; hp 22; MV 6, Fl 18 (C); SA flame spikes; MR 15%; SZ S (3 feet tall); INT very (11); AL LE; ML average (10); XP 3,000.

Spell-like abilities: *affect normal fires, change self, command, produce flame, scare, and stinking cloud.*

Gate (once per day): 1d3 spinagons (35%).

ALL RIGH+, Y@U S@DS, HURRY UP
AND FINISH +EARING DOW+ HIS BUILDING
S@ +HE @+HER SLAVES CAN STAR+
PU++ING I+ BACK UP AGAIN!

— QUI+CHEL, A SPINAGON FOREMAN,
+@ HIS WORK CREW

THE FUGITIVE

This encounter can be run at any time while the PCs are exploring Dis.

You pass an unusual crew of petitioners — a large number of humans and humanoids, with no lemures in the bunch — struggling to lay the fiery iron foundation of a new building. One of the humans keeps looking back at you as he grapples with the hot, heavy stone, then suddenly drops the load and stumbles through the street toward you.

"For mercy's sake, help me!" he screams. "I'm alive, like you! I don't belong here!" The man falls to the ground and winces, his ripped rags poor protection from the burning heat.

The man grabs at the PCs' ankles if they try to walk on, delaying them until the foreman — a comely erinyes named Sauraphine — strides up to the party. She's charmed many mortals to Baator, where they're quickly made into petitioners and put to work in her crew. However, one laborer — Rubbio Finncleve of Waterdeep, the man who rushed toward the PCs — is truly still alive, having so far survived the horrors of Baator and staved off petitionerhood.

"Come along, Rubbio," coos the winged woman, standing over the sobbing, crumpled man. "Leave these nice mortals alone." She pulls a brass rope from her belt; it lashes out — seemingly of its own accord — entangles the man, and yanks him to his feet.

If the PCs simply stand by and do nothing, Sauraphine drags Finncleve back to the crew, where he resumes his painful labor.

If the PCs intervene, the erinyes softly explains that *"the poor man's not in his right head,"* and tries to lead Finncleve away. She becomes more hostile if the PCs offer resistance, demanding the return of her worker, or, failing that, a fair exchange: one PC willing to permanently replace Finncleve on the work crew. Bound by the rules of entrapment, Sauraphine can't force a PC to take Finncleve's place; the exchange must be fully voluntary. She'll try to word the deal concretely enough so that the volunteer has no loophole through which he can escape, but the DM might allow especially careful PCs to leave themselves an out. If any PC does join Sauraphine's work crew, the DM can decide the noble sod's fate.

Another option is open to the party, though the erinyes won't suggest it first: purchasing the worker for a heavy price. If the PCs persist in such a proposition, Sauraphine admits she'd accept 800 gp in gems or two magical items in exchange for Finncleve's freedom — *"after all, Rubbio's such a good worker."*

If the PCs refuse to buy Finncleve or take his place in the crew, they can try to kill Sauraphine or drive her away; in battle, she tries to charm a PC into fighting on her side, gating in reinforcements and teleporting away if necessary.

MERCHANTS: Sauraphine lowers her price for Finncleve to 500 gp if the PCs throw in their entire stock of spices.

SUPPLICANTS: The erinyes expects the PCs to be eager to join her crew — supplicants to Baator are supposed to *dream* of becoming petitioners there.

THE GUIDE: Herfik cares nothing for Finncleve's plight; Therma believes that any PC who takes his place'll be rewarded by the dark powers (though the joyful pain of the labor really is reward enough).

DM NOTE: If the PCs free Finncleve and then leave him on his own, he's snapped up by another crew before he knows what

WHEN SHE SAID SHE'D TAKE ME
BACK TO HER PLACE,
I THOUGHT MAYBE SHE MEANT
SHADOWDALE.

— RUBBIO FINNCLEVE,

OF WATERDEEP,

LURED TO DIS
BY AN ERINYES



hit him. Finncleve's grateful if allowed to travel with the party, but to be of much use he must first be fed, healed, and equipped.

SAURAPHINE (Pl/♀ FD/HD 6+6/LE):

THACO 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3+2 (*hornblade* +2); AC 2; hp 45; MV 12, Fl 21 (C); SA charm, fear, rope of entanglement; SD +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT high (14); ML steady (12); XP 7,000.

Spell-like abilities: *detect invisibility*, *invisibility*, *locate object*, *polymorph self*, and *produce flame*.

Gate (once per day): 1d8 spinagons (50%), or 1d4 barbazu (35%).

RUBBIO FINNCLEVE (Pr/♂ H/T1/At/N):

THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3 (hands); AC 10; HD 1; hp 2 (normally 5); MV 6 (normally 12); SZ M (5 feet tall); INT very (12); ML unsteady (5); XP 15.

THE KING OF DIS

If the PCs are acting as merchant representatives for Dermont, they may take their charge seriously and ask around about setting up a spice tent in the markets; other traders or shopkeepers then inform them that they need to deal with "the king," but provide no further information on the subject.

The title is actually self-proclaimed: The "king" is a tiefling whose thugs bully the markets of Dis and collect a share of the profits. The baatezu tolerate his posturing presence because he does help keep order among the planars in town, but the tiefling—who goes by the name King Hejj—suffers from an exaggerated view of his own importance.

Six turns or so after nosing around, the PCs are confronted in the street by bashers from King Hejj's personal guard. (If the party asked about King Hejj by name—having heard of him from the spinagon herders on Avernus—the bashers show up within only three turns.)

A small band of tough-looking bruisers seems to be shoving its way through the crowds toward you. They approach your group from the side, and one burly, bearded human steps forward: "You the cutters lookin' to set up a little business?"

If the PCs admit so, the thugs—four in all—lead the party to a well-maintained building in a prime-material block, the base from which King Hejj runs his game. (The bashers don't force any PCs who strongly resist, but they do make threats about the risks of operating an "unauthorized" business.)

The inside of this building's not quite as hot as some of the other cases in town; the walls are thickly draped with charred lemure skins, coated with incense that reeks of orange peels. A slender but muscular tiefling in black leather armor interrupts a discussion with five other bashers—something about teaching a lesson—and addresses you: "And what can you do for me?"

If the party explains their situation, King Hejj demands to examine and sample the party's wares, after which he compliments their quality and offers terms for selling such goods in Dis: a "new business" fee of 500 gp, to be paid immediately, and a 60% share of the profits, to be collected at regular intervals.

The party can negotiate the terms; the tiefling lowers the fee (to a minimum of 300 gp) in exchange for a greater cut of the profits (to a maximum of 90%). On the other hand, he lowers his cut by 5% for each additional 500 gp added on to the fee. Donations of magical items, weapons, and nonmetal armor may also entice him; if compensated by 1,000 gp worth of such items or equipment, the king goes as low as a 200 gp fee and 40% share of the profits.

If the PCs refuse to accept his terms, they're escorted roughly out of the building and left in the street. From that point on, no member of the party receives any service in a prime-material inn, shop, or market stall in Dis (word spreads quickly among the traders of King Hejj's displeasure with the party, and all traders wish to remain in the king's favor). If the party later returns to see the king, they're given new terms: double the last-offered fee and an additional 10% share of the profits.

Once the PCs accept a set of terms and pay the fee, the king gives them a signed note of authorization to do business in Dis, warning them to keep it safe—another copy'll cost another fee.

He insists on keeping the party's remaining stock of spices (though protesting PCs can pay another 100 gp to retain one jar) and has his bashers escort the group back to the street.

"A pleasure doing business with you," he says. "We'll be seeing you real soon."

King Hejj and his bashers won't start a fight with the PCs; at most they try to throw the party out. But if the PCs attack, the thugs respond, as does the king, who first tries to cast a *mirror image* spell to confuse the party with 1d4 + 1 duplicates of himself.



WELL. NOW.
+HA+ S N+ EXAC+LY +RUE,
IS I+?
I'M N+ +AKING ALL
OF YOUR PR+FI+ S—
IUS+ NINE+Y PERCENT+.
— KING HEJJ,
+A WHINING MERCHANT+



SUPPLICANTS: If the party's posing as supplicants, they have no reason to ask around about setting up a spice tent. However, they still come to the attention of King Hejj, who feels that he's as deserving of respect and worship as any baatezu. The bashers try to bring the party to see King Hejj, who disparages "fiend-lovers" and demands respect, obeisance, and a 500 gp fee for traveling through Dis. If the party lacks sufficient respect or garnish, they're attacked by the king's thugs.

If the party's not masquerading as either merchants or supplicants, they can still run into the king and his bashers. The PCs can witness the thugs extorting their cut from a hapless prime-material trader, or come to the king's attention by asking around about a gate to Fortitude.



THE GUIDE: Herfik wants nothing to do with the negotiations or any resulting fights; his job was just to guide them to Dis. Flamen Therma refuses to show respect to “an addle-cove who dares call himself king in the very shadow of our Lord Dispater.”

DM NOTES: If the party negotiates successfully and obtains an authorization to conduct business, they must get it back to Dermont in Ribcage for it to do him any good. Tonat Shar hired the party to find the *holy avenger* and bring it to Fortitude, but lawful PCs might insist on returning to Ribcage to see Dermont. If the PCs don't suggest it, Herfik offers to deliver the note to Dermont when he returns to Ribcage — for a 200 gp fee.

The party may have allowed the spinagon herders on Avernus to fly a sample of spices ahead to King Hejj. If the fiends poisoned the spices, the king — who discovered the tampering but thinks the PCs did it — threatens to kill the party unless convinced of their innocence. If, on the other hand, the spinagons delivered the spices with no tricks, King Hejj is impressed by the party's command of the baatezu, and negotiates terms more fairly.

If the PCs ask, King Hejj can have a basher escort the PCs to a gate in the city that leads to Fortitude. However, that service costs an additional 300 gp.

KING HEJJ (PL/♂ TF/T7/W4/FA/LE):

THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 + Type L poison (long sword); AC 3 (leather, ring, and Dex bonus); HD 7; hp 27; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT exceptional (16); ML elite (14); XP 975.

Magical items: *ring of protection +2*.

Spells (3/2): *Armor, color spray, sleep, mirror image, invisibility*.

BASHERS (9) (PL/VAR HUMANOID/F4/VAR/NE):

THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (scimitar); AC 7 (leather and shield); HD 4; hp 30 each; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT low (6); ML steady (12); XP 120.



BE+RAYAL

This encounter should be run only if the party's posing as supplicants and is being led by Flamen Therma.

If the players have role-played their characters well throughout the game — as supposed supplicants trying to maintain that cover — Therma should still believe that the PCs are what they say. However, if the party's given Therma any reason to doubt their devotion to the powers of Baator — most likely by being reluctant or unwilling to submit to the baatezu — she's ready to turn them over to the authorities in Dis.

No matter what she thinks of the PCs, though, Therma heard the pit fiend Kri'ik's proposal to steal the *holy avenger* sword from Dispater's tower (unless she'd been ferreted away from those meetings by a cautious PC, in which case she'd still be suspicious of the party). Therefore, she knows that *someone* is planning to raid the tower, and she intends to raise the alarm in Dis.

The only question, then, is whether she thinks the PCs are part of the scheme, or whether she thinks they're true supplicants who'll help her *stop* the theft.

PART OF THE SCHEME: At an opportune moment, Therma slips away and describes the PCs to the first baatezu patrol she finds, claiming they're false supplicants out to loot Dispater's palace. The DM can decide how long it takes the fiends to confirm and follow up on this information, but, some turns later, a militia finds and confronts the PCs.

Farther up the street, the crowds hurriedly part around creatures pushing through, and you wince at the prospect of more grotesque lemures coming to tear down some building or other. But what emerges is a tall, bony osyluth creeping quickly down the street, followed by a mad jumble of rushing barbazu. "Halt there," calls the osyluth. "Do not move. Halt!" The fiend's talking to you.

If the players flee, the baatezu pursue; the fiends, more accustomed to navigating the shifting streets of Dis, overtake the PCs in two turns and ask the “supplicants” their opinion of the baatezu.

The osyluth, Izea, recognizes the PCs from Therma's description. No matter how the PCs answer, Izea demands they prove their obedience by slaying each other — *now*. If the PCs hesitate or argue — proving they're not true supplicants at all — the baatezu attack. The osyluth and the barbazu *gate* in reinforcements and teleport away if necessary, but the battle shouldn't rage long: After a few rounds of fighting, a spinagon messenger from Dispater appears in the fray.

"Stop!" cries the spike-covered fiend, excitedly waving his arms. "I bring a message from Lord Dispater: The offenders are to be brought to the Iron Tower for interrogation, torture, and death!"

Truth is, Dispater wants the PCs brought to the tower so his secret plan can proceed. The osyluth and a suitable number of barbazu each try to take hold of one party member and *teleport without error* with that PC into the tower's Prison Globe (Area 3). Skip the rest of this chapter and continue with Chapter V, on page 46. If any PCs flee before being captured, the fiends pursue, taking them alive by any means necessary.

TRUE SUPPLICANTS: If Therma believes that the PCs really are supplicants dedicated to worshipping the fiends and powers of Baator, she's sure they'll be just as outraged as she at the plan to steal the *holy avenger*.

Therma announces her intention to warn a baatezu patrol about the plot and can't be dissuaded. If the PCs try to stop her, she brands them as vile traitors and tries to escape, attacking and raising a ruckus if cornered. Unless she is silenced within one round, the osyluth/barbazu militia arrives on the scene three rounds later; if the PCs have already fled, the fiends get descriptions from Therma or passersby and pursue, locating the party within five rounds. The rest of the encounter proceeds as in **PART OF THE SCHEME**, above.

If the PCs prevent Therma from attracting a patrol, they must keep her subdued for the rest of their stay in Dis; the first chance she gets, she tries to break away and alert the baatezu.

