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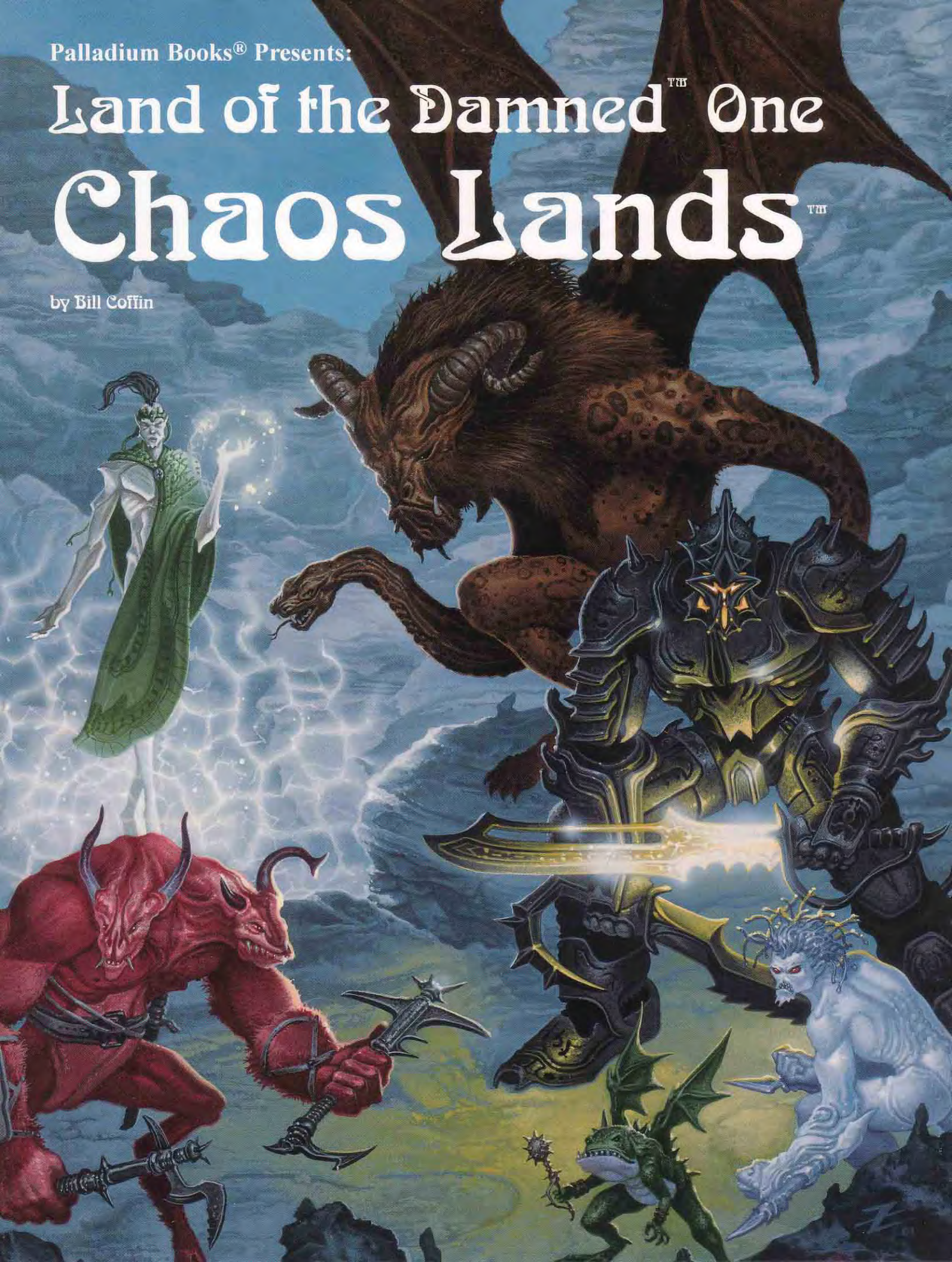
Land of the Damned™ One

