

CODEX OF THE INFINITE PLANES

VOLUME XVIII: NINE HELLS OF BAATOR

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE PLANES OF EXISTENCE



CODEX OF THE INFINITE PLANES



THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE PLANES OF EXISTENCE

VOLUME XVIII:

NINE HELLS OF BAATOR

WRITTEN & DESIGNED BY “WEIRD DAVE” COULSON

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

©2016 Wizards of the Coast LLC, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707, USA. Manufactured by Hasbro SA, Rue Emile-Boéchat 31, 2800 Delémont, CH. Represented by Hasbro Europe, 4 The Square, Stockley Park, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB11 1ET, UK.

VOLUME XVIII: NINE HELLS OF BAATOR

“Evil is a very real and tangible thing in the multiverse, and it stems from two primary sources – the raw chaos and unbridled emotion of the Abyss and the measured competence and premeditation of the Nine Hells. I believe evil – true evil, the antithesis of good – does not exist without both of these opposing views. It’s the Nine Hells that truly earn the title of evil, however. There, the devils and other creatures actively scheme for the downfall of others through webs of deception, murder, and calculated action. When comparing the Abyss to the Nine Hells, it’s key to remember that the Abyss has infinite layers filled with terror while Baator has only nine – and those nine hold the same if not more evil as the Abyss. This is not a place for the sane or foolish.”

Issilda the Unbreakable

The Nine Hells of Baator represent pain, suffering, and never-ending torment, and some planar sages believe they are the original home to these dark tides and so much more. Across these nine layers sit the most wicked, depraved, monstrous beings in all the multiverse, beings which define the word “tyrant” in new and horrendous ways. Evil is the only word to describe Baator but even this word doesn’t do it justice – the evil in the Nine Hells is one born of calculation and premeditation designed only to destroy hope, truth, mercy, and other positive feelings.

Comparisons between the Nine Hells and the Abyss are apt for the two are both incarnations of ultimate evil. Whereas the Abyss creates horrors more bestial in nature and design, Baator plays upon many elements of society, twisting them so far beyond their original purpose as to make them unrecognizable. A byzantine hierarchy exists in the Nine Hells where devils plot their advancement over their fellows in the worst ways possible, but all according to the Rules.

And the Rules rule all in the Nine Hells. They are not written down or inscribed on tablets, but serve instead as a fundamental force felt and obeyed across all the layers. All devils obey the Rules, they can’t not, and the Rules have a way of asserting themselves to any being on Baator regardless of origin. The Rules say each layer must have a ruler, a being who directs the forces of the devils and the landscape itself, and the path for attaining rulership goes through many, many different ranks.

Some say the Rules are a manifestation of the power of Asmodeus, the Lord of Nessus, the ninth and lowest layer of Baator. He is the only devil lord to truly sit in a position of divine power, but the schemes and rumors of Asmodeus point to him being as much of a prisoner of the Nine Hells as the other eight. But Asmodeus nonetheless wields more power than any other in Baator and it is by his whim much of the politics are pushed and arranged.

Devils are the most common inhabitants of the Nine Hells. They serve the Rules of Hell and the Lords of the Nine by virtue of their rank, and they advance only by adhering to the Rules to the letter through assassination, subterfuge, and forcing their superiors into positions of humiliation. A devil can rise quickly in the ranks, especially

through the lower forms of devilkind, by advancing the campaigns of their dukes and archdevils.

The greatest campaign of the Nine Hells is a titanic, sprawling conflict known simply as the Blood War. This is the struggle of law versus chaos playing out across the Lower Planes. The devils of the Nine Hells wage cataclysmic war against the demons of the Abyss. Which is stronger? Which ideology is more secure? The answer may never be known as the Blood War simply continues – some claim it always has and likely always will. Towards this struggle the Lords of the Nine command their forces, legions of devils and other monsters, against the demonic hordes of the Abyss. The conflict is constant and bloody, regularly spilling out across the multiverse to encompass greater swaths of the multiverse. Angels watch and curb, yugoloths sell their service to both sides, and mortals are swept up in the cosmic conflict that is bigger than any Material Plane world.

The greatest currency the devils of the Nine Hells have in this never-ending planar-wide Blood War are souls. Devils capture souls and transform them into new devils, and so devilish agents are sent out across the multiverse to collect souls. The Rules of Hell extend to bargains with these monstrous creatures so mortals that pledge their soul to a devil are signing up for an eternity of conflict, likely in the Blood War but perhaps as a pawn of a petty duke or lesser devilish lord.

There is no greater concentration of pure malice and wickedness than in the Nine Hells of Baator, the inhabitants of which find new and creative ways to bring malice and wickedness to the multiverse. It is a plane filled with pain, lies, suffering, horror, and struggle where the sweet release of death itself is wished but rarely granted.

LAY OF THE LAND

Baator holds nine layers, each with its own form of torture it inflicts upon all who tread upon its surface. More than almost any other plane, the Nine Hells themselves are alive with emotion and thoughts of torturous ruin. The plane doesn’t communicate directly with any being, save for Asmodeus and some of the more powerful Lords of the Nine, but that doesn’t mean it works in silence either.

Though each layer of Baator is infinite, planar sages describe the Nine Hells as an inverted mountain. The first layer, Avernus, is the broadest and most open, and as the layers descend they become more claustrophobic, more hemmed in by the sky and the infernal landscape. The lowest layer is Nessus filled with jagged canyons of black stone, where the sky is choked with clouds of ash.

AVERNUS

The top-most layer of the Nine Hells is the most frequently visited by outsiders and serves as a titanic battlefield in the never-ending Blood War. Countless ruined castles and fortresses sit amidst the broken landscape of crimson stone beneath an ever-red sky of anger and fiery ruthlessness. Rivers of blood weave in and around the small peaks and valleys created by the shifting landscape, though they pale in comparison to the waters of the River Styx.

There are more portals to the rest of the multiverse on Avernus than anywhere else in the Nine Hells, but when a devil commander discovers one of these they often move quickly to build a fortress around it in order to secure it from attacks by demons. The rule of Avernus has passed between multiple hands but currently sits with Zariel, a fallen angel who deposed the previous ruler Bel. Zariel rules from a floating basalt citadel and through arcane might and a deep connection with the layer she is able to rain fireballs down upon the landscape at irregular intervals.

Unlike the other Lords of the Nine, Zariel is not attended to by a host of devil dukes and duchesses. Instead, Avernus is home to the Outcast Dukes – powerful devils that have been banished from their realms in the lower Nine Hells and now must fight for scraps on the edge of the Blood War. Avernus is wracked by constant war and strife, and while Zariel rules, there is too much going on across the layer for her to keep her attention focused on all of it.

DIS

The second layer is Dis, dominated by the blackened iron walls and maze-like streets of the City of Dis. The city sits in a mountains basin hundreds of miles across and beyond the iron gates is nothing but despair-filled wilderness. Though, inside the iron gates is nothing but despair-filled streets.

Dis is one of the most stable of the Nine Hells, owed in large part to its ruler. Dispatier has ruled Dis from the Iron Tower for as long as living memory, and the canny archduke is known to be the most cautious of all the Lords of the Nine. He rarely leaves the Iron Tower, instead working with a massive network of spies and informants, including statues of the imposing infernal archduke placed all about the city and iron specters moving all about on mysterious errands.

The City of Dis is confusing and off-putting. Streets go nowhere or lead only in squares and circles while buildings shift subtly to confuse and confound travelers. Few travelers come to Dis so the streets are usually empty save for the teams of lesser devils on construction projects, tearing down buildings, repairing structures, and re-paving roads using vast vats of boiling oil and sludge. The walls of Dis are hot enough to burn mortal flesh in an instant.

MINAUROS

Below Dis squats the vast, stinking swamp of Minauros. This layer is a fetid nightmarish realm of disease and oozing decay over which rules Mammon, a serpentine archduke of exceeding vanity and pride. Great clouds of bloated flies buzz about the swamp constantly and the stinking morass and dismal weather makes travel difficult for any non-native traveler. Flesh-rending hailstorms are common and can beat down even unprepared devils if they're not cautious.

It's surprising that a fair amount of Minauros is actually urbanized, but all of the cities and fortresses are gradually sinking into the muck and their original construction predate modern memory. Each location works to curb the slow sink in its own way. The city of Minauros where Mammon rules uses hundreds upon hundreds of zombies as an unliving foundation, while Jangling Hiter – the City of

Chains – is actually suspended on massive iron links to the City of Dis on the layer above.

Minauros is also the home of the Witch-Queens of Hecate, who rule a fog-shrouded realm of forbidden magic called Aeaea. These powerful hags have held a long truce with Mammon and the two powers often work together towards common goals.

PHLEGETHOS

Phlegethos is the layer of the Nine Hells that most mortals imagine when they think about the plane of damnation and torture. Great volcanoes stab at the fire-filled crimson skies, pouring rivers of molten magma down their slopes and into bubbling lakes. Jets of flame erupt from the ground at irregular intervals and the air is filled with the screams of the tortured and damned.

Phlegethos is ruled by Belial and his daughter Fierna, a pairing that has given new life to the archduke's schemes and plots. Fierna's Palace is a tower of crystalline stone wreathed in blue flames filled with prisoners and slaves that serve the archduchess' every wild whim. Belial watches and plots from the city of Abyrimoch nestled within the caldera of an always-active volcano. That obsidian city also houses the Diabolical Courts, an independent institution designed to settle disputes between devils.

STYGIA

The frozen layer of Stygia is a realm of enormous ice floes, titanic icebergs, and a howling wind that freezes blood. The River Styx is said to originate here, though truthfully none know for sure its source, but the oily black water is easily distinguishable from the surrounding dark waters. The river cuts through glaciers, many large enough to support cities, and winds through the sea itself.

The ruler of Stygia is Archduke Levistus who is imprisoned in an enormous glacier. He was once overthrown by Asmodeus and imprisoned in the icy tomb, but Baatorian politics brought him back to the status of a Lord of the Nine. It did not, however, free him, and Levistus control the layer and his forces from inside the frozen prison. The former rule of the layer, Geryon, still skulks around Stygia, plotting his revenge and return to power.

Tantilin is an impressive city carved completely from a massive glacier, but it was the seat of Geryon's power and since the archduke's fall the city has collapsed without a ruler. One of the more curious sites on Stygia is Ankhwugaht, the realm of Set, a mysterious deity of snakes and treachery. This realm sits on an enormous earth chunk scoured lifeless by the frozen winds, which also created fine black sand that gets blown around the tombs, obelisks, and pyramids that fill the island.

MALBOLGE

No layer of the Nine Hells has seen more turnover among the Lords of the Nine than Malbolge, the sixth layer. The current ruler is Archduchess Glasya, daughter of Asmodeus, who replaced the only non-devil to rule in the Nine Hells, Malagarde the Hag Countess. Others have ruled over Malbolge in the past, and with the way Glasya openly defies her father, it's not unreasonable to think that

her time is limited at the top as well.

The rocky surface of Malbolge sits at an angle, like the slope of a plane-sized mountain, creating numerous rock avalanches that can catch the unwary and bury them beneath tons of broken stone. Great lakes of poisonous bile dot the sloped landscape, and Glasya has been known to harvest potent poisons from these to use across the multiverse.

When Malagarde the Hag Countess was deposed, Asmodeus turned her into a literal feature of Malbolge. The night hag ballooned out to incredible proportions before being consumed by the land itself, only to have parts of her regurgitated across the broken landscape. Ten enormous ivory towers representing her fingers emerged in one location, and her skull now serves as Glasya's personal fortress.