On the other hand, if the PCs go along with Therma's plan to warn the authorities, they locate a patrol within three rounds

(again, the osyluth and barbaz). Once he hears the situation, Izea tries to use *charm person* on Therma — the ostensible leader of the group — to find out all she knows about the potential crime (which should only be what she picked up from Kri'ik). The fiends teleport her into the tower for further questioning, leaving the “lowly” supplicants in Dis; the PCs can make their own way to the tower. They won't see Therma again.

IZEA (Pl/♂ FD/HD 5/LE):

THACO 15; #AT 4; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d8/3d4; AC 3; hp 30; MV 12; SA fear, poison; SD +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ L (9 feet tall); INT very (12); ML steady (12); XP 7,000.

Spell-like abilities: *fly*, *improved phantasmal force*, *invisibility*, and *wall of ice*.

Gate (once per day): 1d100 nupperibos (50%), or 1d2 osyluths (35%).

BARBAZU (1d4 + 4): THACO 13; #AT 3 or 1 (weapon); Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d8 or 2d6 (glaive); AC 3; HD 6+6; hp 31 each; MV 15; SA glaive, disease, battle frenzy; SD +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT low (5); AL LE; ML steady (12); XP 6,000.

Spell-like abilities: *affect normal fires*, *command*, *fear* (by touch), and *produce flame*.

Gate (once per day): 2d6 abishai (50%), or 1d6 barbaz (35%).

SPINAGON: THACO

17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d6 (military fork); AC 4; HD 3+3; hp 24; MV 6, Fl 18 (C); SA flame spikes; MR 15%; SZ S (3 feet tall); INT very (11); AL LE; ML average (10); XP 3,000.

Spell-like abilities: *affect normal fires*, *change self*, *command*, *produce flame*, *scare*, and *stinking cloud*.

Gate (once per day): 1d3 spinagons (35%).

OLD DEB+S

This encounter should be run only if the party is being led by Herfik the Silent (though it doesn't matter whether they're posing as merchant scouts or not).

On a previous mission in Baator, Herfik abandoned his clients — five elf Sensates seeking new experiences — when confronted by fiends hunting on Avernus. Three of the elves were slain, but two were tortured and taken to Dis, where they've been marooned ever since.

At some point while the PCs walk the streets of the city, one of the elves — Khula Chombrice — spots the cowardly githzerai among them. She and the other elf, her sister Naella, follow and confront the group.

A sinewy female elf in studded leather armor steps directly in front of you. "Hail, friend Herfik," she says, nodding to your guide. "So good to see you again." Just then, a second elf darts in from the side, grabbing firm hold of Herfik's arm. "Told you we'd catch the worm sooner or later. Arvandor smiles on us today!"

Herfik turns invisible, tries to escape, and swears he's never

seen the elves before. If the party is slow to react, Khula and Naella drag Herfik off through the streets, describing the wonderfully cruel experiences they've long planned for him. Within two rounds, they all disappear from sight, never to be seen again.

If the PCs fight for Herfik's honor, the elves return the attack, struggling to the death. If the elves are slain, Herfik acts with greater loyalty to the PCs in all future encounters (but still won't join them in Dispat's tower).

Thoroughly focused on revenge, the elves won't be the first to suggest a trade for Herfik's freedom. However, they do consider offers of any of the following:

EVERY DAY, WE'RE
EITHER A++ACKED,
+TORTURED,
IMPRISONED,
OR ENSLAVED,
AND YOU KNOW
WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT
+++ MUCH OF A GOOD THING.
— KHULA CHOMBRICE,
A SENSATE

JINK: The elves accept no less than 2,000 gp, enough (they hope) to buy their way out of Baator. They care little for weapons, armor, or magical items, unless an item can

transport them back to the Outlands.

SPICES: If the party's posing as merchants, they can offer their spices, "sure to please even the most weary Sensate."

However, the elves, greedy for the promised experience, demand the entire stock or it's no deal.

EXPERIENCES: Throughout the encounter, Khula and Naella complain that they've long since lost interest in the experiences available in Dis. If the party tumbles to their boredom and offers to give them intriguing new experiences, the elves agree to let Herfik go (but only for at least three experiences, and not until the satisfactory conclusion of each).

SERVICE: Herfik's duty was to lead the PCs to Dis. He's returning to Ribcage without them, and the party can try to convince (or bribe) the githzerai to take the elves back with him. 'Course, the PCs must also convince the elves not to kill Herfik along the way.

KHULA CHOMBRICE (Pl/♀ E/F5/S²/LN):

THACO 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 + 1 (spetum); AC 6 (studded leather); HD 5; hp 42; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT very (12); ML champion (16); XP 270.

Magical items: *gauntlets of ogre power* (+3 to attack rolls, +6 to damage).

NAELLA CHOMBRICE (Pl/♀ E/T6/S²/LN):

THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (short sword +2); AC 6 (studded leather); HD 6; hp 29; MV 12; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT high (14); ML fanatic (18); XP 650.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTERS

If the DM desires, the PCs can run into any or all of the following while wandering through Dis:

SUPPLICANTS: A handful of 2d6 supplicants (Pl/var h/0/Dg/LE), in a gesture of respect to the powers of Baator, strike themselves, tear apart their robes, and wail loudly for deliverance into the hands of the baatezu. If the PCs are masquerading as supplicants, the real supplicants call for the party to join their chanting and flogging.

CLUELESS: A befuddled band of adventurers from the Prime Material Plane staggers through the streets, mistakenly transported to Dis by an addled wizard who was supposed to send them to Shadowdale. The 1d4 + 2 Clueless primes approach the party – mostly because the PCs aren't fiends – and ask for directions “back to Mad Mondol's keep.” (The primes won't join the party, but prefer to wander around looking for their wizard friend.)

GUVERNERS: A group of 2d4 scholars from Automata (Pl/♂ g/0/FO/LN) follow petitioner work crews from one job to another, intent on observing, recording, and mastering the laws that govern their construction/destruction assignments. When they spot the PCs, the Guvners approach the party with questions: Have you observed the crews? How and why do they operate? Have you dealt with any personally?

HAWKERS: Three spinagons, running a cheap-looking market stall, try to interest the party in several items: a “recent” street map of the city for 10 gp (useless due to the constant renovations) a pair of “nonflammable” work gloves for 50 gp (they ignite upon their third contact with hot iron), and a “magical” frog in a corked glass bottle that can *commune* with the Lower Planes for 100 gp. The frog's actually a transformed quasit, kidnapped from the tanar'ri and magically imprisoned in a bottle that can only be opened (or broken) by a nonfiend. If freed, the quasit assumes its true shape and attacks any sod standing nearby.

QUASIT: THACO 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d4; AC 2; HD 3; hp 18; MV 15; SA fear, toxin; SD regeneration, save as 7 HD monster, harmed only by cold iron or magical weapons; MR 25%; SZ T (2 feet tall); INT low (6); AL CE; ML average (10); XP 2,000.

Spell-like abilities: *commune* (once per week), *detect good*, *detect magic*, and *invisibility* (each once per round).

BULLIES: A gang of 1d4 + 6 barbazus prowling the streets in search of trouble “accidentally” knocks the PCs over, then demands apologies from the party. If the PCs react calmly, the fiends also demand financial compensation for their inconvenience – 10 gp in gems for each. If the PCs react in a confrontational manner, the barbazus happily attack the party, teleporting away only if four fiends are killed. The barbazus won't *gate* in reinforcements – that implies an inability on their part to finish the battle.

BARBAZU (1d4 + 6): THACO 13; #AT 3 or 1 (weapon); Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d8 or 2d6 (glaive); AC 3; HD 6+6; hp 43 each; MV 15; SA glaive, disease, battle frenzy; SD +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT low (6); AL LE; ML steady (11); XP 6,000.

Spell-like abilities: *affect normal fires*, *command*, *fear* (by touch), and *produce flame*.

Gate (once per day): 2d6 abishai (50%), or 1d6 barbazus (35%).

OUTSIDE THE TOWER

The party's goal in Dis is to reach and gain entrance to Dispater's Iron Tower. If they haven't already teleported inside with a baatezu patrol, they must get to the tower on their own (by clearing their minds or closing their eyes). Once there, read the following:

This close to the Iron Tower, you feel like a flea standing at the base of a mountain – that is, a searing mountain of gray iron that constantly shifts from one massive shape to another. The tower's ringed by a 30-foot-high rock wall that seems a good deal more solid. Painted – in blood, apparently – with scenes of baatezu victories over the tanar'ri, the sides of the wall slope slightly outward, making the top wider than the bottom. Along the top of the wall squat stone gargoyles, spread out every eight or ten feet, all around the tower.

OVER THE WALL

Dispater's magic prevents nonbaatezu from teleporting to the other side of the wall. If a PC tries to fly or levitate over the top, several stone gargoyles (weighing 100 pounds each) spring to life and attach themselves to the offender, causing him to plummet to the ground, whereupon they return to their posts (gargoyles keep piling on a PC until the combined weight finally brings him down). The gargoyles don't attack or defend themselves against attack – their sole function is to prevent visitors from flying over the top of the wall. There are 80 stone gargoyles perched on the wall around the tower; inflicting 30 points of damage to AC –1 destroys a gargoyle.

The PCs can climb over the wall; the stone gargoyles can support a rope and won't attack a climber. However, as before, the hot iron burns skin, cloth, and leather, and heats metal armor. What's more, the outward slope of the wall imposes a –20% penalty on all climbing checks.

If the party takes longer than six rounds to get over the wall (or four rounds if any gargoyles come to life), the cornugons from the gatehouse confront them as in “Through the Gatehouse,” below.

THROUGH THE GATEHOUSE

If the PCs walk around the wall, they find a single gatehouse leading into the courtyard around the tower. Four cornugon guards block the entrance; the leader, a by-the-book fiend named Baalug, confronts the party and demands to know their intent. Actually, Dispater already knows of the party's presence and why they've come, and has instructed Baalug to let the PCs through the outer wall – after putting on a good show, of course.

THE PASS: If the party shows Baalug a pass of safe conduct from Baron Paracs, the cornugon destroys it with a bolt of flame from his palm (using his *produce flame* ability), also inflicting 1d4 + 1 points of damage upon the pass holder. “*That piece of trash is worth less than your life here,*” the fiend states calmly.

FIGHTING: The party may choose to attack the cornugons, an unwise course of action at best. Although ordered by Dispater to let the PCs through, the guards weren't required to let them through intact, and may seriously wound the cutters before offering a chance for surrender. (Fact is, the guards may even kill a cutter or two, since they weren't required to let them *all* through.) The guards *gate* in reinforcements if necessary; any

PCs who do surrender are teleported into the tower as prisoners and left in the Prison Globe (Area 3).

MERCHANTS: One of the other three cornugons teleports inside with a sample of the spices, returning five turns later with a simple message: "*You can go through.*" If the party has no spices left, they need to convince Baalug of their intention to trade in the city and desire to seek permission from (or pay respects to) Dispater.

SUPPLICANTS: The party can beg for an audience with Dispater in order to better worship his magnificence. Baalug insists that they first demonstrate their methods of worship to him so that he may judge their worth. If the PCs make appropriate obeisance – greatly amusing the cornugons – they'll be let through.

DM NOTE: If the PCs were led to Dis by Herfik, the guide leaves the party at the gate and returns to Ribcage.

CORNUGON (4) (PL/VAR FD/HD: 10/LE):

THACO 11; #AT 4 or 1 + weapon; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4+1/1d3 or 1d3 (tail) + 1d6 (spiked whip) (+6 Strength bonus); AC -2; hp 48, 55, 62, 70; MV 9, Fl 18 (C); SA fear, wounding, stun; SD regeneration, +2 weapons to hit; MR 50%; SZ L (9 feet tall); INT exceptional (16); ML elite (14); XP 10,000.

Spell-like abilities: *detect magic*, *ESP*, *lightning bolt* (3 times per day), *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, and *wall of fire* (once per day). **Gate (each once per day):** 2d6 barbazus (50%), or 2d8 abishai (35%), or 1d3 cornugons (20%).

GETTING INTO THE TOWER

Once the PCs have climbed over the wall or made it past the guards, a short, rubble-strewn courtyard is all that lies between them and the ever-shifting tower. While there aren't any obvious doors or entrances leading into the tower, the party can get inside in one of three ways:

WALKING THROUGH: If any visitor to the tower indicates that she's concentrating on Dispater's magnificence (and makes a successful Wisdom check), she can simply walk right through the wall of the tower, appearing in the Pit of Patience (Area 1) no matter where the tower was breached. Any being of lawful evil alignment suffers no damage from passing through the scorching iron; however, those of neutral alignment suffer 1d8 damage, and those of good alignment suffer 2d8 damage. A being of chaotic evil alignment can't pass through the tower in this manner at all – a magical safeguard designed to prevent tanar'ri from getting inside.

The cornugon guards can tell the PCs about this method of entrance for a price: 200 gp in gems. 'Course, if the party previously bypassed the guards

by climbing over the wall, the cornugons now confront the party (as in "Through the Gatehouse").

This method only works one way; the PCs can't walk back out through the wall.

CLIMBING UP: Carved into the outer surface of the tower is a continuous tableau of various greater baatezu gleefully torturing mortals, making it possible for a skilled PC (or one using a heat-resistant rope) to climb up the ridged iron. About 60 feet up, a small ironwork balcony opens onto the City Vista (Area 2), and PCs can enter the tower at that point.

Of course, climbing a tower that constantly changes its shape is quite hazardous. Every other round, the tower melts and reshapes itself into another form, and any PC attempting to climb it must make a successful Dexterity check or fall to the ground (suffering 1d6 points of damage for every 10 feet fallen). As in "Over the Wall," any PC who tries to fly or levitate to the balcony gets yanked back down by the stone gargoyles.

The hot iron of the tower also causes the usual damage to skin and other materials.

HITCHING A RIDE: If the PCs ask, the cornugons offer to teleport the party into the tower for a small payment from each PC: 200 gp in gems or one magical item. Two cornugons (including Baalug) remain in the gatehouse at all times, so the two fiends free to teleport will probably have to make several trips to move the whole party. The PCs are left in the Pit of Patience (Area 1).