Chaos Lands™

by Bill Coffin



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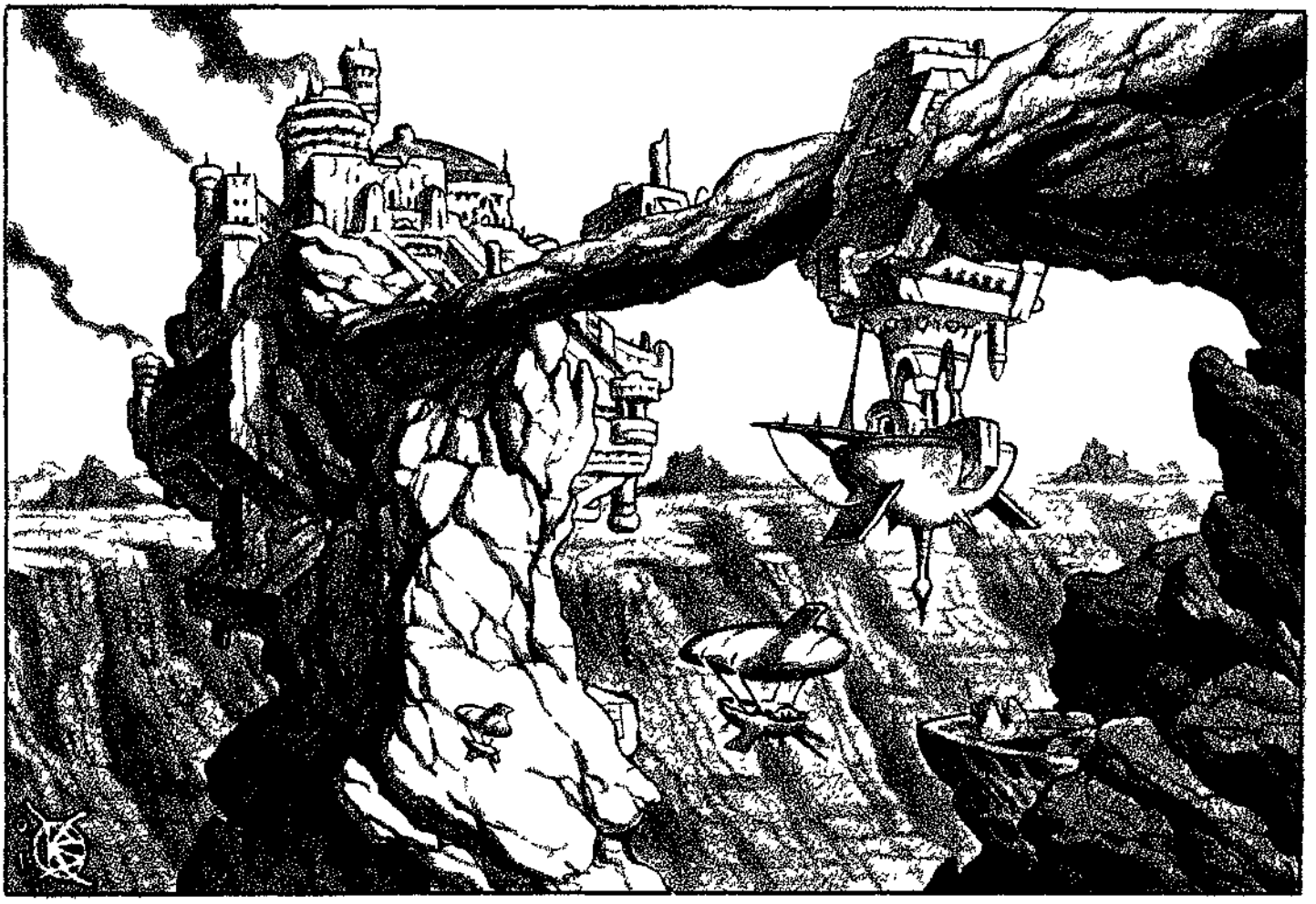

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Acknowledgments

As usual, there are certain people who gave me the kind of help without which I could not have written this book. This time, it is a special quartet who have not only been instrumental in this book, but have been there for me in so many other things.

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And most of all, to my wife *Allison*, who has been the greatest supporter anybody could ever ask for. Without her, I am nothing. For all you've done, darling, thank you.