MALADOMINI

Whatever Maladomini once was, it is now an apocalyptic wasteland. Ruined buildings and destroyed cities squat in squalor and decay amongst sludge-choked rivers. Many of the ruins suggest inhabitants as large as giants but none now in living memory remember any of their names. A stench pervades Maladomini reminiscent of rot, which might explain the truly frighteningly large clouds of black flies that swarm over the skies.

Maladomini is ruled by Baalzebul, the Lord of Lies and Flies, whose lower body was transformed by Asmodeus into an enormous slug. No other Lord of the Nine has tried usurp Asmodeus as many times as Baalzebul but somehow he has retained his rulership over the seventh layer. From his Palace of Filth, this Lord of the Nine wallows in sloth, hating his fellow lords but taking little action against them anymore. Most of the other archdukes pity the once powerful Baalzebul but few seem willing to claim his broken and wretched layer.

Maladomini does hold a surprising haven for malcontents across the multiverse – the city of Grenpoli. There, the Rules of Hell have dictated no violence be done, with powerful wards forbidding weapons of any kind, and any creature in pursuit can find respite there for as long as they stay. Political power is king in Grenpoli as words supplant weapons as the tools of getting ahead.

CANIA

Those that think Stygia is cold are in for a deadly shock when it comes to Cania, the eighth layer of the Nine Hells. Here, no water moves unless its frozen, and great glaciers crash into each other, pushed by elemental forces of death and enormous blizzards with ice-shards capable of rending flesh from bone. Locked in many of the glaciers are frozen cities, the discarded trophies of Cania's lord, where foolish travelers can find some sanctuary from the deadly cold.

Mephistopheles rules Cania, and his ambitions and plots are exceeded only by Asmodeus himself. The Archduke of Cania has his eyes on the throne of Baator itself, and has worked carefully and methodically across eternity to position himself to take advantage of every opportunity. For Mephistopheles, it's not a matter of if Asmodeus makes a grave miscalculation, it's when.

For being the lord of the coldest layer of the Nine Hells, Mephistopheles is the creator of the diabolic

element known as hellfire. This fire burns not with fire but with pure pain, and his dedicated disciples of the art – the Circle of Hellfire – work to spread the power of Mephistopheles across the multiverse. Deep within the Citadel of Mephistar, Mephistopheles' personal abode, new and terrible means of using hellfire are being developed constantly.

NESSUS

The lowest layer of the Nine Hells is the least visited. From what has been gathered, Nessus is a cramped, crowded landscape of blackened earth pitted with miles-deep canyons and gorges that lead to an eternal and endless darkness. The pits of Nessus have birthed monsters out of a devil's nightmare, and from his layer rules Asmodeus, the Lord of the Nine.

Asmodeus's throne rests in Fortress Nessus at the end of a maze-like canyon called the Serpent's Coil. It is said no mortal has visited this unholy site without the express permission of Asmodeus, and any who dare travel to Nessus itself are often overwhelmed with a sense of utter despair that eats away at even the stoutest of resolves.

Overhead, Nessus is lit by a black orb that sheds darkness across the entire layer. Known as the Nighted Sun, it has been confirmed that Asmodeus keeps a prison in the orb for special betrayers – and there is rumors of a treasure vault there as well.

CYCLE OF TIME

There is no cycle of time in the Nine Hells. Each layer is locked in its day-night position, with most sitting at a dusky twilight. Nessus is famous for its black orb that sheds night, while Avernus and Phlegethos are both lit as bright as day because of their fiery landscapes.

SURVIVING

The Nine Hells are the antithesis of hope and joy, and every layer has a unique and deadly way to destroy travelers. Refer to the Hazards & Phenomena section for details on the perils each layer holds.

GETTING THERE

Access to the first layer of the Nine Hells, Avernus, is relatively straightforward. Many portals exist across the multiverse that lead to that first blasted broken land, with some spontaneous gates and other permanent portals. When a new portal is discovered by the devil forces of Avernus, they move quickly to control it by building a fortress around it as soon as possible.

At least when they can. Random portals appear from multiple layers of the Abyss, sending forth demonic forces in waves of brutality meant to break down the devilish holds through sheer numbers and bestial ferocity. Zariel, the lord of Avernus, tries to keep these pushes in check through the use of her lesser dukes and barons.

There is no documented portal that leads to the lower Nine Hells from outside Baator. Conduits, portals, and gates exist from Avernus to all the lower layers, some more secret than others, and this natural chokepoint makes accessing the rest of the Nine Hells a difficult prospect. The Lords of the Nine have ways of creating one-way portals that lead out of their respective layers, and some of the more powerful (Mephistopheles and Asmodeus specifically) can maintain these for periods of time through arcane might, but they all inevitable collapse or are closed deliberately.

TRAVELING AROUND

Non-devils traveling on any layer of the Nine Hells attract the wrong kind of attention from the beings in charge. Beyond the threat of sky fireballs, hailstorms, flame eruptions, and more natural hazards unique to each layer (and found in more detail under Hazards & Phenomena), getting noticed by the wrong devil in Baator can create real trouble for those not looking for it.

Politics are a major component of devil existence in the Nine Hells, and new travelers – especially powerful adventurers – can tip the scales of balance in any one's favor. Whether it's being followed by agents of the layer's archduke or another scheming devil noble, there are few places to go across the Nine Hells that isn't watched or scrutinized. And the ones that aren't are not particularly friendly to travel, such as the swamps of Minauros, the frozen glaciers of Stygia, or the fly-covered ruins of Maladomini.

The River Styx winds through the first five layers of the Nine Hells, providing one of the more stable routes into the lower realms. Like everything else on Avernus, it's part of a battlefield – past, present, or future – so control of the River Styx changes based on the day and the region. In Dis, the Styx's flow runs through iron channels in the great dismal city, whereas in Minauros it mixes with the polluted swamps. It goes no lower than Stygia, flowing into frozen glaciers and below the icy sea before disappearing, though it reappears mysteriously in Nessus when Asmodeus wants it to.

THE POWERFUL AND MIGHTY

The Nine Hells have layers upon layers of power structures, from the very top with the Lords of the Nine all the way to outside interferences. This environment breeds powerful groups looking to gain an upper hand in whatever field they can.

CIRCLE OF HELLFIRE

In the frozen heart of Cania, the either layer of the Nine Hells, Mephistopheles has worked tirelessly to unlock a new and dangerous element called hellfire. This blue and white flame burns on a deeper level than fire, creating sensations of pure pain that can wrack the minds and

bodies of dragons, demons, and devils alike. While Mephistopheles is credited with the creation of hellfire, it is actually the responsibility of a cabal of powerful devil sorcerers now referred to as the Circle of Hellfire.

The Circle of Hellfire is an elite band of devils under the command of the Lord of Cania, though for the most part they are autonomous to the archduke's daily rule. They are charged with using and perfecting hellfire in any way they can, and towards this end they have devoted much time and resources to unlocking arcane secrets of Baator. Long ago, Baator was the home of a race of proto-devils called baatorians. It is their ruins that fill Maladomini's wasteland and their secrets that lay buried in Cania's ice.

The leader of the Circle of Hellfire is Zorazok, a barbed devil of extreme arcane skill who has mastered hellfire like no other in the multiverse. He is cruel and merciless but can be so focused on new and improved ways to use hellfire that he can ignore problems. It's only a matter of time before a fellow hellfire devil takes Zorazok out and claims the top leadership position, but for now the barbed devil enjoys the support of Mephistopheles. Zorazok rarely leaves the Citadel of Mephistar on Cania, preferring instead to communicate with the field teams via magic.

CULT OF THE MIDNIGHT DESERT

Stygia is a frigid layer but it holds a surprising realm few associate with the icebergs and ice floes – Ankhwugaht. This is the home of Set, an ancient god of serpents, upon a blackened plateau filled with pyramids and obelisks, giving the region its nickname as the Midnight Desert. Set is not a major player in the politics of the Nine Hells, but an insidious cult has grown up nonetheless. The Cult of the Midnight Desert counts many devils across Baator as its members, including many fang devils, and all worship in the shadows, advancing the causes of Set slowly and methodically.

The cult extends beyond the Nine Hells as well. A band of knights rooted out a corrupt priest in a temple in Arborea only to discover she was a secret member of the Midnight Desert. The Material Plane is rife with Set's influence, some subtle and others not so much, but the tendrils of the ancient god extend far and wide. What exactly are the cult's aims? Beyond extending the worship of Set, few understand their schemes. Even individual members are often isolated from the larger plans in order to keep the number of creatures that know the truth to a minimum.

It is widely believed that the Cult of the Midnight Desert has infiltrated the courts of Baalzebul and Fierna. For his part, Baalzebul doesn't seem to care or perhaps sees the presence of Set's worshippers as a potential gain to be exploited later – the canny archduke usually plays a long game with such opponents.

DARK EIGHT

The Blood War is the largest and longest conflict in the multiverse. If it were to end with either the demons or devils on top, it would be bad for everyone – either the demons overran Baator entirely, or the devils found a way stop the spread of demonic chaos and can turn their

efforts to other matters. The latter is the goal of the Nine Hells being worked upon by a group of brilliant military strategists called the Dark Eight.

Each is a pit fiend of extreme power and cunning, and though their leader fell to an assassination attempt many years ago (stories differ whether it was to a rival Dark Eight member or an imp that got lucky) the Dark Eight have remained steadfast in their goal of winning the Blood War. They were appointed by Asmodeus to focus solely on the conflict, and they can conscript any devil below an archduke into the war effort. They are in regular contact and meet together every year to discuss plans and strategies, though they have convened in emergency settings when tumultuous events required more careful planning.

The presence of a member of the Dark Eight in the court of an archduke is a bleak omen, for it means an offensive or defensive maneuver is eminent and the forces of the local ruler are going to be key. The pit fiends have their own political squabbles and ambitions, and many of them see their tenure in the Dark Eight as a precursor to full archdukedom, but they are largely above the politics of the Lords of the Nine. Their charge is winning the Blood War and no devil is above this goal. Except Asmodeus.

DIABOLICAL COURTS

The Rules of Hell govern the actions and inactions of devils, but that doesn't mean there are no disputes. Every devil pushes against the rules as far as they can, putting them in direct conflict with others and their superiors. When a dispute happens of critical severity, usually involving a contract between devils outside the regular chain of command, the affected parties can petition their case be heard by the Diabolic Courts.

Based in the molten city of Abriymoch on Phlegethos, the Diabolic Courts hear all manner of cases before teams of judges. The most ruthless and efficient is Judge Shamane, a paeliryon devil that simply devours advocates with frivolous arguments. All of the judges adhere strictly to the Rules of Hell and their decisions in disputed cases are final, recognized by the Rules of Hell themselves.

It is also possible for mortals who have entered into pacts with devils to petition the Diabolical Courts if they believe the pact has been broken. This is an incredibly rare case, and in these events the normal waiting period of years is cut down to just hours – and the results are rarely in the mortal's favor, though the Rules of Hell truly dictate the decisions of the Diabolical Courts.

HELLBREAKERS

The stories are unbelievable, from a thief who broke into the command barracks of the Dark Eight on Avernus to steal plans for a new assault on a tactical target to someone finding and stealing the blood-encrusted Goblet of Dark Pleasure from the treasure house of Dispater. They are just too unbelievable, but they also happen to be true and the work of the Hellbreakers – elite thieves who plunder from devils wherever and whenever they can.

There is little organization to the Hellbreakers. In order to join, a new recruit has to be trained by an experienced

member, and this is the only way their secrets pass on. The treasure and booty of Baator is as ill-gotten as the souls bartered for under devilish contracts, so the Hellbreakers see it as their job to balance the scales. They are wild, crazy, arrogant, and unpredictable, working in small teams in precision jobs across the Nine Hells and wherever devils store their treasures.