The two cornugons can also fly nonclimbers up to the visible balcony for a somewhat more modest charge from each: 100 gp in gems or one magical item. Again, each fiend can only take one person at a time.

However, if the PCs climbed over the outer wall of the tower (an unlawful act), the cornugons charge more for their services: 300 gp to be teleported, 200 gp to be flown.



CHAPTER V: THE LORD OF DIS

Having gained entrance to Dispater's dreaded Iron Tower, the player

characters are free to explore the various locations laid at their feet by the magical *flower of holes*. Powers willing, they'll survive the tower's insidious assaults on mind and body and recover the stolen *holy avenger* sword *Guardian*. But they may also discover that things aren't always what they seem, and find out the hard way why a body should never bargain with a fiend.

DM NOTE: It no longer really matters whether the PCs are posing as merchants or supplicants, and the party must navigate the tower without a guide; therefore, the **MERCHANTS**, **SUPPLICANTS**, and **THE GUIDE** sections no longer appear.

STARTING IN THE TOWER

Depending on how the PCs got into the Iron Tower, they start this

chapter in one of three possible locations:

THE PIT OF PATIENCE (AREA 1): The PCs begin here if they concentrated on Dispater's magnificence and simply walked through the outer wall of the tower, or if they bribed the cornugon guards to teleport them into the tower.

CITY VISTA (AREA 2): The PCs start here if they climbed the tower to the open balcony or bribed the cornugon guards to fly them up.

PRISON GLOBE (AREA 3): The PCs begin here if they were captured by a baatezu patrol or the cornugon guards and then teleported into the tower as prisoners.

In order for the entire party to travel through the tower, they all must start in the same location (Kri'ik *did* warn them to stick together). However, it's possible for some of the PCs to walk into the Pit of Patience, while others climb or are flown up to the City Vista. Whichever group has the flower can move around in the tower, but the others might remain stuck in their starting location. To prevent this, the DM can have an erinyes, aware of Dispater's plan, appear in the City Vista and offer to teleport the PCs to where the rest of the party members wait (for a price, of course).

ROAMING AROUND

Dispater likes to shift the outer appearance of his Iron Tower, but he lets the inside remain fairly constant; most of the rooms keep their shapes, all squeezing magically into whatever new form the tower takes. Technically, the tower's not infinite, but at a grand height of 999 miles it might as well be, as far as the party's concerned.

Each room in the tower's isolated from the others with no doors or tunnels of any kind connecting them. Physical paths just aren't needed; most baatezu can teleport from room to room whenever they feel like it. A nonteleporter can still get around, but it's a lot trickier and a lot more dangerous. Spells or magical items that let a PC walk through solid material won't necessarily help — the user might leave one room only to find that the next open space is through many miles of iron. Spells or items that relocate a PC from one place to another might materialize the user in solid iron or over a bottomless pit — especially if she isn't familiar with the intended destination. 'Course, a body can still cast a *teleport* spell or use a *cubic gate* to leave the tower at any time. But the best way to get around *inside* is by using a *flower of holes* (see below); the DM can determine the success of a party traveling by any other method.

I'LL KILL +HEM.
I'LL LE+ +HEM LIVE.
I'LL KILL +HEM, I'LL
LE+ +HEM LIVE.
— A PI+ FIEND
PLUCKING PETALS
FROM A
FLOWER OF HOLES

Most of the palace is made of the same scalding iron as the city of Dis, and PCs are subject to the same hazards from proximity and contact. The floors, however, are cool enough to walk on, as long as a body's wearing boots or shoes.

USING OTHER MAGIC

Because the entire tower is magical and steeped in a lawful evil aura, spells like *detect evil*, *detect magic*, and *detect alignment* (or items that duplicate such effects) won't reveal anything other than the overwhelming aura of the tower. No specific object or individual can be identified or ruled out as a source. What's more, the tower and everything in it easily withstands any *dispel magic* attempt.

If the party obtained the enchanted *arrow of direction* from Grimbrech Stonehammer, they'll find that it, too, is useless. Even if it points toward a certain wall, the party's method of transportation won't necessarily take them to the area that lies beyond the wall.

THE FLOWER OF HOLES

Occasionally, supplicants, petitioners, and other nonbaatezu have a legitimate reason to visit the Iron Tower, and the fiends within don't often have the inclination to play chaperone to the mortal sods. Thus, Dispater allows one official means by which visitors can move from room to room: the *flower of holes*.

Each black flower, grown from the distilled spirit of a petitioner unfit for the work crews, sports twelve petals. On each petal is a small, red mark — a symbol for one of the rooms in the tower. The petals act much like *portable holes*; however, a body can step through a hole and instantly be transported to the room designated by the petal's symbol. Thus, a visitor can be given a flower that allows him access to certain rooms in the tower.

Here's how it works: First, a body plucks one of the rubbery petals from the flower, which causes the petitioner's spirit to inhabit that leaf. The black petal immediately begins to grow, becoming a four-foot wide circle in two rounds. Then, the visitor just slaps the petal against a wall, ceiling, or floor — any solid boundary of the room large enough to accommodate it. It sticks in place, and for the next two rounds opens a passage: Anything that goes through the hole ends up in the room represented by the petal's symbol. The hole only allows one-way travel; after two rounds it disintegrates, sending the petitioner's spirit back into the flower.

The spirit can only inhabit one petal at a time; a traveler can't pluck another petal until the first has grown and disintegrated (whether it's used for passage or not). Once all twelve petals have grown and disintegrated, the spirit moves into the center of the flower, turning it into a thirteenth petal inscribed with the symbol for the garden (Area 16). When that final petal is plucked, it grows into a hole that provides access to the garden. From there, a fiend usually teleports the visitors out of the tower — once a berk's used up his petals, his visit's over — but the PCs can get their hands on *another* flower that'll take them to more rooms.

A *flower of holes* can be damaged by magical (but not physical) means. However, the petitioner's spirit within can't be communed with, summoned, or driven out before the flower's used up.

THE PARTY'S FLOWER

One turn after the PCs enter the tower, the crystal sphere enclosing their flower melts away. The plant slowly opens, revealing its twelve petals and their room symbols: the Torture Chamber, the Skyscape, the Cavern of Flight, the Ring of Gates, the Endless Spiral, the Skin Bubble, the Library, the Prison Wedge, the Hall of Dark Reflection, the Maze, the Trinket Hoard, and the Heart. (The inside of the DM's screen shows a representation of each room and its associated symbol; the DM should draw the twelve symbols for the party.)

At this point, the PCs can pluck any petal and use it to begin their journey through the tower. They start in one of three locations, and their flower lets them travel to another twelve. Once the flower's used up, the PCs can reach another location — the garden. There, they can inscribe a *new* flower with any of the symbols they already know or two others they discover along the way. Thus, the PCs can explore a total of eighteen different areas of the tower (three starting rooms, thirteen rooms with the first flower, two more with the second).

DM NOTES: Feel free to create additional rooms for further exploration — after all, the tower is 999 miles high. Just be sure to let the PCs also discover the symbols for those rooms so they can inscribe them onto a new flower, or let the party simply find a flower that's already been inscribed.

If the party didn't get a flower from Kri'ik or didn't bring it into the tower, they should find one in their starting location (as ordered by Dispater, who *wants* the PCs to be able to move around).



THE IRON TOWER

Below are the descriptions of the eighteen possible rooms that the PCs can visit. Each room is represented by a unique symbol (found on the DM's screen). The DM should always have the symbol for a room appear somewhere within that room – carved on the walls, ceiling, or floor – as a clue to help the PCs figure out how they're getting around.

1. THE PIT OF PATIENCE: Sods who walk through the walls of the tower end up in this holding area, where they stew until the fiends are in the mood to grant an audience – which ain't often.

The floor of this wide, rectangular room is littered with skeletons, some dressed in tattered cloaks, some so gray with age that they're crumbling to dust. Many of the skeletons seem to have collapsed in mid-combat, their bony fingers eternally locked around each other's neck bone. The ceiling tapers to a point at least sixty feet above.

The floor is so completely covered with skeletons and loose bones that the PCs must clear them aside if they want to place a petal-hole on the ground. Spinagons have long since cleaned the bodies of any useful items, but investigation shows that one skeleton wears a necklace (a *necklace of strangulation* – the cause of its demise.)

If teleported in by the cornugon guards, the PCs are told, "Wait here – someone'll be with you shortly." However, no one else arrives no matter how long the party waits. The access through the tower wall is one-way; even if the PCs walked in through the wall, they can't leave through it.

2. CITY VISTA: Greater baatezu meet here to work out the details of the continuous urban blight in the city of Dis; the small room's a handy place to coordinate the work crews, and the balcony provides a good view of the streets nearest the tower – and a way out.

A narrow balcony of ornately carved iron juts out from the tower here, connected to a small room whose walls are papered with blown-up maps of sections of the city, rosters of work crews, and reports of the various teams' progress – or the amusing lack of it. Strangely, none of the parchment seems to burn, despite being hung on the smoldering iron walls.

The large maps can be removed by the PCs and used as protective wrappings against the tower's heat. If the PCs are flown up to this room by the cornugon guards, the fiends try to entice them to add their names to the work rosters (more as a joke on the crew supervisors than anything else).

3. PRISON GLOBE: This is just one of many rooms devoted to detaining prisoners awaiting interrogation, punishment, or the dead-book.

Pure, unblemished whiteness surrounds you like a snowy sheet – nothing but an endless lack of color as far as you can see. Your boots seem to stand on solid ground, but your eyes insist you're floating in nothingness.

The PCs are actually in a perfect white sphere, ten yards in diameter, that revolves undetectably as they move (in any direction), simulating infinity. Any thrown objects disappear into the ivory haze, ending up in the Trinket Hoard (Area 14). The PCs can't reach the globe's top or edge, but they can always touch its bottom beneath their feet and place a petal-hole there. PCs who inspect the "ground" closely find a minuscule carving of the room's symbol.

If the PCs are captured and brought here by baatezu, the fiends laugh before teleporting away, "Don't worry, you're due to be flayed in just a few minutes – or was that a few centuries? Oh, well. . . ." 'Course, no fiend ever comes for the party.

4. TORTURE CHAMBER: When the PCs land in this room, read the following:

Cruel instruments of torture crowd this blood-spattered room, and everywhere thick chains hang from the ceiling and walls like monstrous iron webs. Two dead or unconscious humans are held limp in horrid devices lined with screws and blades. Suddenly, chains lash out from the walls and slither all around you!

Each PC must make a successful saving throw vs. paralysis at –2 to evade the magical chains. Failure indicates that the chains bind the PC's wrists and ankles and pull his body taut in four directions at once; all armor and equipment wriggles off the bound sod like snakes and collapses in a heap in a far corner of the room. Any PCs who make the save are ignored by the chains and remain free. However, they can't free their captured comrades

WELL, NATURALLY I KNOW
THE COMMAND WORD
+HA+LL RELEASE YOU
FROM +H0SE CHAINS.
BUT WHY IN +HE PLANES
WOULD YOU EVER WANT
+0 GET 0U+?
— A SUPPLICAN+ 0F BAA+0R,
+0 AN IMPRISONED S0D

by any means short of a *wish* spell.

Only the two humans in the torture devices know how to free sods who get strung up in the chains. Supplicants of Baator who accept and enjoy their anguish, the humans are sure the baatezu'll grant them wishes for their fealty. They've heard their fiendish torturers use the command word *varalpo* to release other prisoners from the chains, and they'll reveal the word to the PCs – if persuaded to do so. The party can learn the word by convincing the humans that the PCs are disguised fiends testing their obedience or supplicants on a special mission for Dispater, or by making any other persuasive argument the DM wishes to allow. Neither garnish nor physical coercion works.

If asked, one of the supplicants has also heard that the stolen *holy avenger* is extremely well protected, and knows that the *flower of holes* eventually takes its user to where "all flowers come from."

If the PCs have already visited the Heart (Area 15) and killed it, one of the supplicants is dead. If the PCs search the other torture devices before leaving, they find manacles that still contain a severed hand wearing a *ring of animal friendship* (12 charges).

5. SKYSCAPE: This exposed platform near the top of the tower allows Dispater to view his entire layer at once, including the city of Dis far below.

This transparent half-circle sticks out from the side of the tower at an obscene height, offering you a heart-stopping view of the turbulent city almost a thousand miles below. Then your

brain-box kicks in: The city down there is infinite, and yet you're looking at the whole blasted thing at once . . .

Each PC must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation at -2 or be stunned into catatonic motionlessness for 1d6 turns by the impossibility of the sight. Any PC of lawful alignment who makes the save permanently gains 1 point of Wisdom. Any berk who steps off the platform (which has a diameter of 20 yards and a radius of 10 yards) plummets like a stone.

DM NOTE: If the PCs are eager to get into a good scrap, a barbazu teleports onto the Skyscape and, surprised to find mortal visitors, rushes to the attack. Of course, PCs can't fight if stunned, and the size of the platform limits their attack methods. Note that the barbazu can't fly and, if in danger, teleports away rather than *gate* in reinforcements.

BARBAZU: THACO 13; #AT 3 or 1 (weapon); Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d8 or 2d6 (glaive); AC 3; HD 6+6; hp 40; MV 15; SA glaive, disease, battle frenzy; SD +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT low (7); AL LE; ML steady (12); XP 6,000.

Spell-like abilities: *affect normal fires, command, fear* (by touch), and *produce flame*.

6. THE CAVERN OF FLIGHT: The baatezu that can fly often come to this vast chamber to stretch their wings and practice aerial maneuvers around the rock formations that float here.

This area resembles a monstrous underground cavern – easily a thousand yards wide, with no apparent roof or bottom. Dozens of large, rocky clumps hang frozen in midair throughout the dark cave; you're standing on a formation not far from the cave's wall, where you can spot a small platform. From somewhere above, inhuman shrieks echo in the gloom.

Six rock formations lie between the PCs and the platform (where they can attach a petal hole to the cavern wall); leaps from one to the next require successful Dexterity checks. When the PCs reach the third rock, 1d6 + 4 shrieking vargouilles descend, attacking until slain. A PC who leaps while being attacked makes his check at a -4 penalty.