– Bill Coffin, 2001

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Land of the **Damned™** One

Chaos **Lands™**

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— Kevin Siembieda, 2001

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Author's Introduction

(A few words from Kevin Siembieda. The book you hold in your hands is loosely based on my original *Defilers Campaign*. The demon infested mountains, the Great Rift, the Citadel, the demon haunted lands, forgotten secrets of magic, lost races, Minotaur nation, dimensional portals, gateways to Hell and other worlds, and the omnipresent evil were all aspects of my original Palladium World. I couldn't find many of my old notes to hand to Bill, so we had a few excited conversations where I told him about the key events, people and places, along with the feel and history of the haunted lands, and then let Bill run with them. The end result captures the "feel" of my *Land of the Damned* quite nicely. Of course I have added bits and pieces, while many of Bill's own new and different touches make this cursed region of the Palladium World as much his, as my own. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do.)

Welcome to the first of three Land of the Damned™ sourcebooks! There will be *three* volumes: the Chaos Lands (which you are holding right now), the Eternal Torment, and The Citadel.

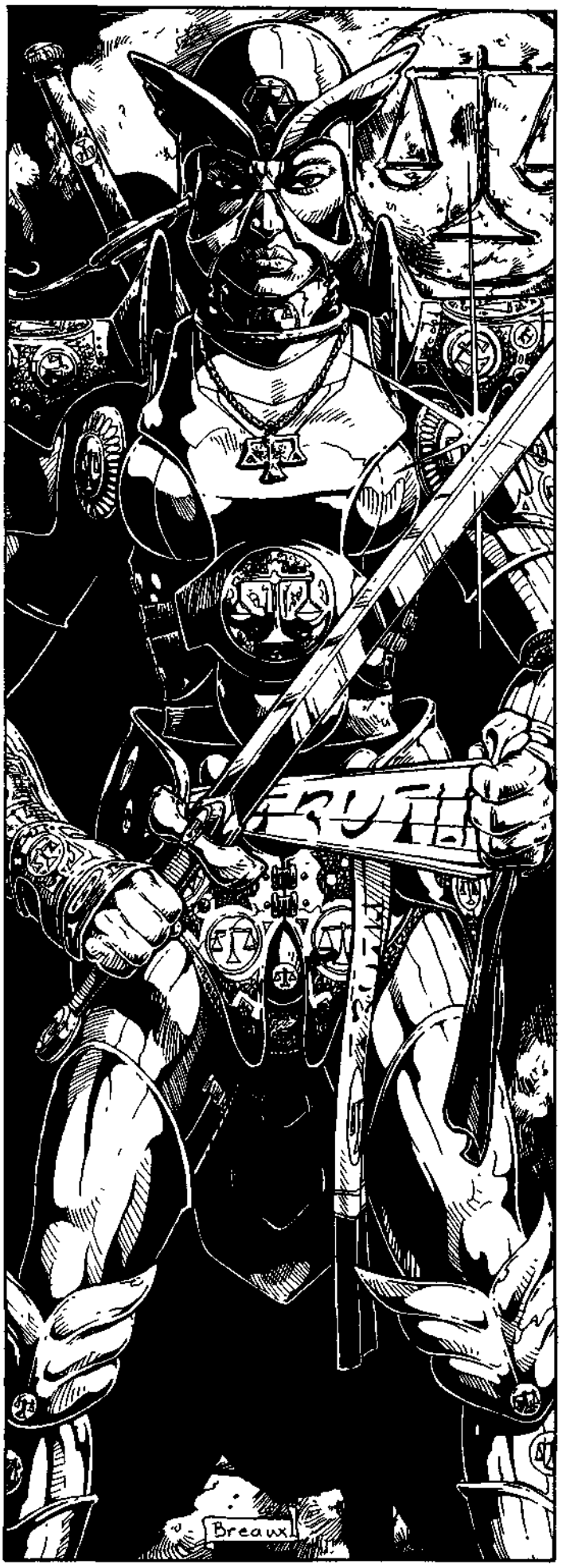
Each of the books in this mini-series will weigh in at about 224 pages, and should provide an epic landscape in which to run some equally epic adventures. Each works as a stand-alone product while building a grand picture of this archaic and frightening landscape cut off from the rest of the world by extreme environmental conditions - and some say, the gods themselves.