The Hellbreakers try to hit the devils of the Nine Hells wherever it would hurt the most, but it would seem Mammon, the ruler of Minauros, is a favorite target. The serpentine archduke has standing orders for his troops to capture Hellbreakers alive so they can be brought to his palace – to date only a handful of the daring thieves have been caught. But from them, Mammon has learned a great deal, but this knowledge has served only to spur the Hellbreakers to greater and more daring feats of larceny.

LORDS OF THE NINE

The absolute powers in the Nine Hells are the archdukes and archduchesses that sit at the top of the power pyramid – the Lords of the Nine. Individually, these are powerful entities that have an almost divine connection to their home layer, allowing them to control and direct geographic and environmental forces nearly at will. The greatest among them is Asmodeus with true divine powers, though a few others are coming close (Mephistopheles being the closest).

Infernal politics in Baator demand the attention of each of the Lords of the Nine. Someone is always scheming against them, usually lesser devils looking to promote themselves to the top by impressing Asmodeus or killing an archdevil. And that's one of the secrets of the Lords of the Nine – they all serve at the whim of Asmodeus. The most powerful archdevil has deposed multiple lords over the countless centuries for displeasing him or simply because he grew bored of them.

Usually, though, Asmodeus does not flex this particular power unless absolutely necessary. The plotting and planning inherent in all devils, as decreed by the Rules of Hell, usually keep the Lords of the Nine occupied and distracted. And that's another secret – Asmodeus knows that if the other lords were to all band against him, they would have the strength to depose him from Nessus. But the devilish nature, inherently selfish, prevents such cooperation from coming together on such a massive scale.

Zariel. Originally an angel from the Upper Planes sent to watch over the Blood War, Zariel fell to the ultimate corruption of the Nine Hells. She spent a long time as the ruler of Avernus before being replaced by a powerful pit fiend named Bel, but the tides recently turned and Zariel rules Avernus once again from a massive floating basalt citadel. Bel still serves as a general, advising Zariel and directing the devilish forces in great campaigns in the Blood War.

Dispater. Dispater rules Dis from an imposing gothic iron citadel in the center of his city. He is paranoid and cautious but the best weapons dealer in all of Baator. Dis' forges pump out the sharpest blades and the most protective armor, but Dispater takes no chances. His network of spies runs deep in his iron city so that little

occurs in those heavy streets without his knowledge, and his trade connections with the rest of the Nine Hells puts him in a very comfortable position. Or so he believes.

Mammon. It is said no devil is as greedy as Mammon, the ruler of Minauros. He oversees the bulk of the soul trade in the Nine Hells and he has amassed a treasure hoard greater than any other in the plane, or so it is said at least. Mammon's greed and obsession with wealth has gotten him into trouble over the centuries but thus far he has retained his position as archdevil.

Belial & Fierna. The rules of Phlegethos are a strange study in duality. Belial and Fierna are father and daughter but their relationship is more intertwined than that, and the two play off each other's strengths and weaknesses perfectly. Fierna is charming, second only to Asmodeus it is said, while Belial is brutal and straightforward. Lately, Fierna has been spending a lot of time on Malbolge in the palace of Glasya, and the two have been working on delicate schemes that are making Belial more than a little nervous.

Levistus. Archduke Levistus ruled over Stygia long ago but angered Asmodeus, so was deposed suddenly and entombed in an enormous glacier. Another archdevil, Geryon, stepped up to claim lordship over Stygia, but recently Asmodeus reinstated Levistus – but didn't free him from his icy tomb. Now, Levistus uses his magical prowess to command the legions of Stygia while Geryon stalks around, undermining the new archdevil at every turn.

Glasya. Malbolge has seen a large number of rulers over the centuries. The previous ruler was Malagarde the Hag Countess, but in a fit Asmodeus threw down the night hag and replaced her with his own daughter, Glasya. Most see nepotism at its finest with this choice but Glasya has proven to be an effective and surprisingly unpredictable ruler, and Malbolge has shifted dramatically under her rule. She works to undermine her father, more openly than any of the other Lords of the Nine, and has thus far managed to not be deposed.

Baalzebul. Baalzebul is a tragic figure in the annals of the Nine Hells. He is an archduke of lies and deceit, perhaps the most intelligent devil in all of Baator, but his ambition long ago to depose Asmodeus failed. Now, more slug than devil, Baalzebul wastes away as ruler of Maladomini, a wasteland layer filled with clouds of flies that matches the mood of its once proud ruler.

Mephistopheles. Cunning, charming, and devious, Mephistopheles is the pinnacle of pride itself and would like to see nothing less than himself on the throne of Nessus. The frozen layer of Cania is his current home but this has not deterred his ambitions. Mephistopheles has so many plots spinning at one time across the multiverse that he can sometimes lose track of them himself.

Asmodeus. At the top of the Nine Hells pyramid (which, as represented by the layers themselves, is actually the bottom) sits Asmodeus, the ruler of Nessus and the greatest devil of them all. His background is a mystery, filled with legends and tall tales about a fall from grace and a grand betrayal, and the truth seems to be that he is as much a prisoner in Baator as its ruler. But his temples and cults have spread across the multiverse, especially in the Material Plane where wealthy nobles find worshipping

Asmodeus a profitable venture – as long as they're willing to pay the price.

OUTCAST DUKES

The dukes that serve the archdevils all scramble for power and prestige in the eyes of their lords, but sometimes they can fall out of favor. When this happens, the archdevil has several options. The least common is simple destruction, as every devil is considered valuable in their own way, so the best option is to demote them to a lesser form. Few drop as far as imps or lemures, but getting knocked down a few stations tends to take the fight out of their spirit for a time.

The other option is to exile the duke. This untethers the duke from the infernal hierarchy, preventing them from becoming anything more or less, and banishes them to Avernus. This way they can still serve in the efforts against the demonic hordes in the Blood War while curtailing their ambitions. These Outcast Dukes usually gather disenfranchised lesser devils to serve in their cause, carving out a small fiefdom in the blasted hellscape of Avernus, while they wait for their opportunity to rise again.

The Outcast Dukes are dangerous and unpredictable. The Rules of Hell still apply to them, as to all devils, but they are not part of a formal hierarchy anymore, so they are bound to no true lord. Zariel has been known to recruit these outcasts for daring missions and has promoted more than a few into her own service, but that is the best hope most of them have for changing their stations.

WITCH-QUEENS OF HEcate

Aeaea is a fog-enshrouded realm in the vast swamps of Minauros, and within that misty veil is the magic-filled region ruled by a group of seven powerful wizards known as the Witch-Queens of Hecate. Each was a mortal woman that traded their souls for immortality and great power from Hecate, a semi-mythical divine figure that powers all of Aeaea.

The Witch-Queens have legions of undead and devils at their beck and call, but their resources pale in comparison to the Lords of the Nine. Nonetheless, they have managed to make a name for themselves in the courts of Mammon, ruler of Minauros, and have provided specialized arcane services to many of the other archdukes. Fang devils come to learn the craft of Hecate, though few are actually accepted as pupils.

Ultimately, the Witch-Queens seek to expand the influence of Hecate in the multiverse, and they are not above using pawns and puppets in other planes to get what they want. Many powerful relics are said to be housed in the foggy realm of Aeaea which has always attracted the greedy attention of Mammon, but the followers of Hecate have their eyes on higher prizes.

CREATURES & DENIZENS

Devils are the most commonly encountered inhabitant of the Nine Hells, but each of the layers have more monsters to offer unwary travelers than most expect. Some are animalistic, born of the fetid evil that pervades Baator, while others are servants or tools of the devils themselves.

BILE SPEWER

The sixth layer of the Nine Hells, Malbolge, has undergone some traumatic changes in the recent past. The biggest change was the fall of Malagarde the Hag Countess, the layer's ruler, in a dramatic fashion – the night hag ballooned out to enormous proportions before erupting, sending her body flying across the mountains landscape. Where her blood fell, pools of bile quickly festered, and from these numerous disgusting locations arose the bile spewers.

A bile spewer is a fiend though not part of the devilish hierarchy. They appear as bloated corpses, pale white or green, with empty milky eyes, vomit-dripping mouths, and bellies filled with all manner of vile liquids. Their blood is poisonous to the touch, which spurts out at the slightest provocation, and they can spit acid churned from the pits of their fiendish stomachs. Bile spewers are barely intelligent, preferring to shuffle around the bile lakes while gorging themselves on the muck when left to their own devices.

Pool Attendants of Glasya. Since her appointment as the archduchess of Malbolge, Glasya has taken a keen interest in the lakes of bile and poison that have formed around the layer. She has an innate command over the bile spewers and has ordered many of them to work with her barbed devil subordinates to collect the poisonous liquid for use with her cults across the multiverse. Glasya has learned that different pools have different effects as well, ranging from agonizing death to paralyzation to debilitating intoxication. The archduchess has assigned Duke Suzgoth, a pit fiend of low intelligence, to catalog the various pools and their poisonous effects.

Sparks of Malagarde. There have been some incidents with the bile spewers that suggests they were not just born of Malagarde's blood when she died, but may actually carry a spark of the night hag's original life. Duke Suzgoth has had a few minor occurrences of bile spewers undertaking independent actions outside of the commands of the barbed devils, especially around some of the Hag Countess' fallen bones scattered about Malbolge's vast mountainside. So far, Duke Suzgoth has not mentioned these incidents to Glasya and has decided to deal with them himself, though so far he has taken no actions in the matter.

BILE SPEWER

Medium fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (8d8+40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	21 (+5)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities acid, fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Infernal

Challenge 4 (1,200 XP)

Poisoned Blood Spurt. Any creature within 5 feet of the bile spewer that succeeds on a melee attack against it is covered in poisonous blood, suffering 5 (1d10) poison damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bile spewer makes two attacks: one with its claws and one with its spit.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) slashing damage plus 11 (2d10) poison damage.

Spit. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) acid damage.

Spew Acidic Bile (Recharge 5-6). The bile spewer shoots a line of vomit and bile out to 60 feet. Creatures caught in the line must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, suffering 36 (8d8) acid damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

BLOOD TONGUE

The rivers of blood that cut through the broken landscape of Avernus, the first layer of the Nine Hells, are not just hideous to behold and disgusting to feel. They also hold very real dangers, the most devastating of which are the schools of blood tongues that swim in their thick crimson waters. Blood tongues are like leeches and look like enlarged muscular tongues, moving through the blood rivers by undulating their rough forms. The tip of the tongue holds a mouth that can open far wider than expected with two large teeth that it uses to latch onto victims. It then sucks the blood out as a vampire, leaving nothing but a dried husk when its done.

Where There's One. Blood tongues are rarely encountered singly, and the devils and demons that continually battle over Avernus know that the monsters are indiscriminate when it comes to which blood they prefer. The barges of siege weapons and other warmongering gear that float down the rivers of blood know to watch out for the monstrous vermin, who are known to jump onto the decks of passing ships in massive waves. Many demons and devils have fallen prey to a sudden swarm of blood tongues.

Amusing Pets. Some of the outcast dukes and lesser devils of Avernus have taken up the idea of taming blood tongues for their own amusement. Some use them as torture devices, while others seem to form a genuine bond with the monstrous beings – or at least as much of a bond as a devil can have. For their part, the blood tongues have little more than animalistic intelligence and simply look for their next meal wherever that may be.

BLOOD TONGUE

Small fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d6+12)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 11

Languages --

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Amphibious. The blood tongue can breathe air and water (including liquid blood).

Pack Tactics. The blood tongue has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the kobold's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage, and the blood tongue attaches to the target. While attached, the blood tongue doesn't attack. Instead, at the start of each of the blood tongue's turns, the target suffers 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the blood tongue regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if its hit point maximum is reduced to 0.

The blood tongue can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach the blood tongue.