Any sod who fails his check slips into the bottomless void unless he concentrates on flying and *fails* a subsequent Intelligence check, which then allows him to "swim" through the air at half his normal speed. A PC who makes his Intelligence check can't accept the possibility of flight and continues to fall; if not rescued, he later rejoins the party by crashing through the ceiling of another room (as determined by the DM), receiving 2d10 points of damage.

VARGOUILLE (1d6 + 4): THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; AC 8; HD 1+1; hp 7 each; MV Fl 12 (B); SA poison, fear; SZ S (head with 3-foot wingspan); INT low (6); AL NE; ML average (9); XP 650.

7. RING OF GATES: Whenever a fiend must undertake a mission outside of Baator, he comes to this room, where hundreds of gates provide pathways to and from other planes.

This curved hallway forms a perfect ring; small gems have been embedded in both walls to outline hundreds of differently sized circles.

The gems can't be removed, and they burn with the same

intensity as the rest of the hot iron. As the PCs walk around the ring, a spinagon returns from a harvesting expedition to the Gray Waste.

One set of gems in the wall nearby begins to glow, and the circle enclosed by the stones shows a gray, desolate landscape. Suddenly, a spinagon steps through the circle, a bulging sack slung over his shoulder.

The spinagon, Memoata, is so surprised to see the party that he doesn't do anything for a few seconds. The PCs can attack him, talk to him, or try to dive through the open gate before it closes (three PCs can make it through, though they'll be trapped on the Gray Waste; Memoata accepts 500 gp in gems or two magical items to reopen the gate).

If the party attacks him, Memoata hurls the sack (a *bag of holding*) at the PCs and jumps back through the gate just before it closes. The 1d6 + 8 larvae within spill out and attack the party until slain.

If not attacked, Memoata's willing to answer yes-or-no questions for 100 gp in gems each. He knows how the *flower of holes* works and where the stolen *holy avenger* is kept, but has little knowledge of the various gates in the room and possesses no more gate keys. If the party waits until the gate closes and then tries to attack Memoata, the

spinagon dumps the larvae on the PCs and immediately tries to gate in reinforcements.

MEMOATA (Pl/♂ Fd/HD 3+3/LE):

THACO 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d6 (military fork); AC 4; HD 3+3; hp 23; MV 6, Fl 18 (C); SA flame spikes; MR 15%; SZ S (3 feet tall); INT average (8); ML average (8); XP 3,000.

Spell-like abilities: *affect normal fires, change self, command, produce flame, scare, and stinking cloud*.

Gate (once per day): 1d3 spinagons (35%).

LARVAE (1d6 + 8): THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1; AC 7; HD 1-1; hp 5 each; MV 3; SA wounding, disease; SZ M (5 feet long); INT semi (2); AL NE; ML unreliable (2); XP 35.

8. ENDLESS SPIRAL: Fiends looking to have some fun often pluck a long-suffering sod out of the Pit of Patience (Area 1) and drop him here.

You're standing on a spiral staircase that curves away both upward and downward. The stone steps are wide and well-maintained. From above come soft whispers; from below, the sound of running water.

The stairs magically fold back in on themselves; whether the PCs climb or descend, in three turns they always end up back at their starting point. However, the physical appearance of the walls and steps changes, so the party's eyes tell them they're making progress. What's more, the noises always sound like they're just around the next few turns.

If the PCs leave an object behind while climbing or descending, they come across it again in three turns. At any time, they can use a flower petal on either wall to leave the staircase; however, a petal won't stick to the steps, as they're not an outer boundary of the room.

HOLD ON –
I'VE GOT SOMETHING
IN MY BAG
FOR YOU. . . .
– MEMOATA
+ THE SPINAGON,
REACHING IN +
HIS SACK OF LARVAE

9. SKIN BUBBLE: This living prison is used to restrain those whose offenses have earned them more than simple confinement.

The surfaces of this small, empty cube seem to be made of a seamless brown material. However, before you can take a step, the walls, ceiling, and floor all constrict and shrink around you, wrapping your group in a warm, rubbery second skin, crushing your bodies together into a single, muddled knot.

The amorphous bubble relentlessly tries to mold itself around the shape of the PCs' bodies; they can breathe through the skin but not see through it. Neither weapons nor fire can harm the skin, which seems to ooze beads of sweat, and offensive spells may be dangerous in such tight quarters.

In order to escape, the PCs must clear enough room to pluck and grow a petal-hole. They can do this by inflicting at least 30 points of damage on the skin from cold-based attacks, which makes it expand in pain for three rounds. Alternately, three or more PCs can push against the skin in different directions, holding it apart long enough for another PC to form an escape hole. (The DM can require the struggling PCs to make a single Strength check or make one check per round, or devise another method of determining their success.)

10. LIBRARY: The pit fiends in the tower maintain a vast collection of dark research and reference materials, all stored in orderly fashion in this room.

Each wall of this octagonal chamber's a bookcase that rises up higher than you can see, filled with tomes whose black spines are etched with strange markings. Several books lie scattered about on a block of iron in the middle of the room.

The PCs can't decipher the markings in most books; spells like *read magic*, *dispel magic*, and *erase* cause the targeted page to expand and wrap around the reader, inflicting 1d4 points of crushing damage per round and suffocating the sod in four rounds. Three PCs working together can pull the page off the victim, but only if they each make a successful Strength check.

One of the books on the block contains what seems to be a blank page. Any PC who specifically examines the page should make an Intelligence check, with *failure* indicating that the PC can see the symbols for five rooms in the tower: the Pit of Patience, the Skyscape, the Ring of Gates, the Head of Blades, and Dispaten's Study. The DM should draw the symbols for the party (without, of course, revealing which rooms they designate).

If the PCs search the shelves for two turns, they find several books written in a familiar language: biographies of each cutter's entire life, continuously updated as new events occur – the words materialize on the pages. The current last line of each book details the finding of the book itself.

At some point while the PCs are in the library, a barb-covered hamatula named Bok teleports in to conduct research. As soon as he sees the party, he attacks. However, if given a garnish of 500 gp, he allows the PCs to leave – as long as they do so immediately.

BOK (PL/♂ FD/HD 7/LE):

THACO 13; #AT 3; Dmg 2d4/2d4/3d4; AC 1; hp 45; MV 12; SA fear, hug; SD +1 weapons to hit; MR 30%; SZ M (7 feet tall); INT very (12); ML fearless (19); XP 6,000.

Spell-like abilities: *affect normal fires*, *hold person*, *produce flame*, and *pyrotechnics*.

Gate (once per day): 2d6 abishai (50%), or 1d4 hamatula (35%).

11. PRISON WEDGE: Like the Prison Globe (Area 3), this triangular room's used to detain captives. Two hound archons taken in a raid on Mount Celestia are imprisoned here, along with a tanar'ri (a marquis cambion) permanently changed by Dispaten into the form of a hound archon to see what effect it might have on the cambion's nature (none so far).

The three sides of this room each hold a prisoner, a muscular humanoid with a doglike head. Each captive is bound not by chains, but by four black serpents – the hissing heads are lashed tightly around the prisoner's wrists and ankles, the thick bodies and tails burrowed deep into the walls.

Each prisoner begs to be freed, but warns that one of the other two is a tanar'ri. The PCs can question the three in an attempt to determine which is which; the lawful good archons always speak the truth, whereas the chaotic evil cambion may lie as he pleases. While chained, the prisoners put up no resistance to attacks, but the PCs gain no experience points from killing them. (The archons have AC 1 and 38 hit points each; the cambion has AC 2 and 40 hit points.)

The snakes restrain the prisoners and block their spell-like abilities. The PCs can't pull the serpents from the wall or untie their heads (though they risk 1d6 biting damage and Type B poison if they try the latter). However, the PCs can sever a snake with +2 or better weapons (by inflicting 20 points of damage to AC 5), or dissolve it with holy water (using one full vial per serpent). In order to free a prisoner, the PCs must destroy all four serpents restraining him.

Any freed prisoners use their regained teleportation abilities to leave the tower, offering to take one or more PCs with them. The true hound archons return to Mount Celestia, but the cambion heads for the Abyss. The DM can decide the fate of any PCs who accompany a freed prisoner.

12. HALL OF DARK REFLECTION: Berks who irritate the baatezu often get dumped in this chamber to get a firsthand look at one of their possible futures.

This long, dank hallway dead-ends at a wall that's completely covered with a reflective surface. The figures looking back at you in the mirror hardly seem like your own, so battered are they by the rigors of the quest. Suddenly, a crimson pit fiend appears behind the figures in the mirror – he must be standing right behind you!

No baatezu actually appears in the hallway with the party, and the pit fiend in the mirror can't harm them, but the image is startling nonetheless.

"Hiya, flaggoes!" laughs the fiend in the mirror, though you can't be sure if he's talking to you or your reflections. "Ready to have some fun? Ol' Zaggutch'll teach ya how to have a real good time!"

With that, the fiend tears the party's reflections to bits with his claws and teeth. The carnage lasts five full rounds, but eventually the reflected PCs are slashed to ribbons, and Zaggutch snacks on their bones for another three rounds. If the party waits it out, Zaggutch turns to them, says, *"See ya later, flaggoes!"* and vanishes. From that point on, the only image shown in the mirror is that of the broken, savaged party.

If the PCs try to smash the mirror, they find that it's made not of glass but of a tarlike substance that absorbs whatever is

thrown or pressed against it. Small objects disappear completely, but large objects stick out just enough for a PC to pull it free again (on a successful Strength check).

DM NOTE: Zaggutch, a lieutenant fiercely loyal to Dispater, is the fiend assigned to travel to Fortitude through the gate opened by the tainted *holy avenger* and take control of Daneel. When role-playing Zaggutch, be sure to use his informal speech patterns — especially the derisive term “flaggoes” — so that later the PCs can realize what’s happened to Daneel.

13. THE MAZE: Like the Lady of Pain, Dispater sometimes traps those who annoy him in a maddening maze; however, Dispater’s mazes seldom have exits, and often change from moment to moment.

You’re standing at an intersection of two long hallways made of bones. Further along each corridor, you can see several other passageways branching off in different directions; a low, muttering voice issues from one of the openings.

The voice belongs to a raving lunatic who’s wandered through this particular maze for years, forgetting everything about his former life. Dispater’s removed his need to eat and sleep and denied him the ability to die. The barmy simply prowls the maze, carrying only a single gold coin and a jagged bone he ripped from one of the walls. No longer interested in leaving, he’s appointed himself the protector of the only world he knows — the twisting maze.

After two rounds, the man appears in the long hallway and approaches the PCs, asking if they’ve seen his fish. If they engage the barmy in conversation, he claims to know all about the *holy avenger*, the *flower of holes*, and anything else the PCs ask him about. ‘Course, the poor sod’s information’s all wrong.

The barmy appoints the PCs lieutenant protectors of the maze, then attacks them for desertion of duty if they try to leave. While in the maze, the man has special defenses: He’s immune to all mind-affecting spells, and he regenerates from any condition, even ashes, regaining 5 hit points per round. He loses these abilities if forced from the maze.

A petal-hole works on the floor or ceiling of the maze but falls off the walls, since they’re not an outer boundary of the room.

DM NOTE: The maze isn’t fully mapped on the DM’s screen; if the PCs try to explore its shifting pathways, feel free to create the maze as they go along — it doesn’t have to make sense. If they use a *wall of force* or similar tactic to block the barmy’s attack, the maze can simply shift and allow the man to approach from a different direction.

BARMY: THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (sharp bone); AC 10; HD 1; hp 7; MV 12; SZ M (5 feet tall); INT avg (8); AL CN; ML fearless (20); XP 175.

14. TRINKET HOARD: Objects peeled from planars and primes that have no real long-term use are dumped in this chamber, and loyal spinagons are sometimes rewarded by being allowed to sift through the pickings.

A colossal, horned skull takes up the center of this room, its eye sockets as big as small tunnels. Anchored to the top of the oblong skull — at least fifteen feet off the ground — is a large metal handle.

The handle’s attached to a heavy but removable lid; the skull itself is full of rocks, cloth, goblets, bones, and other debris.

A diligent search through the trinkets nets small objects that are either interesting (an elf’s diary, a sack of marbles) or useful (a dagger, a purse of silver pieces). No matter how much stuff’s removed from the skull, there’s always more.

If the PCs search through the trinkets for three rounds, they find a scrap of paper dropped by a spinagon that contains the symbols for the following rooms in the tower: the Torture Chamber, the Head of Blades, and Dispater’s Study.

If the PCs search for four rounds, they find any objects they lost in the Prison Globe (Area 3).

If the PCs search for five rounds, they find the object that was stolen from them by the polymorphed gelugon back in the Great Bazaar of Sigil.

Rattling around the junk in the skull disturbs three large scorpions nesting deep within one of the eye sockets; they crawl out after two rounds and attack any PCs on or near the skull.

LARGE SCORPION (3): THACO 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1; AC 5; HD 2+2; hp 18 each; MV 9; SA Type A poison; SZ S (2 feet long); INT non (0); AL N; ML average (8); XP 175.

15. THE HEART: This room’s actually the representation of the heart of one of the supplicants in the Torture Chamber (Area 4).

The smell of blood overwhelms you in this pulsating, dripping cavern that looks like the inside of a goblin’s stomach. Your boots slip and slide on the fleshy ground, and steady claps of body-rattling thunder — like the ponderous footsteps of a power — threaten to shake your teeth loose from your mouth.

The immediate ground surface around the party is too soft to support a petal-hole; the PCs must make their way to one of the heart’s walls, which takes three rounds due to the quakelike beats that knock the PCs off their feet. With each beat, rivulets of sticky blood spray out of the ground and coat the party.

The deafening heartbeats prevent the concentration needed to cast spells and cause 1d2 points of damage per PC per round (successfully save vs. spell to avoid damage). If a PC stabs a weapon into the heart, the beating stops, and a geyser of scalding blood erupts from the wound, flooding the chamber in ten rounds. What’s more, one of the two supplicants in the Torture Chamber dies.