The monsters, races and magic encountered in the Land of the Damned are often demonic and quite powerful. For it is a part of the world that harkens back to the Time of Chaos, when the Old Ones ruled supreme and humans, Elves, Dwarves, Titans and Minotaurs, among many others (some, long forgotten), served as the minions or chattel of monsters. Even today, the Land of the Damned is a dark reflection of an evil, bygone era that will challenge, and possibly destroy, the most chaste and courageous souls brave (or foolish) enough to enter these dark lands. From a game standpoint, if you, the Game Master, find the power level here to be overwhelming, please feel free to scale it down to what you feel is manageable for your campaign. That said, however, the Land of the Damned should be a highly difficult, challenging and deadly environment for any player to face. Allowing heroes to waltz in, smack its inhabitants around and waltz out with forgotten magic or cartloads of treasure is *NOT* the suggested procedure. Making it out alive and with one's sanity intact, should be reward enough! On the other hand, the place should not be an utter death trap, either. There is nothing fun about working up a character only to have the G.M. squash it without ever having a fighting chance to make a mark, do some good and get out alive. G.M.s, use your head and gauge what you find here against the expectations and history of your campaign. It is okay to make the "official" Land of the Damned more or less powerful according to what you feel works best.

The Northern Hinterlands is something of a companion book or prelude to the Land of the Damned series. It deals with the wilderness that lies at the feet of the Great Northern Mountains - the last domain of man, if you will, before making the arduous climb into the demon haunted Northern Mountains and into the Land of the Damned itself. That being said, the Northern Hinterlands is a *stand-alone* adventure-sourcebook with plenty of people, places, villains, monsters and magic to provide a wide variety of wilderness adventure. Whether one is exploring the northwest of the "known world" or headed for the "unknown" and cursed land beyond the mountains is up to the players and their Game Masters.

That's it! Let's game!

— *Bill Coffin, 2001*



Calling All Heroes

High adventure. Mystery, monsters and magic. And the eternal battle between right and wrong, good and evil, light and dark.

These are the hallmarks of the Palladium Fantasy world. A place where mighty heroes and sinister villains vie for control in a world both savage and civilized. It is a world of powerful and emerging nations, such as the *Western Empire, the Eastern Territory, the Timiro Kingdom,* and the *Wolfen Empire.* It is a land of ancient ruins such as the *Old Kingdom* and the *Baalgor Wastelands.* And it is a land of untamed wilderness, such as the *Great Northern Wilderness* and the *Yin-Sloth Jungles.*

Of all these places, one stands supreme as the most hostile, the most **mysterious,** the most dangerous. It is a combination of emergent nation, ancient ruin, and impenetrable wild lands. And more importantly, it is the seat of incredible magic and unthinkable evil. It is a place so synonymous with death and destruction that most **people,** regardless of their race or culture or religion, are afraid to even utter its name. It is as if they believe that by naming this place, one might bring down its horrors on himself, like a curse. Even those who are brave enough to talk about this domain of monsters (some would say, hell on earth), do so by calling it other names, convinced that the place's true name *can not, must not* be uttered aloud!

They often call it the *Unspoken Place,* and those who hear of it usually know enough to close their ears and listen no more. They do not wish to learn of the terrible evils that dwell in that forbidden land, where monsters roam unchecked, where entire armies of evil wage war upon each other, and where the legions of the undead roam the earth. A place where the last minions of the Old Ones struggle for supremacy, and where it is said that the Old Ones themselves might still make their presence known through dark, foul magicks and the villains willing to use those arcane secrets. Not even the bravest of glory-seekers cares to know of such things, for it reminds them that no matter what great adventures they have undertaken, they have not conquered the *Unspoken Place,* and in all likelihood, they never will. And for that, their own deeds seem that much less significant.

Nor do the greediest treasure hunters seek this place, for while it must house riches and artifacts both strange and incredible, the creatures made to guard those things must be equally terrible ... and ten times more deadly to those who try plundering their troves.