BOG SHAMBLER

The swamps of Minauros are filled with all manner of horrors birthed from the depths of the blighted landscape. One of the more feared are the bog shamblers – great mounds of black sludge and poisoned roots mixed with the blood of the wicked and depraved that fell in the Minauros swamps. They resemble shambling mounds found on the Material Plane and elsewhere but a deep malevolence lurks in their infernal red eyes, and the rot of decay that lingers around can overwhelm non-devils quickly. Bog shamblers are also notoriously difficult to kill and regain their size and strength through fire.

Greedy as a Goat. Bog shamblers possess very basic intelligence, more than animals but not by much, but they are greedy to a fault. They seek out fresh life constantly to consume and are drawn to fire as a moth. The servants of Mammon, archdevil of Minauros, are known to lure bog shamblers into service with promises of mounds of rotting flesh discarded from the city's refuse. Since the creatures exist outside the devil hierarchy, Mammon has thus far been unable to directly control the bog shamblers but the monsters' natural greed and eternal hunger make them easily fooled.

Swamp Scavengers. Bog shamblers are not the quickest denizens of Minauros and rarely are they the first to a new kill, but they are marvelously adept at cleaning up. Bones, clothing, armor, flesh, it doesn't matter what type of waste is left behind, a bog shambler happily devours it all. Below the hanging city of Jangling Hiter, home of the kytons, an enormous number of bog shamblers gather waiting for easy meals to drop from the chained environment.

BOG SHAMBLER

Large fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 171 (18d10+48)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +3

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius) passive Perception 10

Languages Infernal

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Fire Absorption. Whenever the bog shambler is subjected to fire damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the fire damage dealt.

Infernal Fortitude. If damage reduces the bog shambler to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the bog shambler drops to 1 hit point instead.

Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the bog shambler must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the bog shambler's Stench for 24 hours.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bog shambler makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8+6) bludgeoning damage plus 9 (2d8) acid damage.

CINDERWIND

Cinderwinds are the very expression of hate and rage on Phlegethos, the fourth layer of the Nine Hells. Birthed from belching volcanoes and constantly erupting flame pits, cinderwinds are brutal fiends that attack weakness without mercy and descend upon any stranger in their fire-laden layer. They resemble air elementals, with orange and red burning embers flying around their vague forms that can transform in an instant to a massive hand or a leering face. Cinderwinds speak in little more than grunts and harsh cackles and take true delight in setting victims on fire.

Cursed by Belial and Beloved by Fierna. The lords of Phlegethos, Belial and his daughter Fierna, have wildly different relationships with the cinderwinds that inhabit their realm. Belial has always hated the things, largely because they are outside his direct control and the archduke despises things that are outside his control. Lake Fierna, on the other hand, has worked with the cinderwinds of Phlegethos to cultivate a bond with the cloud-like fiends. They are not loyal to a fault, not yet at least, but they do listen to Fierna when she speaks and mostly recognize her authority on the plane.

Duke of the Raging Winds. While cinderwinds are not part of the devilish hierarchy, recently a creature has risen up to claim the title of Duke of the Raging Winds, an honorific bestowed upon the supposed ruler of the cinderwinds. It hasn't been used or recognized for countless generations, and most of the fiends are leery of any who claim the lofty position. Thus far, the creature – whoever or whatever it is – has kept a low profile, living in a series of volcanic geysers far from the main areas of Phlegethos. Some cinderwinds have gone on to talk about the newcomer, however, and they talk about the return of a true power in the land, one that could even challenge the archdukes.

CINDERWIND

Large fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 112 (15d10+30)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Infernal

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Air Form. The cinderwind can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Insubstantial. Ranged attacks suffer disadvantage against the cinderwind because of its constantly shifting and insubstantial form.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The cinderwind makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 14 (2d8+5) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Inferno (Recharge 4-6). Each creature within a 30-foot sphere centered on the cinderwind must make a DC 16 Strength saving throw; creatures in the cinderwind's space make the save with disadvantage. On a failure, a target takes 21 (6d6) fire damage and is knocked prone. If the saving throw is successful, the target takes half the fire damage and isn't knocked prone.

CONFLAGRATION OOZE

Poisonous rivers of sludge wind through the cyclopean ruins that dot the wastelands of Maladomini, Nine Hells' seventh layer. Many horrendous monsters have been birthed from these pools of fetid evil but few are as destructive as the conflagration oozes. These horrendous oozes emerge when a particularly foul sludge river crosses too close to the many fires that burn across Maladomini's wasteland. Conflagration oozes are moving, living agents of pure destruction, melting and destroying everything they can in a spiteful existence of pain and suffering. Their globular forms shift constantly, with ribbons of red, orange, and black shooting through their amorphous bubbling masses.

Living Embodiments of Destruction. A conflagration ooze possesses a terrifying appetite for destruction, and they are responsible for the ruination or collapse of many of Maladomini's ancient structures. They are constantly hungry and have just enough intelligence to feel pain and suffering, feelings that drive them forward to consume and dull the emotions. While such situations are not uncommon across the multiverse, conflagration oozes use that drive to willfully destroy beauty, art, and creation. They are monsters in the purest sense of the word but their drive is not unrelatable.

The Nightmare Eye. Long, long ago, Maladomini gave birth to a conflagration ooze greater than that of its fellows. This massive behemoth ooze became known as the Nightmare Eye and it possessed an intelligence and purpose that attracted the attention of Baalzebul, the lord of Maladomini. The scheming Prince of Lies used the Nightmare Eye in a grand scheme to usurp Asmodeus, but the plan failed and as a result the Nightmare Eye was frozen in stone blocks that now stand in the wasteland. It still lives, trapped in a hundred blocks that radiate the heat of a volcano's heart but unable to free itself, but somehow it still communicates with other conflagration oozes around Maladomini. What revenge does the Nightmare Eye plan?

CONFLAGRATION OOZE

Huge ooze, lawful evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 209 (22d12+66)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	6 (-2)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities acid, fire, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages Infernal

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Amorphous Form. The ooze can occupy another creature's space and vice versa. It is not affected by difficult terrain.

Aversion to Cold. If the ooze takes cold damage, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the end of its next turn.

Burning Aura. Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the ooze suffers 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Killer Response. Any creature that starts its turn in the ooze's space is targeted by a pseudopod attack if the ooze isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ooze makes two pseudopod attacks.

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8+5) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Melt Ground (Recharge 5-6). The ooze emits an intense heat that causes the ground in a 120-foot radius centered on itself to warp, buckle, and melt, becoming sludge-like for 1 minute. The area is considered difficult terrain. Creatures affected by difficult terrain that start their turn in the affected area must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or have their walking speed reduced by half.

DEVIL, FANG

Schemers, sorcerers, spies, and so much more, fang devils are the arcane masters of the Nine Hells. They are humanoid in appearance, with black or green mottled scales over their serpentine bodies. The head of a fang devil is that of a hooded serpent, like a cobra, with a pair of horns curling over their hairless eyebrows. More than most other devils, fang devils dress in fine clothing and adorn themselves with jewelry, much of it magical, and they are never afraid to use their arcane arsenal to advance their interests. Delicate runes of eldritch power are tattooed into their arms and bodies, usually covered by robes, that form the source of their magical mastery.

Librarians of Hell. Many powerful dukes and most of the archdukes keep a contingent of fang devils on hand to attend to their libraries that contain their contracts with mortals and other beings. Some of the older archdukes, such as Baalzebul and Belial, keep a secret library filled with lore they've collected over the centuries, and these are tended to by only the most devoted of fang devils. Fang devils pride themselves on the size of their collection and they fight over the coveted positions in Maladomini and Phlegethos respectively.

Secret Spies of Set? With their superficial resemblance to snakes, it is widely feared that many fang devils are secret spies of Set, an ancient deity that dwells in the Midnight Desert on Stygia. Certainly some fang devils are agents of Set but most are not, as they all fall into the devilish hierarchy and must obey the Rules of Hell. Even dukes and archdukes who know better still keep most fang devils at arm's length for fear that they may be secretly communicating with Set, perhaps even against their will.

Arcane Masters of the Nine Hells. Fang devils are some of the most skilled spellcasters in the Nine Hells, second only to the highest ranking abishai and several of the dukes and archdukes. They crave magical power above all else, and have learned ancient ways to transform captured souls into pure arcane energy to power their infernal experiments. Unlike a traditional wizard, however, fang devils do not keep spellbooks, but instead transcribe their spell secrets onto their very bodies in a language known only to them.

FANG DEVIL

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 117 (18d8+36)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +5

Skills Arcana +9, Perception +6

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Infernal telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the devil's darkvision.

Magic Resistance. The devil has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting. The devil is a 13th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The devil has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *poison spray*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *chromatic orb*, *magic missile*, *ray of sickness*, *sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness*, *misty step*, *scorching ray*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *dimension door*, *greater invisibility*, *ice storm*

5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold*, *telekinesis*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate*

7th level (1 slot): *power word pain*

Poison Exploit. Poisoned creatures suffer disadvantage on saving throws against spells cast by the devil.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The devil makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage. If the target is a living creature, it must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the target becomes poisoned and suffers 27 (6d8) poison damage. On a success, the target is not poisoned and suffers only half damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) poison damage.

HELLWASP

Hellwasps are the vermin of the Nine Hells, found in almost all of the layers as constant pests and nuisances – that can quickly become deadly for non-fiends. They appear as large blood-red wasps, about 2 feet long, with the bulbous head, thorax, and abdomens separated by narrow strips of flesh. The abdomen is tipped with a wicked stinger and its front legs end in jagged claws as sharp as swords. Hellwasps are renown for their incessant droning that disrupts spellcasters and a potent painful sting that can reduce any non-fiend to a weakened shell.

Nightmarish Nests. Hellwasps live in nests built from the biggest corpses they can find, and it is not uncommon to find some bodies strung together and hollowed out by the fiendish insects to form one giant nightmarish home. Hellwasps bring food back to their nests to feed the young, and their preferred food is rotting meat of any kind.

Arcane Eggs. The eggs of the hellwasp are prized by wizards and alchemists across the multiverse as potent spell components. A *power word pain* spell using the eggshell of a hellwasp is said to last longer and cause even more debilitating effects, while even a simple *poison spray* cantrip can be enhanced to cause blindness in the targets. Retrieving the eggs is another matter entirely as the hellwasps seem uniquely suited to the nature of the Nine Hells and have not successfully reproduced outside of that plane to date.

HELLWASP

Small fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (10d6+10)

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages --

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Distracting Buzz. The hellwasp emits a buzzing sound to which fiends are immune. Any creature concentrating on an effect such as a spell that starts its turn within 30 feet of the hellwasp must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or lose their concentration. Creating an effect that requires concentration within 30 feet of the hellwasp must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or have the concentration ended immediately.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hellwasp makes two attacks: one with its claws and one with its stinger.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8+5) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) poison damage.

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6+5) piercing damage. If the target is a living creature that is not a fiend, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be wracked with debilitating pain for 1 minute. While under the effects of the pain, any speed the target has can be no higher than 10 feet, and the target has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks. If the target tries to cast a spell, it must first succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, or the casting fails and the spell is wasted. A target suffering this pain can make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turn, ending the effect with a success.

IRON SHADOW

By every rational account, iron shadows should not exist. They are bulky suits of iron armor, 10 feet high or bigger, but made entirely from a living insubstantial shadowy material. They float through the City of Dis as the secret spies and guardians of Dispater, dispatching justice and reporting crimes and treachery against the paranoid archduke. Silent as death and quick to strike to eliminate opponents, iron shadows are the will of Dispater given form.