16. THE GARDEN: In a vast “room” that more resembles an outdoor landscape, pit fiends tend to the creation of *flowers of holes* from the bright, distilled spirits of lawful evil petitioners.

You’re standing on a low hill of black dirt, under a putrid, purple sky. Dim light issues from a translucent tank at the bottom of the hill, in which thousands of glowing balls swirl through a hazy soup. Orderly fields of black flowers stretch beyond the tank to the horizon, and two large pit fiends tend to the plants.

If the PCs hide on the hill for nine turns, they can observe the pit fiends go about their duties, which includes plucking a ripe flower and preparing to inscribe its petals. However, a third pit fiend appears, interrupts the work, and all three teleport away together. Investigation reveals the following items lying near the tank: a flower with 12 blank petals, a bowl of blood, and a long, narrow thorn. By dipping the thorn in the blood, a PC can inscribe the petals with desired room symbols (such as the one for Dispater’s Study, which holds the *holy avenger*). For each attempt at inscription, the PC must successfully make both a Dexterity check and a Wisdom check or botch the symbol, per-

manently ruining that petal. Successful checks indicate that the newly inscribed petal can be used as transportation to the designated room.

If the PCs approach the pit fiends, the baatezu gardeners – warned by Dispatar to cooperate with the party without knowing why – make gruff conversation but continue with their duties. From the fiends, the PCs can learn that *Guardian's* held in Dispatar's Study and get the symbol for that room. What's more, the party can even convince the fiends to inscribe a new flower if they offer one of the following in exchange: all of their remaining gems, the life of one lawful evil being (to be made into a petitioner and cast into the tank), or assistance in tending to the garden (the fiends make them plow a field by hand, which takes two weeks).

If the party demands it, the fiends are willing to teleport them out of the tower, leaving them just beyond the surrounding wall.

DM NOTES: The pit fiends can inscribe flower petals with symbols for any room in the tower – a good way to allow the PCs access to rooms beyond the eighteen described in this chapter (if desired).

Once the pit fiends leave, the PCs can pick additional flowers from the fields; however, they can't bind a petitioner's spirit to the flower and so can't create any more *flowers of holes*.

17. THE HEAD OF BLADES: As part of his attempt to take control of Sigil, Dispatar is running grotesque experiments to analyze the Lady of Pain and perhaps even figure out how to defeat her.

A glint of light in the center of this dark room attracts your attention, and as you approach you make out a horrifying sight: A woman stands imprisoned in a solid block of iron that's covered with odd markings and ringed by ruts cut into the floor. Only the woman's shoulders, neck, and head stick out of the top of the block, and growing cleanly out of her head are a dozen large blades.

Course, the woman isn't the *real* Lady; she's only an unfortunate victim of the experiment and can't harm the party (nor can the markings or ruts). She watches the PCs but doesn't communicate with them in any way. Each blade can be drawn from her head (leaving a bleeding wound) and used as a +1 sword, but any PC who pulls one out suffers a curse immediately upon leaving the room. Roll 1d6 and consult the following table:

DIE ROLL	CURSE
1	Gender changes
2	Hair on head turns to worms
3	Body weight doubles (clothing fits accordingly)
4	Skin becomes transparent
5	Skin reeks of vinegar
6	PC becomes mute

A PC can avoid a curse by making a successful save vs. spell at –4. Effects can be reversed with a *remove curse* spell, but not while on Baator.

18. DISPATCH'S STUDY: With the new flower from the garden (Area 16), the PCs can use a petal to reach Dispatar's personal study. Anticipating their arrival, Dispatar's chosen to have the room appear as plain as possible.

This nine-sided chamber is probably the most ordinary you've seen yet in the tower. The only features are a simple

wooden chair, a long wooden table, a bucket of slop, and a skeletal arm hanging on bone pegs on one wall. The bony hand still clutches a long sword.

Investigation shows that the chair, table, and bucket are just what they appear to be. Dispatar hasn't left any special protections for the sword – he hopes to derive amusement from watching the PCs take pains to avoid traps that aren't there. Read the following to any PC who pries the sword from the skeletal arm's grasp:

As you take the sword by its gilded handle, you feel a soft wave of warmth flood throughout your body. Without a doubt you know – though you can't explain how – that this weapon is, indeed, the holy avenger sword called Guardian, the object of your long quest.

Once a PC takes the sword, the party's journey through the tower is over. Proceed with "Enter the Archduke," below.

DM NOTE: *Guardian* looks like nothing more than a finely made sword, but a skilled weaponsmith might be able to recognize its holy enchantment without picking it up. Due to its inherent magical nature, it constantly radiates magic. However, there's no way a PC can detect the special *gate* spell Dispatar's cast upon the weapon. Until the sword carries out its dark duty, it simply acts as would any holy sword in the hands of someone other than its intended owner: as a +2 weapon.



ENTER THE ARCHDUKE

The party found the sword as easily as they did only because Dispatar wanted them to – if the archduke'd really planned to keep the holy weapon, no mere cutter would've ever lain eyes on it again. Fact is, Dispatar figures the party'd realize that, too (assuming they're not totally Clueless). After all, even the dimmest basher would probably get suspicious if he just waltzed out of the Iron Tower clutching the stolen *holy avenger*.

So, to make sure that his dark drama plays out to its conclusion, Dispatar manifests his avatar in the study – along with several dozen other vicious fiends – to give the PCs one last run for their jink.

No sooner have you plucked the sword from its spot on the wall than gallons of fetid slop explode from the small bucket like a geyser, blasting the ceiling with a continuous, pounding stream of ooze. The blobs and drips rain down all over the room and begin to collect into a shape as they hit the floor. Feet, legs, a torso – within seconds an entire humanoid form accumulates and solidifies, and before you stands archduke Dispatar, the Lord of Dis.

As a solid creature, Dispatar assumes a somewhat more acceptable form: that of a sleek, yellow-skinned human male, ten feet tall, with horns like a pit fiend's, dressed in an ornate, sleeveless waistcoat and pants. Behind him a red cape flutters like bat's wings.

A host of greater baatezu – nine gelugons, nine cornugons, and nine pit fiends – teleport into the room along with their lord, appearing in neat rows behind Dispatar as he addresses the party.

"Come to reclaim that dreadful nuisance, have you? Well, it was only a matter of time, I suppose." The archduke looks over your group carefully, unable to restrain a subdued smile. "You know, I must confess I'm a bit surprised. I expected something of

a grand invasion force — thousands of noble paladins descending upon my hateful palace in the name of all that's holy, and so on and so forth. Instead, I find you: a small band of — you'll pardon the expression — ordinary thrillseekers."

If the PCs engage him in conversation, Dispater continues to play the role of the gracious host. He claims that the baatezu who originally stole the *holy avenger* from Daneel — which he deems "an unfortunate turn of events" — hoped to please him with such a rare prize. However, Dispater says he's actually inclined to view it as little more than a knick-knack, and given that no baatezu can touch the enchanted thing without suffering great pain, he's not particularly fond of having it around.

What's more, Dispater complains that the other powers of Baator have done little since he acquired the sword but scheme to wrest it from him. It's gotten so bad that he fears a war may erupt on the plane for possession of the *holy avenger*, and one war at a time — especially one so far-reaching and all-consuming as the Blood War — is enough for him.

Simply put, *Guardian* is more trouble than its worth, and Dispater's glad to have it removed from Baator for good. However, there is the matter of the party's criminal intention to *steal* the sword — something the archduke considers a most unbecoming and impolite act (if confronted with the fact that the baatezu stole it in the first place, Dispater insufferably reminds the PCs that two wrongs don't make a right).

ATTACKING DISPATER: While on Dis (and especially while in the Iron Tower), the PCs can't harm Dispater's avatar by any means. If they drive a sword through his chest, he simply pulls it out and hands it back to the owner, admonishing him or her to "be more careful with your toys." If the PCs attack with spells, Dispater simply waves the effects away, clucking, "Now, now — let's have none of that." Not even a *wish* spell can disturb the archduke's avatar.

DISPATER'S OFFER

The archduke's willing to let the PCs take the *holy avenger* out of Baator, but he insists that they first make fair restitution for their effrontery: Each PC must give him an eyelash as a personal memento of the whole sordid affair. He doesn't plan to use the lashes to control the PCs or harm them in any way; he just wants to watch the mortals stew over the request. If the PCs adamantly refuse, Dispater offers to let them submit a body part of their own choosing. If the party again refuses, the archduke gives them one last chance, asking only that each PC surrender any one personal item.

ACCEPTING THE OFFER

If each PC gives Dispater either an eyelash, a body part, or a personal item, the archduke agrees to let them take the *holy avenger* out of Baator.

What's more, if the PCs ask, Dispater cures any curses they received from the lady in the Head of Blades room (Area 17). He also restores to life any PCs who got put into the dead-book while in the tower. 'Course, the archduke doesn't do such deeds out of the goodness of his heart — he'd simply prefer to have the PCs alive and well to witness the culmination of his dark plan, especially since they've unwittingly played such a large part in its success.

YOU FOUGHT YOUR WAY
THROUGH BAA+OR
+O FIND +HE HOLY AVENGER?

TSK, +SK —

ALL YOU HAD +O D+ WAS ASK.
— DISPATER'S AVA+AR,
IN A
LIGH+HEAR+ED M+O+D

Dispater summons the pit fiend Kri'ik — conspicuously absent from the host of assembled baatezu — and instructs him to see the party safely back to the city of Dis.

Proceed to "Going Home," below.

REJECTING THE OFFER

If the PCs won't meet his terms, Dispater announces that he's made three fair offers and concludes that the PCs simply can't take what they haven't paid for. He instructs his fiendish legions to reclaim the sword and dispose of the "mortal debris."

The DM should let the PCs try to fight if they wish. Each pit fiend, cornugon, and gelugon has the same statistics as the others of its type; use the pit fiend statistics given on page 5, the cornugon statistics on page 45, and the gelugon statistics on page 9. The archduke offers the PCs one chance to "stop wasting time and resolve this like civilized beings." If the party continues to attack, the baatezu do their best to slay the sods. Dispater melts away, planning to wait for the next batch of mortals that comes hunting for the *holy avenger*.

The PCs can try to escape by teleporting or otherwise relocating themselves outside the tower, or by using their *flower of holes* to flee to another room. The baatezu pursue in either case, but the PCs may be able to get to the City Vista, in which case they can escape the tower via the balcony.

If the PCs are resourceful enough to get out of the tower, Dispater decides to let them keep the *holy avenger*. After all, the success of his plan is more important than collecting a handful of eyelashes from some mortal sods. Proceed to "Going Home."

GOING HOME

If the PCs accepted the sword from Dispater, they now have Kri'ik as an escort to the city; if the PCs escaped from the tower, the DM should have Kri'ik appear to them at the edge of the city. In either case, how the fiend acts depends on how the PCs dealt with him during their first two encounters. The DM should run one of the following possible conclusions — all of which see the party in Fortitude with the *holy avenger* — and then proceed to Chapter VI, on page 56.

THE FIEND'S LOOPHOLE

When Kri'ik offered to reward the PCs for stealing the *holy avenger*, he was careful to specify that the deal was valid only if the party *stole* the sword from the tower. 'Course, Dispater actually ended up *giving* the sword to the party or trading it for a personal item. So, if the party wasn't clever enough to wring a

more exacting promise out of Kri'ik, he's not required to fulfill any stipulations of his bargain.

Kri'ik explains his logic and announces his intention to kill the PCs, take the *holy avenger*, and use it for his own ends. However, one round after the fiend begins his attack, Dispater's avatar appears once again.

The horned archduke seems to grow right out of the ground; Kri'ik looks even more surprised than you. "Dear me, Kri'ik," says Dispater, shaking his head at the stunned fiend, "I'm truly saddened by this tawdry betrayal. And to think it was I whose hand guided your ascension over the millennia. Why, I remember when you started as a squiggling larva — such a waste, such a waste. Ah, well. Kri'ik, this hurts me more than it does you; I hereby revoke the powers granted to you as a greater baatezu. Go, and never darken my door again."

Dispater then turns to the PCs and adds:

"You know, I hear the jawbone of a pit fiend can bring quite a tidy sum in the right places. I'm sure Kri'ik here won't mind relinquishing his."

Dispater's avatar melts back into the ground, leaving the PCs to deal with the newly powerless and furious pit fiend. Kri'ik can still fly and make attacks inherent to his fiendish form (wings, claws, tail, and poisonous bite); he also retains his Strength bonus and magic resistance. However, he's lost all of his spell-like abilities (including *gate* and *teleport without error*), his regenerative power, his *fear* aura, and his immunity to non-magical weapons.

Full of rage and accustomed to centuries of supreme confidence, Kri'ik continues to attack the party, but tries to escape if reduced to a third of his hit points. The PCs can try to finish him off and take his jawbone, or just let him go.

To leave Baator, the party can either seek out a gate in the city that leads directly to Fortitude (King Hejj knows of one), or head back to Sigil and find a portal there (such as a window at the Sill). In either case, they can use the small chain from Tonat Shar as the gate key.

KRI'IK (ADJUSTED FOR REDUCED POWER):

THACO 7; #AT 6; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d6/1d6/2d6/2d4 (+6 Strength bonus); AC -5; HD 13; hp 84; MV 15, FL 24 (C); SA poison, tail constriction; MR 50%; SZ L (12 feet tall); INT genius (18); AL LE; ML champion (16); XP 10,000.

THE FIEND'S PROMISE

If, during their first two meetings with Kri'ik, the PCs were wise enough to insist that the pit fiend reward them if they merely *obtain* the sword, or if they otherwise nailed him down with wording so exact that he couldn't find a loophole, Kri'ik must now fulfill his end of the bargain and deliver the promised ruby.

Course, Kri'ik wouldn't be a pit fiend if he didn't try to break the spirit of his agreement. If the party wasn't on its toes when hammering out their bargain, Kri'ik probably has a number of possibilities for peeling the berks; the DM can use any of the following loopholes or come up with others, as circumstances dictate.