Nor do the **staunchest** explorers venture too deeply into this place, for they know that of the many who have ventured into the dark place, only a pittance are ever heard from again - and half of them are driven mad by the experience. So they content themselves with the notion that the *Unspoken Place* has always been uncharted and as far as they are concerned, it shall always remain uncharted.

But there are higher callings to action, and more noble adventurers who would challenge whatever hardships this mysterious land has to offer. Those who dig deeper and pit themselves against the horrors of this demonic land come to know it as the *Realm ofMonsters,* for nowhere else in the world is a region so thickly populated by strange and hell-spawned beasts. Creatures known only to the wisest of scholars, most powerful practitioners of magic and top explorers, but even many of them know of

these monsters only through myth, folklore and forbidden books. For it is said that races of beasts and men unknown to the rest of the world and who, under the guidance of the Old Ones, once commanded great armies still exist in the *Realm of Monsters*. Many now teeter on the brink of extinction or are found only in the place that should not be named, but they exist. Nestled among them are supernatural abominations and predators of every kind. Demonic beings who prowl the land with impunity, preying on anyone they choose, even those who dare to try to tame them. And there are tales of far worse than all of that. Of creatures so alien, so inconceivable that there can be no defense against them. Such is the way of this savage realm, where a vile menagerie of the most damned creatures in the world hunt and kill and devour one another in an endless cycle of violence and death. Woe be to those who would try to break this cycle. And woe be to those who think they can enter the *Realm of Monsters* and defy its inhabitants to do what they do best: destroy every interloper and intruder that dares venture into their killing grounds.

Then there are the true and righteous heroes. Champions who long to know what it is to face an indomitable enemy. Theirs is a calling of confronting evil in its strongest and most deadly form, even when all of the odds say that victory against such a menace is impossible. Heroes are the ones who tap hidden reservoirs of strength and courage to prevail, even against the most invincible foe. For though the forces of evil run strong in this world, the forces of goodness and light run ten times stronger, if only there are mortals willing to risk their lives to champion such causes. Such selfless crusaders are few and far between, but they do exist, and they are the ones about whom legends and songs are written. They shall shrink before no evil, no villain, no wrong that stands **unrighted**. And to this rare, elite breed of hero, this mysterious region has yet another name. To them, this place is simply the *End of the World*. Partly because it occupies the most remote corner of the Palladium continent, but more importantly, because here are brewing evil forces that if left unchecked, or allowed to break loose from the barriers that confine them, will one day destroy everyone and everything in the world. They know that demons and Deevils gather in massive armies of darkness to fight one another, but should a victor emerge from that conflict, it will grow exponentially in strength, and surge forth to plunge the world into darkness. They know vast legions of the ***undead*** walk the cursed earth, waiting for the moment when their numbers grow so large they might break free from the *End of the World* and turn the world of the living into a graveyard. Minions of the Old Ones work within this dread land to foist their evil schemes upon the outside world, and to awaken their ancient masters, the Lords of Chaos, the dreaded Old Ones. And they receive unwitting help from those who occupy a fortress of pure evil, a Citadel of darkness that with every passing day weakens the very magic that keeps the Old Ones in their punitive slumber. The world might have forgotten about this region and the evil dwelling within it, but those who have been charged to secure this place have not. Only they watch as year after year, the forces of darkness grow stronger and the forces of light meant to contain them keep waning in strength. It is as if the evil powers of this land beat mercilessly against the safeguards meant to contain them - secret armies of heroes, **crusaders,** a mountain chain none can traverse - and slowly are wearing them down, like rocks turned to sand before the relentless march of the sea. Even the greatest heroes know a wall can only hold back the sea for so long if no one steps up to repair it. And so it is that the *secret heroes* of the world come to this place and wage war against the evil therein, hoping that their efforts will prevent the *End of the World* from ever happening. Heroes who are often assisted by adventurers who are unwittingly (often unknowingly) "fated" to join in the crusade against unspeakable evil, and help the forces of good in some large or small way they may never understand or realize.