Born of the Shadowcast Forges. The City of Dis is known renown for its enormous ironworks, with forges and blacksmiths producing the finest quality weapons and armor. Near Dispater's personal tower, in the deep bowels of the iron city, sits the archduke's secret Shadowcast Forges. Here, devils work in secret to create living iron that is insubstantial yet durable – the iron shadows. Dispater oversees the “birth” of these monsters personally by traveling via a series of underground tunnels that lead to and from his gothic Iron Tower.

Enforcers of the Iron Tower. Iron shadows are the will of Dispater in the City of Dis and beyond. The archduke of the second layer has sent individual iron shadows on missions to hunt down betrayers and root out deep-seated plots through the Nine Hells and beyond. And because the iron shadows are not true devils they are not as bound to the Rules of Hell so can be a little more loose with their administration of Dis justice.

IRON SHADOW

Large fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 105 (10d12+40)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	19 (+4)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

Skills Stealth +5, perception +4

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Infernal

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Amorphous. The iron shadow can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Innate Spellcasting. The iron shadow's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). The iron shadow can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *fear*, *invisibility*, *silence*

1/day: *mental prison*

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the iron shadow can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, the iron shadow deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the iron shadow that isn't incapacitated and the iron shadow doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The iron shadow makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.
Hit: 18 (2d12+5) bludgeoning damage.

SCREAMWRAITH

Asmodeus, the lord of Nessus, has many tools at his disposal and many creatures at his beck and call, but one of his favorites is the screamwraith. A screamwraith is the soul of a mortal creature bound forever in torment to the service of Asmodeus. They are the deadly playthings of the archdevil, who often uses them to harangue and harass powerful individuals across the multiverse. They appear as incorporeal humanoids composed entirely of insubstantial red and black mists, their mouths frozen in a permanent scream and a look of pure terror etched on their immortal faces.

Canyon of Infinite Screams. New screamwraiths created after a living creature is killed by the undead monster's exhausting abilities are born anew in the Canyon of Infinite Screams on Nessus, the ninth layer of the Nine Hells. There, beneath the Nighted Sun overhead, screamwraiths are doomed to an existence of horrendous torture, wailing and screaming in the maze-like region. Lower-ranking devils that displease Asmodeus are sent into the canyon for one day as a test, and thus far none have made it out in the timeframe.

A Scream in Time. As an entity older and more powerful than any other in the Nine Hells, Asmodeus has been referenced – directly and indirectly – by more prophecies across the multiverse than he can keep track of. One of those prophecies speaks of the “scream to end all screams, in a time when no scream can be heard, that heralds the changing on the throne of Nessus.” Many diviners and sages that study such lore believe this has something to do with the screamwraiths that serve the Lord of Nessus. Perhaps when the Canyon of Infinite Screams is empty of all inhabitants then Asmodeus will be dethroned? But then what is the “scream to end all screams”? Those that have sought the answers to these questions inevitably draw the conclusion that it has something to do with the Nessian canyon where the screamwraiths live, but none have gone there and returned.

SCREAMWRAITH

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 180 (24d8+72)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	22 (+6)

Skills Stealth +5, erception +4

Damage Resistances acid, cold, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities fire, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Infernal

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Exhausting Aura. Living creatures that start their turn within 5 feet of the screamwraith must succeed on a DC 18 Charisma saving throw or gain a level of exhaustion.

Exploit the Exhausted. Screamwraiths have advantage on attack rolls against targets that have one or more levels of exhaustion.

Incorporeal Movement. The screamwraith can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The screamwraith makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) slashing damage plus 22 (4d10) necrotic damage.

Primal Scream (Recharge 5-6). The screamwraith lets loose a primal scream, tapping into the infernal power of Nessus. Living creatures in the 60-foot cone must make a DC 18 Charisma saving throw. On a failure, the target suffers 55 (10d10) necrotic damage and gains a level of exhaustion. On a success, the target suffers half damage and does not gain a level of exhaustion.

Targets that die as a result of too many levels of exhaustion from the screamwraith's Primal Scream rise as a screamwraith on Nessus one hour later.

STYGIAN ICE SERPENT

Prowling the icy waters of Stygia, the fifth layer of the Nine Hells, the Stygian ice serpent is an alpha predator well-suited to its environment. Its long, legless serpentine body is covered in thick white fur that helps protect it from the cold, and its massive jaws exude frozen death along its razor-sharp fangs. The ice serpent's tail ends in twin blades that it uses to slash through ice and flesh but its most devastating attack is its breath weapon. Believed to have been adapted from the waters of the River Styx that cut through the Stygian sea like a black oil, the breath of the monster can render foes stupid and brainless, if only temporarily, but usually long enough for the ice serpent to feast.

Predators of the River Styx. While found primarily in the waters of the Nine Hells' fifth layer, Stygian ice dragons have been known to follow the current of the River Styx outside of the realm on hunting excursions. They prefer the cold but sometimes the waters of Stygia don't offer enough prey for the predators to hunt. Those that ply the River Styx regularly know how dangerous a Stygian ice serpent can be when hungry and desperate.

Zulkalath and Doomfrost. Stygian ice serpents devour any flesh, and since devils are the most common inhabitant of the Nine Hells the monsters feast on devils more than anything else. Such an attitude keeps most devils away from the deep waters of Stygia, but not the ice devil Zulkalath. Once a vassal of Levistus before the archduke was imprisoned in a glacier, Zulkalath found itself drawn to wilds of Stygia after the coup and ended up bonding with a particularly vicious ice serpent. Naming the creature Doomfrost, Zulkalath now rides the Stygian ice serpent throughout the layer in service to the restored Levistus, and the two love nothing more than hunting down the servitors of Geryon amidst the glaciers and icebergs.

STYGIAN ICE SERPENT

Huge fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 170 (20d12+40)

Speed 20 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, fire, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages --

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Amphibious. The serpent can breathe air and water.

Frigid Body. A creature that touches the serpent or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) cold damage.

Magic Resistance. The serpent has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The serpent makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target.
Hit: 27 (4d10+5) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) cold damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target.
Hit: 33 (6d10+5) slashing damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5-6). The serpent releases a 60-foot cone of green stupefying vapor. Living creatures in the area suffer 26 (4d12) psychic damage and must succeed a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or suffer the failed saving throw effects of the *feeblemind* spell for 1 minute. The target can make a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

HAZARDS & PHENOMENA

The Nine Hells are a dangerous place, and each of the its layers offer a different and horrifying way to maim, hurt, or simply destroy the unwary or unprepared. The devils and other creatures that inhabit each layer usually have their own ways of avoiding these hazards, at least all except one – the Rules of Hell, which binds all devils to their hierarchy and defines the structure of the Nine Hells itself.

AVERNUS: FIREBALL STRIKES

The first layer of the Nine Hells sees some of the most blatantly destructive hazards in all the multiverse. Enormous flaming spheres rain down from the sky, striking the scorched earth and leaving blackened craters in their wake. The devils and demons that turn Avernus into an eternal battlefield in the never-ending Blood War are generally all immune to fire, so the fireballs are little more than distraction. Other creatures are not as lucky.

An Avernus fireball streaks down from the sky and strikes a point, blossoming out to a 20-foot-radius sphere. Creatures in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, they suffer 28 (8d6) fire damage and are knocked prone, and if they succeed they only suffer half damage and are not knocked prone. The fireballs are irregular but seem to almost possess a will – they strike travelers, intruders, and strangers to Avernus more than the devilish legions.

DIS: WEIGHT OF THE WALLS

The City of Dis, which encompasses most of the layer of Dis, is filled with gothic, foreboding buildings, walls, and structures that loom over everyone with a sense of momentous importance. Every shadow seems to hold eyes and the dark corners of the streets hide unknown terrors waiting for a chance to leap out and strike. This environment creates a very real sense of dread that beats down on any traveler.

Non-devils that spend a short or long rest in Dis must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or lose the benefit of the rest, regaining no hit points, spell slots, or other abilities that reset on that type of rest. The paranoia of Dispat, the archduke of Dis, imbues the gothic structures of his city with the same sense of fear that creeps slowly into the hearts and minds of any who travel through the twisted narrow streets.

MINAUROS: HAILSTORMS

Many travelers are surprised to find the weather to be one of the more dangerous aspects in the swampy landscape of Minauros, the third layer of the Nine Hells. The thick, oppressive humidity and clouds of gloomy rain are cut occasionally by bursts of skin-flaying hail. It is widely believed the hail, composed of polluted ice chunks, to be the direct result of Dis above Minauros.

A Minauros hailstorm strikes without warning and inflicts 3 (1d6) slashing damage per round to any exposed creature. A hailstorm typically lasts 2d12 minutes but

occasionally longer bouts can pound the swampy terrain for up to six hours.

PHLEGETHOS: FLAME ERUPTION

Phlegethos holds many threats to life and limb for the unwary. Volcanoes erupt regularly, raining lava down in wide areas and spilling rivers of molten rock down blackened slopes. It is the layer most recognized for its fiery landscape, which also manifests as a random and dangerous wall called a flame eruption.

Flame eruptions occur when the ground of Phlegethos cracks and releases the built-up energy beneath in a crackling wall of fire and brimstone. The eruption takes the form of a 20 foot long, 20 foot high, and 1 foot thick fiery barrier. Creatures directly in the area of the wall must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, suffering 22 (5d8) fire damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. Moving through or touching the eruption inflicts 22 (5d8) fire damage without a saving throw. Each flame eruption lasts for 1 minute before subsiding as the ground seals back up over the fissure.

STYGIA: FROZEN WIND

The fifth layer of the Nine Hells, Stygia, is cold, filled with icy waters and glaciers, but that's not the greatest threat posed by the landscape itself. That honor belongs to the frozen wind, a force with an almost malevolent intelligence that chases down creatures through iceberg canyons and across blasted stretches of barren tundra. It is widely believed the frozen winds of Stygia are a direct manifestation of Levistus, a trick he learned since becoming entombed in ice.

When a frozen wind strikes, two effects take place. The first is the area is under the effects of strong wind, as detailed in Chapter 5 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* under Wilderness Survival. The second is biting cold, and creatures within the area must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, suffering 18 (4d8) cold damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. The saving throw must be repeated every minute a creature remains in the frozen wind. Bouts of frozen wind typically last 2d12 minutes.

MALBOLGE: STONE AVALANCHE

The slopes of Malbolge are rocky, precipitous, and prone to dangerous avalanches with little or no warning. It is true that the number of stone avalanches has decreased since the downfall of Malagarde the Hag Countess, but the landscape of the sixth layer remains unsteady and perilous for those traveling by land.

A stone avalanche covers a very large, sometimes as much as a mile or more wide, and every creature on the ground in such an event must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failure, the creature is buried beneath the jagged stones and rubble while suffering 26 (4d12) bludgeoning damage. In addition, they are incapacitated beneath a new layer of rocks 2d10 feet deep and begin to suffocate. Creatures that succeed on the save suffer half damage and are only restrained by the rocks until they free themselves as below.

Digging a 1-foot cube of rocks to free someone on Malbolge requires an action and a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Multiple creatures can dig in a single location to help free a trapped person.

MALADOMINI: CLOUDS OF FLIES

The seventh layer of the Nine Hells is a wasteland of ruined buildings and gutted streets. The wind is dry, the air is dusty, and everything holds a feeling of ancient decay and collapse. But the most striking feature of all are the clouds of black flies, swarming above and through it all in a never-ending macabre dance.

A cloud of flies on Maladomini can be distracting and downright dangerous under the wrong circumstances. Each cloud spreads out to cover an area many hundreds of feet wide, and until they descend down the constant buzzing disrupts concentration. Creatures concentrating on an effect must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or lose the effect they are concentrating on every minute they remain beneath the cloud. Creating an effect that requires concentration requires a DC 15 Constitution to succeed in the area.