- ◆ Kri'ik produces a maelephant that's been shrunk down to the size of an insect — after all, the PCs didn't specify that the maelephant had to be normal-sized — and dutifully gives the party a ruby the size of its tiny head, a gem worth about 10 gp.

- ◆ Kri'ik does indeed give the party a ruby the size of a standard maelephant's head; however, he does it so conspicuously that every barmy, bubbler, and cutthroat in Dis is aware of the exchange, too. Thus, a stampede of greedy bashers descends upon the party, smashing the gem into thousands of worthless pieces in the riot.
- ◆ Kri'ik presents the party with a live maelephant whose head just happens to be made out of a ruby. Of course, the beast isn't about to surrender his head to the PCs without a fight.

If the PCs made a pact of nonaggression, Kri'ik won't attack them if they don't attack him first. However, the fiend taunts the PCs over the "simple" method by which he cheated them, hoping to goad them into attacking and thus breaking the truce. If the PCs restrain themselves, Kri'ik angrily teleports away to plot his vengeance against the party.

The PCs can then find a gate in the city that takes them straight to Fortitude (King Hejj can direct them to one), or return to Sigil and seek a portal there. In either case, the small chain from Tonat Shar works as the gate key.

DM NOTE: If the PCs failed to make a pact of nonaggression, Kri'ik attacks them. However, this attracts the attention of Dispater's avatar, who appears and strips Kri'ik of his power, as in "The Fiend's Loophole," above.

If the PCs truly made a deal in which Kri'ik was forced to deliver the ruby with no tricks, the fiend hands over the reward, but vows to see the party suffer for besting him.

THE FIEND'S ASSAULT

It's possible that the PCs simply refused to make any deal whatsoever with Kri'ik, ignoring his threats and promises during their first two encounters. In that case, Kri'ik's not bound to deliver any reward to the party, nor is he prevented from attacking them and claiming the sword for his own purposes.

After leading the PCs to the city, Kri'ik begins his assault. However, Dispater's avatar reappears and, as in "The Fiend's Loophole," robs Kri'ik of his special powers as punishment for his indiscretions. The rest of the encounter then proceeds as in "The Fiend's Loophole."



KEEPING THE SWORD

The PCs may decide not to bring the *holy avenger* to Fortitude after all, but keep it for themselves, sell it to another faction, give it to a passing barmy, etc. Sooner or later, though, the secret *gate* spell will activate, and the pit fiend Zaggutch will come through to take control of the sword's wielder.

If the PCs kept the sword, they'll have to deal with a controlled party member; if they gave it to another faction, that group angrily comes looking for the PCs, believing them to have knowingly sold a tainted sword. In any case, for failing to deliver the *holy avenger*, the PCs get no reward from the Harmonium; in fact, the Harmonious Ascension is ruined and the Hardheads vow to scrag, imprison, and execute the PCs for breaching the agreement. The party's made enemies for life.

CHAPTER VI: HEARTS AND MINDS

In the concluding chapter of *Fires of Dis*, the party presumably returns the *holy avenger* to Fortitude in time for the

Harmonious Ascension. Before long, however, the PCs realize that Dispaters got more tricks up his sleeve than they might have thought, and they must fight to ensure that their quest ends in success. What's in the balance? Not much, berk – just the life of a paladin, the spirit of a fiend, and the fate of an entire gate-town.

IN THE EGG

When the PCs step through a gate to Fortitude – whether it's from the city of Dis, the Sill in Sigil, or any other place the DM wishes to set up a gate – they emerge in the gate-town that some planars call "the Egg," due to the high stone wall that surrounds the whole burg in a perfect oval. The DM can

place the PCs at any spot in the town; refer to the map on the gatefold screen. Below are descriptions of the look and feel of Fortitude to allow the DM to properly set up the scenes in this chapter, followed by a brief outline of the major locations in town.

THE LOOK

Fortitude's a clean, neat, well-run place. A population of about 5,000 individuals – mostly dwarves and humans – live within the surrounding egg-shaped wall, all working together to keep their town both wholesome and ordered (the strong presence and influence of the Harmonium helps see to that). The two main entrances to the town are at either "end" of the wall, though each longer "side" contains three smaller entrances. The broad streets run more or less at straight angles through the town and are made of white tile squares laid so precisely it'd be hard to find the cracks in between. Most of the dwellings and shops have bases of stone, though the upper floors of treated wood and baked mud look just as solid as the first floors. About half the town's made up of buildings, and half's full of more attractive features, including sparkling fountains, lush groves and parks, and orchards full of ripe fruit. Even still, the order and harmony of Fortitude shines through: The trees and flowers are planted to grow in neat rows, the water hoses are set to spray at pleasing angles, etc.

THE FEEL

In order to ensure that the Harmonious Ascension succeeds and Fortitude slides into the plane of Arcadia, the Harmonium's been working overtime to instill a sense of law, order, and harmony in the citizens. As a result, everyone's on his or her moral toes, though it's more out of a true desire to see their town ascend than a fear of the occasionally intimidating tactics of the Hardheads.

One side effect of the concentration on harmony and goodness is suspicion. Strangers in town are often given the peery eye, and never so more than now, at the brink of the Ascension. A few petitioners from Arcadia – all of whom can *know alignment* at will – are on hand to help guide Fortitude into their plane, and they peek at the alignments of potential troublemakers. Neutrality's more tolerated in Fortitude than in Arcadia, but a berk of any evil alignment is usually identified and scragged by the Hardheads before he knows what (or who) hit him. Strong evil

BE G⊕⊕D
⊕R BE DEAD.

— GRAFFITI SCRAWLED
IN THE TOWN SQUARE

might be enough to block the Ascension, and the townsfolk don't want anything upsetting their chance to join the Land of Perfect Good.

MAJOR LOCATIONS

Below are some of the more important locations in Fortitude that the PCs might visit (or at which encounters can be set). The DM can also add sites of his or her own, including shops – tidy, regimented ones – where the party can pick up any needed supplies.

1. THE CONFESSIONAL: Made entirely of stone, this huge, round arena's sunken into the ground like a bowl. It's filled with roughly a thousand seats that ring a stage at the bottom, nearly 100 yards below ground level. Three times a week, residents of Fortitude descend the narrow staircases that lead down into the bowl, quickly filling it to standing-room-only capacity. One at a time, individuals can take to the stage and confess their perceived crimes and flaws before the assembled crowd, which then gets to pronounce a suitable punishment – anything from a mild reprimand for a minor offense to execution for what's judged to be a more serious crime. What with the recent Hardhead push to get the town in shape for its Ascension, the Confessional's seen a lot of activity lately, with body after body volunteering to throw themselves at the proverbial mercy of the crowds.

2. THE GATE TO ARCADIA: The gate is a tall flame that swirls and licks with various shades of green, and its size and brightness increase in direct proportion to the collective mindset of the town; the more the residents' attitudes mirror that of Arcadia, the larger and brighter the flame becomes. It's set atop a 20-foot-tall pyramid made of seven stacked squares, each smaller than the one beneath, with a staircase climbing to the top from each side. The pyramid's set in the Town Square, a huge open plaza at the opposite end of Fortitude from the Confessional.

DM NOTE: The PCs won't be able to open or use the gate. The DM can have the townsfolk be too suspicious of the PCs to give them a gate key or just unwilling to let them use the gate for fear it might adversely affect the Ascension.

3. THE BLOCK OF LAW: More formally known as the town headquarters for the Harmonium, the Block is just what it sounds like: a building shaped like a large slab of gray, speckled stone, built to resemble the City Barracks in Sigil (the main headquarters of the faction). Its offices and quarters take up a whole city block. The building's got four entrances, one on each side.

4. TEARS OF TYR: One of the most popular inns in Fortitude, probably because it's so close to the Confessional that travelers can watch the proceedings from the comfort of their windows and balconies. It's a restrained place, run with a bit more class than many kips, but it appeals to a variety of residents and visitors, as it features rich ales and foods alongside the cheaper, more common fare.

5. THE BABBLING BONEYARD: Full of neat rows of tombstones, this cemetery holds only the most upright and lawful citizens of Fortitude who've passed into the dead-book. Each grave marker's enchanted to deliver a eulogy of praise for the deader's character and accomplishments whenever a body stops at the gravesite for more than a few seconds. When occupied by groups of mourners, all triggering different tombstones, the Boneyard can be a very noisy place.

6. THE ORB OF DAY AND NIGHT: In Arcadia, a great orb set atop the plane's tallest peak rotates continuously, filling half the plane with warm light and half with starry darkness, in strict 12-hour cycles. The Harmonium's built a stone tower in the middle of town, on top of which is their *own* revolving orb that gives off flat light and inky darkness (with no stars). Unfortunately, their orb isn't a perfect sphere, so the division between light and dark isn't always 12 hours; confounded Hardheads are always on or near the tower, tinkering with the orb to try to make it more precise.

DELIVERY: THE EASY WAY

If all of the PCs are of a good alignment (whether neutral, chaotic, or lawful), they can get directions to the Block of Law from anyone on the street and proceed there without incident to turn over the *holy avenger* (unless the DM wishes to throw an extra encounter in their path; see below for options).

You're ushered in to see Tonat Shar, who examines the sword and confirms that it is, indeed, the fabled Guardian. "Good job, cutters — but let's not go slapping our bone-boxes about this all over town, all right? The faith's already starting to slip a bit for some folks; we've got to show them. Daneel and Guardian soon, or all our work'll be for nothing, and Fortitude'll stay mired on the Outlands for powers know how long."

Shar explains they'll send for Daneel from Arcadia and make arrangements for the Ascension ceremony to take place after a half-revolution of the Orb (12 hours). The importance of the Ascension takes precedence; Shar will collect and deliver the party's reward once it's concluded. The PCs are expected to attend the ceremony, but may do as they please until then.

DELIVERY: THE HARD WAY

Strangers in Fortitude are subject to alignment checks from petitioners of Arcadia. If the party happens to include a PC of evil alignment, the berk is marked soon after arriving.

You notice an older dwarf in regal battle armor peering intently at your group. Suddenly, he points at one of your number and starts to yell: "Evill! Evil berk on the street!" Others turn at the shouts and start to gather. Three hulking humans and a stout dwarf stride quickly toward you; one barks, "Where'd you come from?"

Two members of the Harmonium patrol know of the stolen *holy avenger*; if the PCs explain their situation truthfully and show the sword, the guards hurry them to the Block — trying to keep the sword hidden from the eyes of the gathering onlookers — and events proceed as in "Delivery: the Easy Way." However, Shar also has a Harmonium mage cast an *undetectable alignment* spell on each evil PC, masking his or her alignment for 24 hours, to prevent further incidents.

If the party resists, the guards try to subdue the PCs and drag them to the Block for interrogation; four more Hardheads appear every other round until the PCs surrender, escape, or are killed. Escaping PCs are hunted until found and won't be able to show their faces in Fortitude unless it's to surrender.

DM NOTE: It's possible to run this encounter with the dwarf checking for chaotic or true neutral alignment (assume the looming Ascension heightens fears of *any* berks who don't cut the philosophical mustard).

GUARD (4-DE VAR) (PI/VAR VAR/F4/HA/LG):

THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (scimitar); AC 5 (chain mail); HD 4; hp 29 each; MV 12; SZ var; INT very (12); ML champion (15); XP 120.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTERS

After turning over the sword, the PCs can explore the town at their leisure until the Ascension ceremony, having any or all of the following encounters:

INVESTIGATION TEAM: A wizard or priest member of the party is invited to remain in the Block and help the Hardheads test the *holy avenger* to make sure it hasn't been corrupted. Physical tests reveal no taint. Strong magic already present in the sword resists all attempts at dispelling and makes it impossible for *detect*

magic, *identify* or similar effects to find Dispatser's secret *gate* spell until it's been activated. No powers (if contacted) know of or reveal the plan.

DM NOTE: A *wish* spell might reveal but not undo the tampering — if the DM can find a way to fulfill the terms of the wish without ruining the remainder of the adventure. Otherwise, simply assume that Dispatser's magic is too advanced to be detected by any nonpower.

KEEPING THE FAITH: Five priests (PI/var d/P3/HA/LG) move through the town, strengthening the resolve of the citizenry for the upcoming Ascension. They paint Daneel and *Guardian* as paradigms of law and virtue, and encourage the PCs to lend their will to that of the rest of town when all assemble for the ceremony.

OOPS, SORRY: One of the PCs accidentally breaks a minor law of the town — trodding on fresh flower buds, failing to yield right of way, etc. — and onlookers react with horror. They encourage the PC to confess her "heinous crime" at the Confessional and dog her until she agrees to do so, fearing that any spark of chaos might endanger the Ascension.

THE CHANT: While eating or relaxing at the *Tears of Tyr*, the PCs pick up a number of rumors about the Ascension, including: einheriar and aasimon will arrive from Arcadia to attend; an identical version of Fortitude similarly ascended long ago; Daneel's never been more robust; Factol Sarin of the Harmonium must remain in Sigil and can't attend; the gate's green flame will engulf the town in soothing warmth.

In addition, however, the PCs find one woman (PI/♀ h/O/FL/LN) who's worried: No one in town's seen Daneel in some time and dark rumors whisper of the loss or incapacitation of *Guardian*. If any of the PCs tell what they know, an agent (PI/♂ d/B3/HA/LG) sent by Shar to watch the party warns them not to contribute to "lies of enemies vainly trying to confuse our noble citizens."

DM NOTE: The PCs can get a room at the inn if they choose to bed down for the "night" (even though the light side of the Orb currently faces that end of town).

RATCATCHERS: Frightened screams in a street near the town's surrounding wall alert the party to danger; investigating PCs find the trouble to be 2d10 cranium rats who've scrambled in through a small crack in the wall.

CRANIUM RAT (2D10): THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; AC 6; HD 1; hp 4 each; MV 15; SD save as creature of Hit Dice equal to group Intelligence; SZ T (6 inches long); INT var (1 point per every five living rats); AL NE; ML unsteady (7); XP 65.