In the **end,** there are only two reasons to come to the *Unspoken Place-Realm of Monsters-End of the World.* To fight the evil or to join it. Anybody who believes otherwise is lying to himself or a blind fool. So it is, that the realm is certainly a death trap, and of those who enter, few ever come back alive.

The grim truth is that since before the Elf-Dwarf War, thousands and thousands of adventurers have entered this part of the **world,** but less than *one hundred* are said to have ever returned to tell of it. The fabled **Defilers** are the most famous of the lot, but there are others, though they be precious few. And those who do return are not laden with treasure nor brimming with tales of glorious victory - not even the Defilers. Their treasure is surviving the ordeal with their life and fragile sanity intact. Their weary bodies clad in shattered armor, their bloodied hands clutching broken weapons, and a thatch work of scars their only medals of victory. For many, the physical wounds are only the most visible scars. Deep mental and emotional trauma may haunt them till the end of their days. In fact, many a madman can be found roaming the Northern Mountains as well as the nooks and crannies of the Unspoken Place like crazed animals. Some gibberish about horrors they can not quite put into words, while others are lost in a nightmarish fantasy world only their fevered minds can see. These are the unfortunates who have managed to survive with their bodies intact, but their minds forever shattered.

Survivors and legend warn there are no easy victories, nor quick treasure hunt in this terrible region. There is only the worst kind of adversity, and nearly certain defeat, torture and death. It is common knowledge that keeps the vast majority of what the world considers its best adventurers from ever setting foot there. But there are those who disregard the warnings, who ignore the dangers, and who cast aside the doubts of survival. These are the ones who do not merely *want* to visit this *Realm of Monsters,* they are driven to do so. They are compelled beyond reason to fight evil and to do what they can to save the world from the inevitable horrors of this place. Oftentimes, they are afraid and uncertain, but they go anyway, willing to honor their duty to the world, or the siren call to adventure, even if it kills them.

And what evil could be so great that most of the **world's** finest heroes and most powerful sorcerers who go to face it are never heard from again? Very few know for certain, but the world's **rumormongers** whisper that this place was once home to the Old Ones, those Masters of Chaos who ruled the world for eons, turning it into a giant torture chamber and house of horrors. Only when some of their bravest slaves rebelled and gods from other dimensions rallied and challenged the Old Ones, could **their** hold on this world be broken. The Old Ones were put to sleep, for they could not be killed, and they slumber to this day, deep beneath the earth of the world they once governed.

Their influence has not entirely faded, however, and in what was once the capital of their ancient homeland, their influence can still be felt. It stirs deep within the earth and stone, it adds an electric hum to the area's ley lines, and it hangs in the air like the traces of a persistent fog. It is the lasting effect of the Old Ones. A reminder of a time when the world was in constant turmoil and darkness, and when pain and fear were known by all. It was a time of absolute horror and tyranny, made possible not just by the power of the Old Ones themselves, but by the enormous legions of willing followers who would rather have served evil than fought against it.

When the Old Ones were finally defeated, there remained huge forces of their minions, who had to be punished for the crimes. But rather than destroy them outright, those who vanquished the Old Ones pushed them to the *End of the World,* and decreed that these dark minions would forever remain imprisoned in the same region that had once been their greatest stronghold. There, they would have to live with each other, where evil turns on evil, and all are subjected to a miserable experience of constant fighting, killing, rivalry and uncertainty. Though many of the evil creatures living here are so foul they do not mind their state, *everything* living in the *Unspoken Place* knows that their lives will be dismal, brutish and short, and that for them, there shall never be a great glorious lifetime, filled with the joys known by the rest of the world. Theirs is a doomed and largely pointless existence where they shall forever pay for the transgressions of their ancestors. This, more than anything, fuels their burning anger for all living things, but especially those who live outside their private hell. When any of those free creatures invade their prison, the foul creatures seize upon these interlopers with a special vengeance, as if torturing and killing them might somehow help negate the fact that they shall never know any of the peace, comfort and happiness that their victims once did. It is a deeply flawed mentality, but to the miserable creatures doomed to live their lives here, it is one of the very few things that gives enough sense and structure to their lives to keep the lot of them from going completely insane.