If the cloud of flies descends fully, the entire area becomes heavily obscured by the buzzing fiendish insects in addition to the effects above. The buzzing takes on an otherworldly quality that eats away at the mind, inflicting 5 (1d10) psychic damage at the start of each creature's turn they remain in the cloud. A cloud of flies typically stays descended for 2d6 rounds before returning to the Maladomini skies.

Dispersing a cloud of flies requires creating a strong wind, such as a *gust of wind* or similar spell. Using such an effect pushes the cloud of flies back to the sky.

CANIA: DEATHLY COLD

The cold of Cania, the eighth layer of the Nine Hells, is deeper and more insidious than any other outside of the Frostfell between the Planes of Water and Air. The air is constantly dry and pulls the moisture out of travelers while freezing the very blood to make them sluggish and tired.

After each hour spent on Cania, creatures without cold immunity must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature gains a level of exhaustion. After every four hours in Cania's deathly cold, creatures without cold immunity gain a level of exhaustion. Long rests on Cania do not provide any benefit for creatures without cold immunity and usually end in frozen death.

NESSUS: UTTER DESPAIR

The deepest, darkest, most malevolent pit in all the multiverse, Nessus is the beating black heart of the Nine Hells and the home of Asmodeus himself. It is a realm of unimaginable despair that seeps insidiously into the hearts and minds of any who travel there. The effects are similar to Cania's deathly cold but work on a mental rather than physical level.

After each hour spent on Nessus, non-fiend creatures must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or gain a level of exhaustion. After every four hours on the layer, non-fiends gain a level of exhaustion, and long rests do not provide any benefit to non-fiends. Any non-fiend that dies on Nessus as a result of exhaustion has their souls trapped within the Ruby Rod of Asmodeus and cannot be raised or resurrected without the expressed permission of the Lord of the Nine, even with divine aid.

RULES OF HELL

The Nine Hells are governed by more than just the Lords of the Nine and the internal nature of the denizen devils. Those creatures are bound to their nature by a force known simply as the Rules of Hell. Put simply, the Rules of Hell dictate the hierarchical structure of the devils, from the lowly lemures to the mighty pit fiends and into the thrones of the archdevils. The rules govern what they can, what they can get away with, how to advance, the rewards and duties, and the punishments.

The Rules of Hell are legislated largely by the Diabolical Court on Abyrिमoch, an obsidian city on Phlegethos. These judges and administrators interpret the rules within the confines of the wordings, which are innately known to all devils regardless of rank, though disputes and misinterpretations occur with alarming frequency. The Rules of Hell also instruct devils on how to deal with outsiders, mortals specifically, and the contracts signed by other beings with a devil are tied intrinsically back to the Rules of Hell.

Who wrote the Rules of Hell? Most point to Asmodeus, who is not above them though as existed longer than any other devil, but the more canny planar sages look to the badge of office Asmodeus holds – his Ruby Rod. This powerful and ancient relic bears the archdevil's name but predates him by all accounts, and it is tied to the Nine Hells of Baator in such a way as to make its separation near impossible. Asmodeus uses the Ruby Rod when making official decrees and imposing his will across Baator, such as when he deposed Malagarde the Hag Countess and instituted his daughter Glasya as ruler of Malbolge.

The Rules of Hell are also the binding force that affects travelers to Baator in subtle ways. Food tastes rancid, water spoils, and there's a general level of discomfort that pervades every aspect of existence in the Nine Hells. It only takes a planar traveler a few minutes on any of the layers to become affected, and some descend quickly into the clutches of absolute evil (another article of the Rules of Hell is the corruption of any foreigner to Baator's landscape). These affects are more flavor than hard game rules but can give guidance on how to make the Nine Hells uncomfortable for characters traveling across any of the layers.

MYSTERIOUS SITES & TREASURES

Sages and librarians know stories and rumors of more sites within the Nine Hells of Baator than almost any other plane. This is perhaps due to the devilish nature to interfere with outside powers in order to supplement the forces of their own infernal legions, but regardless even a fledgling planar sage can recite the names of the nine layers and their current rulers, at least as far as their knowledge goes. The sites described below may have tantalizing entries in crumbling libraries across the multiverse, especially the deeper one travels into Baator itself, lending an air of mystery and unknown terror about each one to tantalize the foolish.

AEAEA, REALM OF THE WITCH-QUEENS

The swampy landscape of Minauros holds many secret places within its polluted wastes, but any travelers to stumble upon Aeaea know they've entered a strange and magical place. This is realm of Hecate, a powerful force of curses and black magic, governed by a force of wicked Witch-Queens. Thick tendrils of fog fill Aeaea's region, obscuring vision and providing glimpses into a world beyond sight and sound, where magic flows through the swirling mists.

The Witch-Queens – powerful hags all of them – rule Aeaea without question, and can manipulate the mists to create powerful illusions capable of fooling nearly any that enter. The few invaders that have managed to escape with their lives tell stories of looming monstrous towers built from bone and spittle that serve as the personal sanctuaries of the Witch-Queens themselves. The hags boast a number of devils, nightmares, and other fiends under their complete control, much to the annoyance of Mammon, Minauros' archdevil ruler.

Mammon and the Witch-Queens have an uneasy alliance. The powerful hags send emissaries to the court of the greedy archdevil to deliver gifts of magical secrets, but these are too infrequent for Mammon's liking. He would prefer tributes delivered every day, but when he has pushed his forces into Aeaea to force the minions of Hecate to submit he was left with a legion of devils gibbering and insane from their time. Mammon knows a great magical treasure sits somewhere in the mists of Aeaea and he would like nothing more than to possess it.

BRONZED BAZAAR

The second layer of Baator is the realm of Dispaten and is dominated by the sprawling, gothic City of Dis. It is a place of paranoia and shadows, where every grim alleyway can hold an assassin, spy, or worse, and the very walls have eyes. Yet, Dis is also the center of arms manufacturing in the Nine Hells. The forges below the city streets constantly churn out weapons and armor to equip the infernal legions. The generals, dukes, and other representatives across Baator and beyond go to one place to barter for those goods – the Bronzed Bazaar

The Bronzed Bazaar is one of the few open air locations in Dis, where the tallest buildings loom grim and monolithic at the edges rather than crowded along narrow streets. Devilish representatives of Dispaten work countless deals with the merchants that come to gain access to the wonderfully crafted items, including rare Baatorian green steel weapons and armor that are only forged in Dis. The ground in the area is paved with intricate symbols in tarnished bronze, giving the area its name, and these magical runes allow Dispaten's forces a glimpse into the true intentions of any buyer.

Devils are the most common customers in the Bronzed Bazaar, representing legions from across the Nine Hells, but yugoloth mercenary companies, night hag covens, fire giant kings, and other such beings are known to come seeking Dis forged goods. Dispaten prefers to deal in souls, soul coins specifically, but magical items, relics, and treasures hold their weight for the right buyer as well.

HEART OF THE HAG COUNTESS

The downfall of Malagarde the Hag Countess as the lord of Malbolge was a surprising turn of events in infernal politics, and the particular method of her removal was dramatic as well. Asmodeus bloated out the powerful hag to enormous proportions, a process that that drove her to insanity with pain, and then her body exploded spectacularly. Parts of the Hag Countess flew across the rocky landscape of Malbolge, her blood pooled in toxic pits, and Glasya was appointed new ruler of the layer.

Malagarde's heart, bloated and overblown, was thrown particularly far. Glasya has made a point of finding and claiming as much of her predecessor's former corpse as possible, but so far she has not found the blackened heart. Glasya's scouts and patrols have reported seeing the monstrous thing crawling along Malbolge's mountainside with countless smaller fiends dancing and moving around it in jubilation. But whenever the devils got close, the heart vanished into the cracks, seeping into the rocks like black oil.

Glasya wants desperately to claim the Heart of the Hag Countess, if nothing else than to make sure her predecessor is truly put down. What force moves it across Malbolge now? Is it a fragment of Malagarde's spirit left to writhe in torment, tied to her enormous black heart? Or has it become the home of a new fiend looking to claim the hag's power for their own? Glasya doesn't want to find out the answers to these questions the hard way.

HUNGRY VAULTS

Maladomini was once the home to a great race of monsters, huge and imposing, that many planar sages link to a predecessor to the known devils of today. This was in a time before Baalzebul who, long ago, ruled both Malbolge and Maladomini, and considered Maladomini the far lesser of the two. Several failed coup attempts against Asmodeus later and Baalzebul is a slothful shadow of his former self, though the Archduke of Lies remains a potent player on the Lords of the Nine stage. He has done little to explore the contents of Maladomini, being more preoccupied with his current slug state, but one region that has caught his

attention for centuries are the Hungry Vaults.

In a particularly worn set of cyclopean ruins in the dust-choked depths of the Maladomini wastes sits a series of great obsidian hatches in the hard-packed ground. There are supposedly seven of these, each marked with different words in an unknown language, but to date Baalzebul has only managed to open two of them. And within he found a powerful secret held by the ancient race of beings of Baator – along with a pulsating, malevolent darkness that devours all without thought or care. Baalzebul has lost many legions exploring the Hungry Vaults and to date has only managed to procure minor items, but it is rumored that something he found there pushed his plans for a coup of the Nessian throne into action (though it ultimately failed).

Whatever the Hungry Vaults hold gnaws at Baalzebul and he still errantly sends units to the far-flung site to keep abreast of any changes.

IVORY FINGERS OF MALAGARDE

After the dramatic fall of the Hag Countess from her position as lord of Malbolge, several strange things starting showing up across the mountainside layer. Aspects of the powerful night hag, physical and spiritual, began springing up, and the new ruler Glasya is determined to claim all of these and make sure the wicked Malagarde never gains a foothold. The daughter of Asmodeus has found and claimed one site already, a series of ten curved towers known as the Ivory Fingers of Malagarde.

These ten towers look like skeletal fingers clawing out of the side of Malbolge's rocky landscape, with the palms hidden just below the surface. Glasya has made it her "retreat" palace and keeps teams of devils working to hollow each one out for the new archduchess to use. Only two have been completed thus far, referred to as the Tower of Pain and the Tower of Agony, but Glasya knows it's only a matter of time before she has all five under her complete control.

The devils working to hollow out the Ivory Fingers and turn them into towers have been reporting some strange phenomena, however. Several of them have been possessed by an overwhelming urge to dig in the areas between the two groups of five towers, where the palm and remaining hand would be. Diligent overlords have kept all the devils in line so far, but the feelings have been getting stronger in some. Glasya has dismissed all reports of these incidents as nothing more than superstition and has ordered the demotion of several ranking devils as punishment.

JANGLING HITER

Above the stinking swamps of Minauros hangs the city of Jangling Hiter, also known as the City of Chains. It is mysteriously suspended above the muck and mire by enormous lengths of chain that stretch up into the shrouded atmosphere of the layer, to connect eventually to the bottom of the City of Dis. None in Jangling Hiter question or marvel at this feat of engineering skill, for the residents of the city – chain devils primarily – are concerned with only one thing: torture.

The chain devils of Jangling Hiter are renown through the Nine Hells for their ability to torture both flesh and soul. Every archduke has their own contingent of torturers under their control but these are generally for the flaying and whipping of flesh. For soul torture, most look to the pain experts in Jangling Hiter. The screams of the tortured souls merge together within the City of Chains to form a wild cacophony that drives most mortals to madness within a few hours.

Jangling Hiter sees quite a few merchant travelers from across the multiverse. Most come to deal with the chain devils that have become so renown for their torture abilities, but also the chains manufactured in Jangling Hiter are some of the strongest around. The merchant district of the city is the only one that sees much outside traffic and travelers are warned to keep clear of the rest of the regions.