THE CEREMONY OF ASCENSION

Twelve hours after turning over the *holy avenger* to Tonat Shar, the PCs find that the ceremony to usher in the Harmonious Ascension is about to begin.

It seems as if the entire population of Fortitude is marching — slowly but surely, in the most calm and orderly swarm you've ever seen — toward the open Town Square at the far end of the city, where the gate to Arcadia rests.

If the PCs resist joining the wave of bodies, they're constantly entreated by passersby to attend the ceremony and finally ordered to by Harmonium guards trying to keep the crowds flowing smoothly. If they've seen the gate to Arcadia before, they notice that it's now much bigger – about 20 feet tall.

Standing in front of the bright, greenish flame atop the white pyramid is the paladin Daneel, flanked by two elderly, imperial dwarves in military garb. Daneel's right arm is missing, but in his left he holds aloft the sword Guardian, which glows fiercely in his grasp. The crowds around the Town Square continue to grow into the thousands, as the townspeople press forward to see and hear the fabled Daneel, Smiter of Fiends.

The DM should role-play various members of the crowd shouting hurrahs, weeping for joy, and clamoring for Daneel – the PCs should get the idea that the paladin is a much-venerated symbol of good to the citizens here. In addition, a few folks should express surprise and concern that Daneel's missing an arm. After a few anxious moments, Daneel addresses the crowd, which erupts in cheers and applause throughout.

"Beloved citizens of Fortitude! Truly on this day thou art blessed, for on this day shalt thou ascend into the land of perfection, the land of harmony, the land of all that is good – our most noble and rapturous Arcadia! I stand now before thee a humble servant, willing to lend my aid in ushering this city into a new age of amity, truth, and sun-kissed serenity. And now I beg of thee, good people: Lend me thy hearts – lend me thy minds – lend me thy bodies and thy spirits, and let the celestial hosts themselves weep from the glow of our assembled fellowship!"

As the crowd becomes more attuned to the tenets of law, harmony, and order, Fortitude begins to slide into Arcadia: The green flame grows, and ghostly forms of giant trees and mountain peaks begin to appear beyond the town's surrounding wall. If the PCs don't pick up on what's going on, several townspeople delightedly point out what's happening.

As Daneel pauses in joy at the crowd's growing, radiant energy, the green flame behind him continues to flicker higher and wider, fanning out like a brilliant sheet across the sky. The scattered eruptions of blissful cheers from the crowd begin to meld into one electric, crackling wave, an achingly beautiful song not diminished a scintilla by its lack of sound. "Direct thy hearts, strong friends," shouts Daneel, raising Guardian into the air. "Unleash thy minds!"

The philosophical movement of Fortitude finally triggers the gate spell hidden in the holy avenger. Unless ignoring the pyramid, the PCs see the sword crackle with a short, red burst and the pure glow of the blade suddenly fade away. Any PC who makes an Intelligence check also spots a small ball of red light – the spirit of the pit fiend Zaggutch – emerge from the tip of the sword and sink into Daneel's head. However, the PCs won't be able to make themselves heard over the still-enraptured crowd.

Daneel motions for the masses to ease their concentration for a moment and strides forward on the pyramid. "Ya know," he calls to the quieting crowd, "I think I've had a change of heart. What this burg really needs is a slap in th' face." Suddenly, the paladin swings Guardian around, cutting the neck of one of the dwarf elders behind him, spilling a hot stream of red blood onto the white pyramid. The thousands fall silent almost instantly, staring in cold shock. "Oh, I am sorry," he says to the dwarf. "Truth hurts, don't it?" Then he turns to the crowd: "Stick with me, flaggoes – I'll put things right. Ol' Daneel'll show ya the fes-

tering truth behind yer pack of lies!" And with that, the paladin disappears from the pyramid.

The astonished crowd, forced to question their long-held faith in a respected paladin of legend, begins to break down into troubled murmurs; the DM should role-play several townsfolk until the PCs realize the rug's been pulled out from under them, their minds hurled into a maelstrom of confusion and doubt. The green flame of the gate to Arcadia begins to die down, and the mountains and trees outside the town become less substantial. The town's stopped sliding and is stuck between planes.

DM NOTE: If the PCs refuse to attend the ceremony, Tonat Shar hurriedly finds them afterward, explains what happened, and threatens to jail the PCs for somehow having had a hand in the disastrous events. If they want their reward, he says, they'd better help put Daneel back in his right mind.

THE DARK ☉ F I+ ALL

Dispatser empowered Zaggutch to take the form of a distilled spirit, charging him with ruining Daneel's career as a paladin by committing evil acts that'll be attributed to the Smiter of Fiends. If Zaggutch also stops the Harmonious Ascension – perhaps permanently, if the townsfolk remain emotionally shattered – he'll be up for promotion in the archduke's ranks.

If the PCs manage to drive Zaggutch out of Daneel (see below), the fiend's spirit tries to take over another body (which takes one round) and continues to disparage the tenets of good and harmony. Zaggutch's spirit form can't harm the PCs; he can only attack while in command of a host body, using the host's equipment (the DM can equip host bodies as desired.)

ZAGGUTCH'S POWERS: While in a host body, Zaggutch retains his own spell-like abilities (including those common to all baatezu), saving throws, attack rolls, *fear* aura, magic resistance, morale, and alignment. The body retains the host's hit points and physical strengths and weaknesses (though no special abilities of the host). Statistics are given below for Zaggutch while in Daneel and while in spirit form.

Note that because Fortitude is stuck between planes, Zaggutch can't *gate* in reinforcements or teleport beyond the surrounding wall of the town – fact is, all methods of entry or exit (physical or magical) are cut off until Fortitude settles in either Arcadia or the Outlands. This also means the PCs can't leave, a fact the party can learn from frightened residents shouting that the town's "trapped between planes."

DRIVING ZAGGUTCH OUT: The death of a host inflicts no damage on the fiend but forces him from the body. If the PCs use magic, the DM should follow these guidelines:

- ◆ Spells/effects that dispel evil or magic merely force Zaggutch to spend the rest of the round regaining full control of his host body; the fiend can't attack, and attacks on him are made with a +4 bonus.
- ◆ Spells/effects to send Zaggutch back to his own plane merely drive him out of the host body; no one leaves the town while it's stuck between planes.
- ◆ Spells/effects that bind a host or affect his mind (*charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, etc.) drive Zaggutch from the body.

CAPTURING ZAGGUTCH: While in his spirit form, Zaggutch can't pass through any solid magical substance. Thus, the PCs may be able to trap him within a magical helmet, a suit of sealed magical armor, or some other magical container.

THE SWORD: Now that Disputer's *gate* spell has been used, it can be detected on the sword by any spells or similar effects that locate and identify conjuration or summoning magic – magic that's not a normal part of *Guardian*. What's more, while Zaggutch is in control of Daneel, the sword loses most of its special abilities, functioning only as a +2 weapon.

ZAGGUTCH IN DANEEL: THACO 7; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 + 2 (long sword); AC -1 (*plate mail* +3); hp 74; MV 12; SA fear; MR 50%; SZ M (6 feet tall); AL LE; ML fearless (19); XP n/a.

Spell-like abilities: *detect magic*, *detect invisibility*, *fireball*, *hold person*, *improved invisibility*, *polymorph self*, *produce flame*, *pyrotechnics*, and *wall of fire* (each once per round); *symbol of pain* (once per day); and *wish* (once per year).

ZAGGUTCH'S SPIRIT: AC 0; HD 13; hp 66; MV Fl 18 (A); SA fear; MR 50%; SZ T (1 foot diameter); INT exceptional (16); AL LE; ML fearless (19); XP 4,000.

Spell-like abilities: none.

REIGN OF MADNESS

Zaggutch intends not to physically destroy Fortitude or its residents, but to undermine their faith by committing acts of evil. With each successful act, Fortitude slides a bit closer to the Outlands; the gate's green flame dwindles and the surrounding mountains and trees become more airy. Observant PCs can note the changes and realize what's happening.

The PCs can block Zaggutch's campaign of terror, halting the town's regression, but Fortitude can't move all the way into Arcadia until they confront and defeat Zaggutch in the Confessional (see "Facing the Fiend", page 62).

The townspeople, easily swayed by Daneel's high Charisma and accustomed to having great respect for the paladin, remain confused and susceptible to Zaggutch's tricks. They can offer little aid, other than to alert the PCs with their anguished shouts ("Daneel's in the Boneyard," etc.). Harmonium troops are too busy quelling disturbances in other parts of the city to be on hand for any of the party's battles.

Below are a number of encounters in which the PCs can face off against Zaggutch; the DM's free to add others to build tension before the final confrontation.

DM NOTE: It's not necessary to run all of these encounters or run them in any particular order. Just let the PCs try to stop the madness for as long as game play remains exciting and enjoyable.

MARCH OF THE UNDEAD

Zaggutch appears in the Babbling Boneyard (Area 5) and uses his *animate dead* spell to raise 1d6 skeletons and 1d2 zombies each round until the PCs arrive.

The enchanted gravestones rattle off the praises of the deceased even as the undead monsters rise up out of the ground and stumble into the streets. Daneel stands in the cemetery, laughing at the absolute horror on the faces of the townspeople scattering in fear. "D'ja think these traitors were the best among ya?" he shouts. "Well, look at 'em now! They've come up out of their graves to show ya flaggoes what's really waiting for any leatherhead who puts his faith in good sods!"

Zaggutch continues to raise undead until personally attacked by the PCs or until he's raised 30 skeletons and 10 zombies, at which time he teleports away. The undead pursue and attack the townspeople unless destroyed by the PCs.

SKELETON (VAR): THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword); AC 7; HD 1; hp 6 each; MV 12; SD immune to poison and cold-based attacks, half damage from edged weapons; MR immune to *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, and death magic; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT non (0); AL N; XP 65.

ZOMBIE (VAR): THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; AC 8; HD 2; hp 13 each; MV 6; SD immune to poison and cold-based attacks; MR immune to *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, and death magic; SZ M (6 feet tall); INT non (0); AL N; XP 65.

A SKY AFIRE

Zaggutch teleports to the top of the Orb of Day and Night (Area 6), where he uses his *pyrotechnics* ability to create frightening explosions of fireworks and flame across the sky, blinding and scattering the townsfolk.

"This is the kind of glow ol' Daneel likes now! The kind that's hot, and burns, and sears! That's what clears the mind and cleans the body!"

Zaggutch uses his *wall of fire* ability to surround three citizens (Pl/var h/O/Ha/LG) in a ring of flame 20 feet high and 20 feet in diameter, then teleports away. The ring dissipates in ten rounds, but the screaming sods within die from the heat if not rescued within three rounds. Any PC walking through the ring suffers 2d6 points of damage; any PC within the ring sustains 1d4 points of damage per round.

FALSE ALARM

At some location in the city, Zaggutch uses his *advanced illusion* ability to make it look like a number of aasimon – devas and planetars – emerged from a gate to rescue the town, but immediately caught fire and fell to the ground, writhing helplessly in agony.

Daneel waves mockingly at the burning agents of good. "Hey, flaggoes, yer just not needed here. I guess the truth of it all makes ya a bit hot under the wings, eh?" Then he addresses the stunned onlookers: "Not too useful, are they? It's about time I put a few of 'em in their place."

The thermal component of the illusion makes the flames and heat seem real; the frightened townsfolk hover nearby but don't approach the aasimon. The PCs must prove the illusory nature of the spectacle to the assembled crowd. Any PCs who actively try to disbelieve the illusion can save vs. spell; a successful disbeliever may influence other viewers, each of whom can then save vs. spell with a +4 bonus.

Zaggutch remains at the scene to "taunt" the illusory aasimon, teleporting away only if attacked or if the illusion is broken.

GENTLE PERSUASION

Zaggutch uses his *charm person* ability to convince citizens to do their part against the "wrongheaded" forces of harmony. Desperate to place their foundering faith in what they still see as the paladin Daneel, the poor sods can't resist the spell: They begin



tearing up the white tiles of the roads, shouting out rude slogans against the Harmonium, and breaking into fistfights.

By the time the PCs arrive, Zaggutch is directing a citizen to rip up a flowerbed; the fiend immediately teleports away, leaving eight dwarves under his influence, all of whom act independently of the others. The PCs must give each dwarf — one at a time — a good reason to stop performing his or her particular action and make a Charisma check at -2; with each success, the next attempt gains a +1 bonus to the check. A failed check means the victim immediately attacks the PCs (victims also fight back if attacked first).

A PC who tries to dissuade an attacking victim can make a Charisma check at -4; success indicates the sod stops fighting, but resumes the action suggested by Zaggutch. A successful *dispel magic* frees a charmed victim, and any who are bound or held for five rounds also shake off the effects of the spell.

CITIZEN (8) (Pl/VAR D/O/FO/LG):

THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3 (hands); AC 5 (chain mail); HD 1; hp 6 each; MV 6; SZ M (4 feet tall); INT very (12); AL LN; ML elite (14); XP n/a.

FACING THE FIEND

After the PCs have had a chance to fight the effects of Zaggutch's evil throughout the town, the DM should run their final encounter with the fiend: a showdown in the Confessional in full view of a captive audience. A frightened dwarf shouts that Daneel's in the Confessional; there, the PCs find Daneel strutting about on the low, round stage, speaking to the hundreds of calm citizens filling the seats.

"Our powers've failed us! D'ya really think they care if we push off into their blasted plane or not? D'ya really think they'd spend a thought over whether we live or die? Guess again, berk — ya've been under their thumbs so long ya can't see the truth in front o' yer face. Peace? Harmony? Don't make me laugh, flag- goes! It's all dead — just look at me!"

Zaggutch's using an ability granted by Dispatser similar to (but more powerful than) an *enthrall* spell to mesmerize the crowd, all of whom give the paladin their undivided attention as a result. Any PCs who enter the Confessional must successfully save vs. spell at +4 or become enthralled themselves (PCs save with a bonus because they don't share the crowd's natural reverence for Daneel). Enthralled individuals — whether PCs or crowd members — take no action until 1d8 rounds after Zaggutch stops speaking, and the fiend won't stop unless forced. However, enthralled PCs can be roused by comrades who make a successful Charisma check at -4.