So it is that this land of darkness earns its final name, its *true* name. The name known by all but rarely uttered. The name that is the title given to all that is the opposite of life itself, all that would destroy rather than create, all that would sow despair rather than foster hope. All that would be evil. All that would be dark. Such is the fate of ...

... the Unspoken **Place** ...
... the Realm of Monsters ...
... **the End of** the **World** ...
... **Hell** on **Earth** ...
... the Blight of the Ages ...
...the Land of the **Damned.**

Creation Legends

The *Tristine Chronicles* are considered to be the most authoritative reference on many aspects of ancient Palladium history. That would be the case for the Land of the Damned, were it not for a bizarre incident some 300 years ago that sent the world's academic community into a tailspin, pushed the history of the Land of the Damned further into mystery, and questioned the legitimacy of the Tristine Chronicles altogether.

For much of recorded history, the chronicle of the *Chaos War,* the defeat of the Old Ones and the eventual devolution of the Land of the Damned into a chaotic realm of monsters came from a single book, the *Thurgeh Fragment,* a section of the Tristine Chronicles thought to be the largest and most authoritative in existence. Long held in the private library of an eccentric (and filthy rich) alchemist named *Skedley Morish,* the Thurgeh Fragment gave the world its only account of how the Land of the Damned originally formed. For years upon years, Skedley Morish made a fortune by charging academics a fee to see and read the treasured manuscript. Apparently, it was more profitable for Morish to charge his own reading fees for the book than to sell it to the *Library of Bletherad* despite the ever-increasing sums the Library offered to buy the book from him. Some think Morish was only holding out for the Library's best offer, while others think he was just a miser who liked hoarding information. And still others believed he got a thrill charging "the world" for something that should have been public knowledge. Whatever his motivation, Morish kept a tight grip on his Thurgeh Fragment, causing a costly bottleneck in the historical study of the Palladium World.

Some 300 years ago, Morish's fortress-like home was raided by a large and well-organized group of adventurers who were intent on stealing the miser's stockpile of gold and treasure kept there. Those closest to Morish believed the intruders were either collecting on a debt Morish owed or avenging a wrong Morish had perpetrated. Both were equally likely, since Morish had a terrible gambling addiction as well as a propensity to hire thugs to terrorize those who would not sell him alchemical components at prices Morish considered fair.

The upshot of the event was by the night's end, Morish lay dead, his home was a smoking ruin, and his vast collection of magical items, money, alchemical agents and priceless historical artifacts (of which the *Thurgeh Fragment* was merely one) were missing.

The academic world was in a furor. Gone was an important bit of information, and though many scholars had made their own copies of the Thurgeh Fragment, when compared to each other, they all differed quite a bit regarding the many details of the early history of the Land of the Damned. It was quite the mystery, for how could so many scholars have transcribed the same thing in such different ways?

The answer came about 50 years later, when a scholar belonging to the *Order of Ages,* a shadowy group of academics and conspiracy theorists dedicated to chronicling the Age of Chaos, stepped forward. According to this individual, whose name has oddly been lost to history, the reason why no Thurgeh Fragment copies matched up is because the Thurgeh Fragment

itself was a hoax, a magic item Morish crafted to mimic the Tristine Chronicles. Though the Fragment showed the same basic story, its details changed every time somebody would read it, which is why all the transcribers walked away with differing accounts of how the Age of Chaos came to an end.

"Good enough," thought the world's scholars. But then the Order of Ages went one step further, and this is where things started getting sticky. Not only did the Order *claim* the Thurgeh manuscript was a fake, but so is *every other existing fragment of the Tristine Chronicles!* The Order offered a bizarre and complicated theory about how the Tristine Chronicles were a) created as a cruel joke by the Old Ones before they were defeated, b) written by hundreds of different authors over the years to make a few fast gold pieces, c) penned by Dragons for reasons unknown, or d) an improbable combination of all three. According to the Order of the Ages, the end result was the same: the Tristine Chronicles were a phony account of the world's true history, *especially* when it concerned the events of the Chaos War and the creation of the Land of the Damned.