KINTYRE

The frozen landscape of Cania is dotted with cavernous ruins of cities and civilizations that fell into the clutches of Mephistopheles. So many have fallen into the icy crags and crevasses that the archdevil has lost track of them, and even the ones he remembers he doesn't know all of the details. Kintyre is one such city, claimed long ago and frozen solid in a massive mountain of ice, but something in it has piqued the interest of the Circle of Hellfire.

The Circle of Hellfire believes KIntyre holds some promising secret of hellfire itself, and they've managed to carve out a tunnel leading into the frozen city's outskirts. They work to melt away the ice without damaging the structures, and they've uncovered a city literally frozen in time. Kintyre was a center of learning in a far-off Material Plane world whose leaders fell to worshipping Mephistopheles. Then, their greed became too great and they gave up the city to the archdevil, who claimed it in one massive sweep.

The Kintyre library has been the focus for the Circle of Hellfire but melting the ice without burning the books and scrolls has proven time consuming. Mephistopheles is barely aware of the operation, and the devil in charge – an erinyes hellfire sorcerer named Lady Dorzonella – seeks to claim the secrets of Kintyre for herself and usurp leadership of the Circle of Hellfire.

MAGGOT PIT

Avernus is a battle-scarred wasteland of broken stones beneath a bloated crimson sky under which march armies without end. It is the staging point for the Blood War but the layer serves many other purposes. One of its primary functions in the grand scheme of devilkind is the mass transformation of souls into lemures, the lowest of devils, and this is done in a massive crater called the Maggot Pit. Over 1,000 feet wide, the Maggot Pit is filled with crawling white worms that latch onto souls, devouring them and becoming lemures in the process. The pit is considered neutral territory in the Nine Hells, controlled by no single archdevil, but curiously it also blocks the entrance into the realm of a Baatorian prisoner known across the multiverse – Tiamat, Queen of Dragons.

Tiamat's citadel beyond the Maggot Pit is a secret place wherein the dragon queen is bound forever by ancient and divine pacts. She constantly struggles to break free, to set claw and wing on a plane outside of the Nine Hells, but many planar scholars believe the Maggot Pit is part of the lock that keeps Tiamat bound. Why else would such a critically important place be so close to enemy territory? For her own part, Tiamat and her forces keep to her secret citadel and leave the Maggot Pit alone for her attempts at disrupting the flow of souls has always met with disaster.

Each archdevil has means of transforming souls into lemures in their own realms but not on such a scale as the Maggot Pit, so soul caravans from all over the Nine Hells come to Avernus to perpetuate the line of devils. Because of this, the region also holds the most portals to the lower levels of Baator, but each is carefully guarded and kept as secret as possible.

MAW OF HELLFIRE

Mephistopheles' use of hellfire in recent years has been the subject of much debate among planar scholars. Where did the archdevil find and cultivate such a powerful resource in Cania, the coldest layer of the Nine Hells? Hellfire is white and burns not with fire but with pure pain, and as such the psychic damage it inflicts is felt by devils, demons, and almost every other creature across the multiverse. The Circle of Hellfire continually searches for new ways to use the potent element, but the truth of its source has long been a mystery.

One theory points to the Maw of Hellfire on Cania, a great yawning pit in the heart of an ice volcano in the frigid wastes. Hellfire burns continually within the icy caldera, spouting out in great bursts at irregular intervals, and a maze of tunnels have been carved into the volcano's side as servants of Mephistopheles study the site. Is this the source of hellfire? Or an experiment of Mephistopheles' to see just how much hellfire he can summon and harness? The devils assigned to the Maw of Hellfire are among the archdevil's most loyal servants, and even the Circle of Hellfire itself is kept out.

MENTIRI, PRISON OF DIS

Deep inside a labyrinth of tunnels below the iron streets of Dis sits Mentiri, a hidden prison that has long served as a dumping ground for those that displease or cross Dispater. Mentiri is divided into two large segments serving different purposes. The Bastille of Flesh houses mortal beings that have not yet died, and if Dispater has his way will continue to live in lightless cells under truly torturous conditions. Fallen paladins, defeated angels, devil insurgents, demon rebels, and more languish in this prison guarded by fearsome devils and powerful magic.

The second section, the Bastille of Souls, is devoted to souls that Dispater has not been able to transform into devils yet. These fall into one of two types. Either they have ended up in the Nine Hells accidentally by some happenstance of fate or they were part of a larger bargain but not corrupted yet. In both cases the souls cannot be transformed into devils, not yet at least, and the Bastille of Souls is dedicated to punishing those souls until they

finally break and Dispater can use them in future legions.

The jailers that keep Mentiri running are cruel and ruthless, even by infernal standards, and they take their work seriously. Very few prisoners have escaped from the iron prison of Mentiri over the centuries, a point of pride for the devils in charge, and none have escaped without significant outside help.

MIDNIGHT DESERT

A black sand wasteland sits in the cold waters of Stygia, scoured by the frozen winds that blow through the layer. Countless pyramids and monuments built of white stone or permanent ice fill this land in dedication to Set, a mysterious and ancient snake god who supposedly slumbers beneath the ground. Known as the Midnight Desert, this is a harsh and unforgiving region in a harsh and unforgiving layer of the Nine Hells, where powerful magic runs through obelisks, fueling the power of Set and his deranged cultists.

Fang devils are a common sight in the Midnight Desert along with infernal yuan-ti that serve as the minions of Set. Levistus, archduke of Stygia, has long left the Midnight Desert to its own devices, though for Geryon's brief reign as ruler he attempted to annex much of the black sandy region in order to claim Set's magic for himself. The powers of Set pushed back Geryon's advances and now that Levistus is restored as the Stygian ruler, the fallen archdevil has greater things to pursue than a petty grudge against the ancient serpent god.

Priests of Set worship in dusty halls and enormous catacombs beneath many of the pyramids. It is rumored that an intricate series of tunnels extend beneath the Midnight Desert, connecting all of the sites together in an arcane pattern of untold power that allows Set to slumber beneath the eyes of more powerful gods that would seek to put his forces down.

NIGHTED SUN

Nessus is a layer of despair and hopelessness. Few things represent this more than the great black orb that hangs in the sky over the shadow-filled canyons. Those that have seen it call it the Nighted Sun for it sheds darkness instead of light, and seems to absorb the energy of any who gaze upon its horrible glory. Asmodeus is said to have a magnificent gallery in his hidden palace that allows him to bathe in the Nighted Sun's negative radiance.

While Nessus remains one of the least visited layers of the Nine Hells, there have been reports of a band of hellbreakers that discovered the Nighted Sun actually contains numerous treasure vaults of Asmodeus himself. Of the group that discovered and broke into one of these vaults, only two survived – one is a gibbering lunatic bound to the eternal care of holy priests and the other wanders the Material Plane, half lucid and speaking in riddles. What they stole remains a mystery as well or for what benefactor.

NIGHTSHADE CRATER

The first layer of Avernus is a blasted landscape of broken rubble and jagged peaks pocked by countless pits caused by both the movement of fiendish armies and the never-ending fireballs that drop from the bloated crimson sky. Most of these pits are nothing more than impact craters, but some are so large as to defy this explanation. Nightshade Crater is one such place, and it is nearly a mile across and half that deep.

The slopes of the crater are smoothed like glass as if burnt under extreme heat, and the conventional explanation for its origin says an enormous flaming ball fell to the Avernus ground from elsewhere. That doesn't explain the huge number of black nightshade flowers that grow in the normally infertile rubble or the cloyingly sweet smell of death that hangs over the entire region. Something beneath the ground in Nightshade Crater feeds the strange flora. One theory put out by a band of planar scholars says the crater hides the fallen corpse of a defeated Abyssal demon lord, but attempts at digging into the blasted earth has yielded no such proof.

Nightshade Crater also contains a large concentration of nightshade monsters, undead horrors normally found on the Plane of Shadow. The presence of these creatures and the abundance of black flowers gives the crater its name. Are the nightshades guarding something? Are they result of some foul connection to the Plane of Shadow itself? Or are they simply scavengers picking the bones from some horrendous battle fought long ago?

PITS OF HELL

Phlegethos is the burning hellscape most mortals think of when they imagine the Nine Hells, but even in that fiery layer of active volcanoes and rivers of magma some regions stand out more than others. The Pits of Hell are one of those. These seven enormous pits in the blackened ground are filled with molten lava and an incredible heat. Iron cages hang along the walls of many of the pits wherein sit devils that have been found guilty of breaking the Rules of Hell by the Diabolical Courts. A special enchantment is placed over the devils that removes their fire immunity, and in the Pits of Hell the heat is so intense that some devils are reduced to naught but ash and bones by the time their sentence is served.

The other purpose the Pits of Hell serve is to baptize new pit fiends into the greater service of Baator. The name pit fiend actually refers to these Pits of Hell where they are born in the deepest bowels of liquid magma. Ice devils that have advanced far enough in the infernal hierarchy are sponsored by an existing duke or archdevil and lowered into the Pits of Hell for 666 days. Assuming they survive, they emerge as pit fiends, the highest ranking of the greater devils, ready to wreak havoc upon the multiverse in the name of Baator.

RUBY ROD OF ASMODEUS

Without argue, the most potent relic in all the Nine Hells is the Ruby Rod of Asmodeus, the badge of office for the Lord of the Ninth and the symbol of power recognized and honored by all the infernal residents of Baator. Asmodeus never leaves the Ruby Rod unattended and uses it judiciously to hand out punishments and rewards in his duties as lord of Nessus. Its powers are many and varied and there are some that believe it predates Asmodeus himself and serves instead as an extension of the Nine Hells.

From time to time, Asmodeus has gifted prized followers across the multiverse with replicas of his Ruby Rod. These facsimiles remain incredibly powerful relics capable of blasting opponents with spells, weaving potent illusions, and directing the souls of the departed down to the night-haunted pits of Nessus itself. Rarely does the Lord of the Ninth allow such copies of his prized weapon to remain out in the multiverse for long and, regardless of what the devotee was told, the copy of the Ruby Rod always seems to possess a malevolence and plan all its own.

The Ruby Rod of Asmodeus is inextricably linked to the Rules of Hell that invisibly govern how devils operate across the multiverse, which leads many planar sages to believe its power stems from a source greater than Asmodeus himself. Is it an ancient entity of primordial evil, bound to the potent relic by forbidden magic? Is it the will of Asmodeus given ruby form? Or something more?

SANGUINE DELVES

Countless devil legions march across the rocky wasteland of Avernus, but most avoid the deadly region known as the Sanguine Delves for fear of getting trapped in the maze-like canyon. A river of boiling blood rushes through the floor of the delves, a depth of over 500 feet in the deepest reaches from the surface, but the true danger lies in the insane number of portals that spontaneously appear along the walls. Portals to the Abyss, spewing demonic armies, and portals to the lower reaches of the Nine Hells, all appear with no rhyme or reason.

Whatever force creates the portals in the Sanguine Delves has never been controlled or catalogued, and because of this it has never been more than an anomaly in the war-strewn wasteland of Avernus. At least one outcast duke has built a castle above the boiling blood river, held by powerful magic and a deep sense of paranoia, but most natives of the Nine Hells avoid the region for its obvious dangers and lack of strategic value.

SERPENT'S COIL

There are several myths around how Asmodeus came to stand atop the hierarchy of the Nine Hells, but most focus on the idea that he was cast out of somewhere in the Upper Planes – Mount Celestia, Elysium, or even some primordial archetype for these angelic realms. And, the proof of this myth is found right in Nessus - Asmodeus' fall literally created the deep canyons and gorges of the lowest layer of the Nine Hells. And those that take these myths as truth point to the Serpent's Coil as the epicenter of the fall.