Nonenthralled PCs may descend to the stage and fight the fiend in Daneel's body, who uses all the powers at his disposal to humiliate and destroy the party. In addition, a PC not engaged in direct fighting can try to rally the crowd.

HE WAS A PERFECTLY NICE PALADIN.
KEPT +Θ HIMSELF.
NEVER BΘ+HERED ANYΘNE.

I GUESS IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY —
IT'S +HΘSE QUIET +ONES YOU'VE GΘ+
+Θ WATCH ΘU+ FΘR.

— A CITIZEN OF FORTITUDE,
COMMENTING ON DANEEL'S RAMPAGE

RALLYING THE CROWD

A PC can try to convince the crowd to tumble to what's really happening and give their hearts and minds back to Daneel.

If the DM thinks the PC's argument is sound, the cutter gets to make a Charisma check. Success

indicates that a few audience members (as role-played by the DM) shout out support to Daneel, reminding him of his devotion to peace and harmony. Failure indicates the audience remains unmoved.

If the PC succeeds in rallying the first members of the crowd, her next attempt to do so gains a +2 bonus to the required Charisma check, thanks to the cumulative effect on the audience.

For each round in which the audience calls out to Daneel, the paladin's subjugated spirit gains strength, and Zaggutch must focus on reasserting his control over the body. During that round, Zaggutch can make no attacks, and all PCs make their attack rolls with a +4 bonus.

DM NOTE: The crowd's shouts are effective only if Zaggutch is busy fighting members of the party. Otherwise, the fiend's control over Daneel is too strong to be weakened by verbal assaults.

ZAGGUTCH'S TACTICS

The fiend won't teleport away from the fight, figuring he wins either way: If he kills the PCs, the crowd loses even more faith in the paladin; if the PCs kill Daneel's body, Zaggutch can just jump to another host.

At some point during the fight, he tries to trick the PCs into thinking Daneel's regained control:

The paladin suddenly stops fighting and begins to tremble. He shakes his head, blinks, and looks around as if seeing his surroundings for the first time. "What — what's going on?"

If any of the PCs cease fighting, Zaggutch tries to catch them off guard with a surprise attack — *"See what happens when yer good?"* — and resumes the battle with full intensity.

If Daneel's body is reduced to 12 or fewer hit points, Zaggutch's spirit really does leave the body and relinquish control to Daneel — intending for the paladin to be fully conscious of his imminent death. Any PCs who make successful Intelligence checks see a small red ball of light emerge from Daneel's head; all PCs experience the following:

"Stop, stop!" cries the paladin, throwing down his sword. "The foul spirit has. . . has. . . it is I — Daneel. . ." The man collapses at your feet.

Zaggutch's spirit tries to enter the body of a random audience member and continue to disillusion the crowd, repeating this trick until finally captured or killed.

DM NOTE: Zaggutch won't leave Daneel if the paladin's body is imprisoned or held. Fact is, the fiend tries to rally any nearby townspeople to rescue him from the hands of the "evil bashers" (the DM can decide if and how the onlookers comply).

THE FATE OF FORTITUDE

Not knowing the dark of Dispat's plan, the Harmonium simply thinks that Daneel's turned stag on the faction, believing he's been driven barmy by the vicious attack in which he lost both his arm and *Guardian*. The Hardheads want Daneel scragged, tried, and executed for blowing the Harmonious Ascension.

Once the PCs have defeated Zaggutch (by capturing or killing the spirit), Harmonium troops arrive and grab Daneel, dragging him to the Town Square for an immediate public forum on his crimes. Any PCs who try to intervene are told they can make their case after the paladin's been charged.

Thousands of townspeople again begin to gather around the pyramid, its weak and dim flame a pale reminder of how powerfully it once had burned, the mountains and trees that had begun to take shape outside the town now little more than blurry outlines against the gray sky. However, the murmuring crowd seems more disturbed by the sight of Harmonium guards on top of the pyramid, offering Daneel, Smiter of Fiends, as a prisoner for judgment.

The Hardheads charge Daneel with spilling innocent blood, committing evil and destructive acts, betraying the faction, and preventing the ascension of Fortitude into Arcadia. Daneel, wounded and dazed, has only vague recollections of what happened while he was inhabited by Zaggutch, and swears that someone – or something – seemed to take over his body. However, he accepts responsibility for his actions and agrees that he should be put to death.

At this critical juncture, the PCs can decide the ultimate fate of Fortitude by remaining silent or speaking in Daneel's defense.

REMAINING SILENT

If the PCs do nothing, the Harmonium – not realizing the consequences of their actions – successfully convinces the crowd that Daneel did, indeed, turn stag. The Hardheads persuade the crowd to call for the former paladin's death – the final straw in their loss of faith that propels the town back to the Outlands.

As the people turn against Daneel, dark ripples of despair and loathing seem to wash across the entire town. A low buzzing like a swarm of insects pervades your senses, a twisted reflection of the melody of peace that seemed poised to sweep the town into Arcadia. The green flame on the pyramid dwindles to the size of a halfting, its glow too dim now even for reading, and the spectral mountains and trees fade completely from the sky. The ground doesn't move, but the weight in your heart tells you that Fortitude's fallen back to its patch of dirt on the Outlands.

The DM should role-play the despair of various townspeople to make sure the PCs realize what's happened, then proceed to "Aftermath," below.

DEFENDING DANEEL

If the PCs speak in Daneel's defense, they can try to convince the Harmonium and the crowd of Daneel's innocence in the matter, and even inspire the townspeople to greater heights of solidarity by rallying them against the defeated forces of evil.

As evidence, the PCs can point out the glowing red spirit, their encounter with Zaggutch in the Iron Tower, the change in the paladin's manner of speaking, and the *gate* spell on the sword (if they found it). PCs who help defend Daneel in spite of their align-

ment serve to increase the collective harmony of the gathering.

What's more, if the PCs captured or killed Zaggutch's spirit in front of onlookers, those witnesses tell what they saw, adding to the crowd's acceptance of the party's argument. Presenting and killing the captured spirit in front of the crowd is even better (besides, the town might not slide into Arcadia if the fiend's spirit is still alive).

The DM should try to make a decision based on the quality of the role-playing. If the PCs vigorously defend Daneel and rouse the crowd into a state of lawful harmony, the scales tip and Fortitude slides into Arcadia. However, if the DM wants to measure the success of the arguments more exactly, he or she can require the PCs to make an initial successful Charisma check at +10 and add a +2 bonus to subsequent checks for each bit of "evidence" presented to the crowd.

In any case, if the PCs are successful, read or paraphrase the following:

As you speak, you notice the green flame atop the pyramid growing larger and larger, consuming the sky in a jade inferno that warms your skin thoroughly without making it shed a single bead of sweat. The ghostly trees that hovered insubstantially outside the town solidify into mighty oaks, and the wispy mountain peaks crystallize into a gleaming range of ice-capped cliffs. A silent song from the assembled thousands fills your heart, and as the flames slowly recede from the sky, you see the smoky gray haze has been swept away, in its place a field of flawless blue.

The DM can role-play the delight of the townspeople to make clear what's happening to PCs still in the dark, then proceed to "Aftermath," below.

DM NOTE: If the PCs killed Daneel during their battle, the Hardheads simply drag his corpse to the Town Square and posthumously charge him with the crimes. The PCs can still try to explain the dark of the situation and rally the crowd toward lawful harmony, but they have a much harder time. The DM can insist on top-notch role-playing or saddle the PCs with even heavier penalties on their Charisma checks.

AFTERMATH

If the PCs helped push Fortitude into Arcadia, the Harmonium is, at first, annoyed that the party dared to challenge their accusations against Daneel. However, once the results become clear, the faction hails the PCs for managing to defeat the plot against the Ascension, never realizing that Daneel was the primary target.

Tonat Shar gives the PCs the full amount of the promised reward for delivering the sword and can even be talked into upping the jink another 2,500 gp for the party's rescue of the town. The dwarfsmith Grimbrech Stonehammer escorts the PCs to the halls of Mount Clangedin, where each PC gets to choose one magical item from the dwarves' vast armories. (The DM can specify whatever weapons, armor, or other items he or she wishes to have among the choices.)

Daneel is stripped of his status as a paladin. However, because Daneel's evil actions were magically influenced, an agent of the power Marduk permits him to undertake a dangerous quest to atone for his misdeeds; if he's successful, his status will be restored. The agent asks the PCs to accompany Daneel on the quest to atone for bringing the tainted sword to Fortitude in the first place (an ideal jumping-off point for a new adventure), but he doesn't compel the party to do so.

As the PCs eventually discover, Fortitude's ascension doesn't leave a hole on the Outlands. The town's not called "the Egg" for nothing — in a mysterious rebirth, another copy of the burg appears in the same spot on the Outlands, containing similar buildings but different residents. The DM can have a member of the Harmonium, lightheaded with joy over the Ascension, share the following legend with the PCs: Other versions of Fortitude have ascended before and many more will ascend in the future, but if the town goes over enough times (though no one knows how many), something wondrous will finally take its place on the Outlands.

BACK TO THE OUTLANDS: If Fortitude slid back to the Outlands, the mood in town is more grim. Daneel undergoes a public Ceremony of Disgrace and is summarily executed by the Harmonium for his crimes. Since the PCs did return the *holy avenger* to Fortitude as agreed, Tonat Shar delivers the promised jink — but not a coin more — and Grimbrech Stonehammer allows each PC to choose a magical item from Mount Clangedin. However, the Harmonium indirectly blames the PCs for bringing the tainted sword in the first place and treats them with hostility in the future. What's more, the PCs are warned they'll be scragged and imprisoned for life if they breathe a word of the failed Ascension to anyone.

STORY AWARDS

In addition to experience points gained throughout the adventure, the DM should give the PCs awards for completing the following tasks:

RETURNING THE SWORD TO FORTITUDE: All PCs receive 5,000 experience points.

STOPPING ZAGGUTCH'S CAMPAIGN OF EVIL: All PCs receive 2,500 experience points.

USHERING FORTITUDE INTO ARCADIA: The DM can award experience points based on role-playing and on whether each PC acted in accordance with his or her alignment. Among PCs whose alignment required them to *help* push Fortitude into Arcadia, those who did the most receive 3,000 XP, those who did less receive 2,000 XP, and those who did the least receive 1,000 XP. The same guidelines apply to PCs whose alignment required them to try to *prevent* Fortitude from sliding into Arcadia.

AN APPENDIX: ON BAA+OR AND +HE BAA+EZU

BAA+EZU POWERS

SPELL-LIKE ABILITIES: Most baatezu have individual spell-like abilities, usable at will once per round unless otherwise indicated. All baatezu except for lemures, nupperibos, and spinagons also have the following abilities, which are not listed in the statistics given throughout this adventure: *advanced illusion*, *animate dead*, *charm person*, *infravision*, *know alignment* (always active), *suggestion*, and *teleport without error*.

GATE: All baatezu except for lemures and nupperibos can use a *gate* ability to try to summon other baatezu. Statistics in this adventure note how often they can try, the chance of success, and the type and number of baatezu that can be summoned.

REGENERATION: Lemures, nupperibos, and abishai regenerate 1 hit point per round from most damage (refer to the PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix for more information). Lemures and nupperibos regenerate from any condition, including ashes. Cornugons, gelugons, and pit fiends regenerate 2 hit points per round.

TABLE I: DAMAGE INFLICTED ON BAA+EZU

ATTACK FORM	DAMAGE
Acid	Full
Cold	Half *
Electricity	Full
Fire	None *
Gas	Half
Iron weapon	None **
Magic missile	Full
Magical weapon	Full
Nonmagical weapon	None **
Poison	None
Silver weapon	Full †

* Gelugons suffer half damage from fire, none from cold.

** Lemures, nupperibos, and spinagons suffer full damage.

† Amnizu, cornugons, gelugons, and pit fiends suffer half.

TABLE II: EFFECTS ON MAGIC IN AVERNUS AND DIS

CONJURATION/ SUMMONING:	Caster must make successful spellcraft proficiency roll or Intelligence check at -5 to control conjured/summoned creature.
DIVINATION:	Attracts baatezu to caster. Results of spell presented as grimly as possible.
ELEMENTAL:	Avernus: Earth/fire spells intensified; air/water spells diminished. Dis: Earth/fire spells intensified; air/water spells impossible.
NECROMANCY:	Caster of healing/life spells must make successful save vs. spell. Spells to cause damage/pain or control undead cast as if caster were one level higher.
WILD:	No wild surges or spells above 4th level. All spells cast as if caster were one level lower.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
2nd Edition

PLANESCAPE™

SCAPE™

ADVENTURE

FOR 4 TO 6 CHARACTERS OF 5TH TO 9TH LEVELS

FIRES OF DIS

by
Steve Perrin and Ray Vallese

IN THE OUTER PLANES, A HOLY SWORD
CAN BE A FIEND'S BEST FRIEND,
ESPECIALLY WHEN THE OWNER WANTS IT BACK. . . .

Sneaking into the second layer of foul Baator ain't easy, but with a little help from the right high-up men, it can be done. 'Course, exactly who the right high-up men are can give a basher pause, so it's often best not to ask. But there's a sword to be found, and bloods needed to find it. Truth is, those who don't end up lost are sure to find out that no good deed goes unpunished!

Fires of Dis is a PLANESCAPE™ adventure for four to six characters of 5th to 9th levels. From Sigil, the City of Doors, the heroes plunge head-first into a dangerous journey across the Outer Planes. Their quest for a stolen sword leads them to the hostile gate-town of Ribcage, the treacherous plane of Baator, and the disciplined burg of Fortitude — a gate-town teetering between two planes, just waiting for something to tip the scales. Your player characters need wits as keen as their steel to brave the fires of Dis — and survive!

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