The deepest canyon in all of Nessus, Serpent's Coil is a spiraling labyrinth of black rock cliffs that grows deeper the further along one travels. Some say the corkscrew path was underground long ago but time has eroded the surface to create the ever-deepening canyon. And at the end sits the palace of Asmodeus himself, in an unfathomably deep crevasse where light is forbidden to shine, guarded by the most fanatically loyal devils in all of Baator. These devils are the literal manifestation of Asmodeus, born of his spilled blood, and they patrol Serpent's Coil with a righteous zeal.

A dwarf miner from the wilds of Bytopia managed to take a team into Nessus long ago and return with samples of the black rock that form Serpent's Coil. She found that the stone reacted strongly to light but could be worked with a hot enough force to form items of unquestionable beauty. The dwarf crafted a few trinkets and weapons of the black stone before succumbing to a madness that sent her fleeing into the multiverse, but not before she built an idol dedicated to Asmodeus himself.

SHADOWCAST FORGES

Dispater employs the most talented weapon and armor smiths in all the Nine Hells to work in the endlessly belching forges in the city of Dis. The best of the best, however, the archduke saves for a special project deep in the underbowels of the city. There, the infernal masters work tirelessly in the darkness of the Shadowcast Forges, fashioning items from pure shadow steel for use by Dispater's elite soldiers.

The Shadowcast Forges are lit by a burning black fire originating from the Negative Energy Plane. The energy is pumped and harnessed by powerful bellows and then worked by devilish crafters to form items of liquid shadow, as strong as steel and as transparent as smoky glass. The iron shadows that serve as Dispater's eyes and ears across the city are birthed in the Shadowcast Forges, unholy monstrosities given life and sentience by dangerous and unpredictable arcane forces.

The devils that work the Shadowcast Forges are not allowed access to the outside, and none but Dispater himself are allowed into the labyrinthine bowels of Dis where the forges operate. Knowing the potency of the weapons and armor created there, several of Dispater's archdevil rivals have sent scouts in search of the location but so far none have prevailed in finding let alone crippling the powerful site.

STONES OF THE NIGHTMARE EYE

The wasteland of Maladomini is dotted with cyclopean ruins of unknown but ancient origin, but out there in the blowing dust and clouds of flies are a series of standing stones that do not date back to the time before devils. This arrangement of six great stone blocks, pulsating red and black, are much more recent, having been built by Baalzebul as a way to contain a powerful rival from his own layer. Known as the Nightmare Eye, it was a conflagration ooze of tremendous proportion and endless hunger that sought to usurp the archdevil.

Baalzebul put down the uprising and, in order to keep the Nightmare Eye from reforming, broke it up into six massive blocks, hardened it with powerful magic, and threw the stones into the wasteland of Maladomini to stand forever in silence. But the Nightmare Eye has been anything but. It has learned to communicate telepathically with other conflagration oozes across the plane, along with other fiendish oozes and slimes, and its plot for revenge against the Prince of Lies works slowly behind the scenes. It has worked to place its subtle minions all around Baalzebul's personal Palace of Filth, with some acting as sentries to the archdevil's abode.

Is Baalzebul truly ignorant of the threat posed by the Nightmare Eye? The slug-like archdevil seems to pay the oozes and slimes that surround his palace and infest Maladomini little heed, but on the other hand Baalzebul is known to play the long game with foes. When the Nightmare Eye moves against the Lord of the Seventh, who will come out on top?

TOMB OF LEVISTUS

Levistus is the Lord of the Fourth, ruler over Stygia, but he is an archdevil with a problem. Long ago, he moved against Asmodeus in a grand coup attempt that failed miserably, and as a result the Lord of the Ninth entombed Levistus within a glacier in Stygia's frozen landscape. Geryon took over as Lord of the Fourth while Levistus, frozen and unmoving but not dead, could do little but seethe and dream of the day of his revenge.

That day came suddenly when Geryon was deposed and Levistus reinstated as Stygia's ruler. But, his tomb remained firm and steadfast. His mind sharpened by years of nothing but thinking, Levistus has learned to control the elements of Stygia mentally and has gained a respectable command of psychic power. The Tomb of Levistus where his body rests now in magically hardened ice remains his forever prison, but the wily archdevil has managed to turn the tables and gain an advantage over many of his foes. Geryon, now deposed, works to return to Stygia's throne but he has little idea as to the extent of Levistus' new power.

The Tomb of Levistus is attended to by a tribe of fiendish yetis who pledged their undying loyalty to the archdevil ages ago. They now serve as his caretakers and constantly try to dig Levistus out, though thus far their efforts have been in vain. That fact has not bothered Levistus much as he continues to use his psychic powers to gain leverage over the other Lords of the Nine and plot his ascent to the throne of Nessus.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Nine Hells of Baator are no place for the weak. Devils and infernal creatures crawl over every layer, seeking out fresh souls to serve as fodder in the never-ending Blood War, while the very environment works to destroy any intruders. Nonetheless, adventure opportunities abound, especially since devilish politics have a tendency to spill out across the multiverse and encompass more than just the fools that deal with such beings.

TIER 1 (LEVELS 1–4)

The environment of the Nine Hells is lethal to characters without experience, so it is recommended for them to avoid directly traveling to Baator for any reason. There are enough problems from the devils and other monsters of the Nine Hells to reach out to the Material Plane and beyond to involve such inexperienced novices, however, so they shouldn't worry too much about being left out!

... The magister in a small town has signed a deal with a barbed devil promising fame and fortune, but the magister didn't read the fine print. Now, the town has become a breeding ground for lemures and other infernal monsters and the terms of the contract prevent the magister from taking action. The characters come into the scene and must find out who the real villain is – the magister or the barbed devil? Or both? Can the magister be saved?

... A paladin died recently and his holy order have given him a grand funeral to which the characters are invited. Unfortunately, the paladin made powerful enemies in the Nine Hells and all divine powers of the knights are suspended as devilish forces led by a powerful warlock intrude upon the funeral. The characters slip unnoticed out of the scene and have an opportunity to put an end to the infernal interruption by closing a portal to the Nine Hells in the abandoned graveyard adjacent to the temple.

... The Circle of Hellfire has sent agents to the Material Plane in search of a potential arcane discovery in nearby hills. The characters learn of white fires being seen atop ancient stone-crowned hills, supposedly haunted, and when they go to investigate they find the infernal cultists working to unearth a new source of hellfire.

TIER 2 (LEVELS 5–10)

Even for characters of this experience level, the Nine Hells remain a dangerous place. However, they should be better equipped to handle the threats posed by the environment, and they likely learn that moving quickly through Baator is the best way to avoid the worst the plane has to offer.

... The characters track down a band of slavers and defeat their master, only to learn that the slavers were harvesting souls for devils in the Nine Hells. Some souls are in need of rescuing, and the characters can travel to Avernus to the Maggot Pit to stop the caravan from dumping the soul cargo and creating wretched lemures. But who really pulls the strings in the operation? Which duke did the characters just annoy by breaking the supply chain?

... A goodly noble falls ill suddenly and all divination points to the source of the poison as a rare nightshade flower that grows in Avernus, in the Nightshade Crater. The characters are asked to travel to the Nine Hells and retrieve some of the nightshade flowers so that an antidote can be prepared, but while traveling in the region the party encounters an erinyes looking to make a deal. The noble's family apparently made a bad bargain and the erinyes has tracked the party to make sure the deal doesn't fall through. Do the characters defeat the erinyes and her servants in Nightshade Crater to save the noble?

... A mysterious fog rises over the land and the cackling of witches can be heard. A coven of hags have come as emissaries of the Witch-Queens of Hecate looking for magical tribute, and while the fog remains dark and terrible things occur across the countryside – cattle are born without eyes, babies grow devilish deformities, and essential crops wither and die. The characters are asked to find the magical tribute demanded by the hags but this does not appease the invaders. The characters must face the coven, but in doing so they make powerful enemies in the swamps of Minauros.

TIERS 3 AND 4 (LEVELS 11+)

There are few greater quests for noble characters than a venture into the Nine Hells, the very heart of evil itself, to accomplish some great deed. Though Baator remains dangerous even for experienced characters, they should have the skills necessary to deal with many of the threats and can penetrate deeper into the layers of the Nine Hells to find greater and greater glories to accomplish.

... Infernal yuan-ti have overrun a local temple, and the characters are asked to help put them down. They find a cult dedicated to Set along with a powerful link back to the Midnight Desert in the frozen sea of Stygia. The characters must defeat the cultists and then sever the link by traveling to Baator and into the black pyramid of Set itself.

... An imp approaches the characters looking for help. He serves an outcast duke on Avernus that has become crazed with bloodlust and now seeks to send his infernal legions to the Material Plane. The imp has no desire to end its life on such a foolish crusade, and used a loophole in the Rules of Hell to travel to the characters and appeal to their sense of righteousness. The outcast duke must be stopped. But is the imp telling the truth? Or is he an agent of a rival duke looking to eliminate a rival?

... An army of hobgoblins are being equipped with powerful weapons and armor far beyond the scope of their own workings. The supply line leads to a merchant from Dis looking to earn a bit of extra coin by selling infernal goods to outside forces. The characters must stop the flow of the weapons by traveling to Dis, navigating the Bronzed Bazaar, and putting an end to the merchant's plans. But what connection did the merchant have to the representatives of Dispatet? And why are the statues in the oppressive city always following them?

RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLES

The below tables can be used by the Dungeon Master as a source of inspiration when a party of characters are traveling through the Nine Hells. Though each layer has its own unique flora and fauna, the two tables below – one for wilderness and one for urban – can be used on almost any of the layers to throw challenges at a band of characters. Look at each one as a springboard for new adventure ideas, or as a means of highlighting the nature of the plane for the players.

NINE HELLS WILDERNESS

1D100	NINE HELLS WILDERNESS ENCOUNTER
01-05	A gang of feral barbed devils looking for an easy meal
06-10	A bone devil torturing a lemure
11-15	A squad of bearded devils on patrol
16-20	An erinyes flying overhead on an important errand
21-25	Two imps arguing over orders from a superior
26-30	A swarm of nupperibos oozing over the landscape
31-35	A legion of merregon waiting for a commanding officer
36-40	A narzugon riding a nightmare hunting down a fugitive
41-45	Two white abishai on secret assignment from Tiamat
46-50	A pack of spined devils eating at the carcass of a fallen foe
51-55	A chain devil looking for a lost soul
56-60	Two horned devils flying overhead
61-65	A pack of hell hounds chasing a lost traveler
66-70	A screamwraith with special orders from Asmodeus
71-75	A swarm of hellwasps disturbed from their nearby nest
76-80	A conflagration ooze bubbling up from a nearby pool
81-90	Horde of demons! Roll on the Abyssal random encounter table
91-00	Baatorian Hazard (based on layer)

NINE HELLS URBAN

1D100	NINE HELLS URBAN ENCOUNTER
01-05	An ice devil repairing a weapon at a forge
06-10	Three chain devils dragging a slave to a darkened alley
11-15	A duergar warlock making a deal with a fang devil
16-20	Two erinyes on the lookout for troublemakers
21-25	An amnizu with bodyguards heading to an appointment
26-30	A horned devil tormenting a mortal wizard
31-35	A hobgoblin warband looking for weapons and armor
36-40	An imp selling trinkets out of a poorly constructed stand
41-45	A narzugon making trouble for outsiders
46-50	A rakshasa inspecting slaves for sale
51-55	Skum agents of an aboleth
56-60	An iron shadow spying on everyone
61-65	An ultroloth general dealing with a horned devil captain
66-70	A squad of off duty mezzoloths
71-75	A blue abishai on the prowl for arcane knowledge
76-80	Two spined devils spying for a duke
81-85	A fire giant mercenary selling his sword for coin
86-90	A human archmage dealing poorly with an amnizu
91-95	A polymorphed drow mage spying for a demon lord
96-00	A pit fiend on assignment from the Dark Eight