As one might expect, most people, particularly the clergy, scholars and nobility, condemned the theory put forth by the Order of Ages. The Tristine Chronicles had existed for eons and although there were different and sometimes contradictory and obviously incomplete versions of the great book, most learned people in the world accepted the Chronicles as an authentic (if cryptic) account of ancient times, filled with clues to the past and prophecies of the future. Many voiced their disdain for the Order of Ages and loudly condemned them as agents and dupes of the Old Ones. After all, it was no secret that the Order of Ages advocated *chaos* and rejected many things other knowledgeable folk accepted as "truths." For example, the Order of Ages has always questioned the validity of the Tristine Chronicles, and does not even believe the *Chaos War* ever happened. They also propose that if the Old Ones ever really existed, they went underground voluntarily, so they could work their evils on the world in more insidious ways.

When the Order rebuked the history of the Tristine Chronicles and presented the theory that it was a "patchwork fake" that spanned the ages, it hit the academic circuit like a maelstrom. It made the initial uproar over the disappearance of the Thurgeh Fragment seem like a minor incident. Those who publicly stated that they believed the Order of Ages' theory that the Tristine Chronicles were fake often found themselves under attack by the multitude who believed the Chronicles to be genuine. Attacks went the other way, with all manner of foul accusations pointed against the Order. It did not help matters when known cults and organizations known to support anarchy or who worshiped the Old Ones sided with one view or the other. Religious cults and paramilitary groups worldwide got in on the fracas, and for more than a generation, the **Fragment Wars** broke out in nearly every major nation in the world. It was a quiet, secret kind of war comprised of assassination, intimidation, slander, covert destruction of property, and the occasional melee or small riot in broad daylight.

While the Fragment Wars were hell on the world's academic community, adventurers everywhere profited as they soon found themselves with more work being thrown at them than they could handle. In large cities especially, it seemed a freelance adventurer could hardly throw a rock without hitting somebody offering to hire courageous souls either to seek information proving or disproving the Tristine Chronicles' validity, or to assault or discredit certain individuals, claims or organizations who disbelieved in the Chronicles.

For more than a decade the Fragment Wars took a terrible toll on the world's libraries and universities as entire drafts of the Tristine Chronicles were destroyed, stolen, or hidden from the public. In the end, the Order of Ages *disappeared,* presumably destroyed or gone into hiding.

Gone also was the talk of the Tristine Chronicles being fake. As if by a happy coincidence, a new document, the *Aurora Tristinium,* surfaced which offered a comprehensive ancient history of the Chaos War and the creation of the Land of the Damned. The Aurora Tristinium was just a single chapter of the Tristine Chronicles, but what a chapter it was! For not only did it offer an early history of the world, but it also offered a history that was not tainted by accusations of forgery and fraud.

Most people were glad to accept this document as the truth, and put the Fragment Wars behind them. But there exists to this day a sizable number of scholars and adventurers who wonder if the Order of Ages might actually have been right. What if the Tristine Chronicles were pure bunk? What if the history of the world as people knew it was a sham? Secretly, groups have begun investigating this mystery, trying to locate old documents from the now defunct Order of Ages or to dig up their own evidence to either prove or refute the "evidence" in the Tristine Chronicles, as well as the veracity of the Aurora Tristinium. And again, secret forces have begun to emerge and wage war upon each other as simmering hostilities that went unresolved in the Fragment Wars threaten to re-ignite.

For now, the consensus is that the Aurora Tristinium's account of the Chaos War and the events that followed it is legitimate. A rough summation of what the Aurora Tristinium has to say follows. Due to its excessive length and extraordinarily dense prose, it is almost never reproduced by scholars in its entirety, and even the *Library of Bletherad,* which owns the document, has refrained from making a backup copy. To the skeptical, this is just more proof that the document is a carefully crafted fake designed to stop the Fragment Wars and to get people to agree on a common history of the world, even if it is a false one.

The Chaos War

Excerpted from the "Aurora Tristinium," an ancient chapter from the fabled **Tristine Chronicles:**

In the beginning, there was but darkness. All was an absence of everything. So it was from the emptiness of the black did crawl forth the Great Old Ones, also known as the Dreaded Ones. Birthed in blackness their souls only knew darkness and chaos, and lo' did they revel in it and did wield incredible power. Wretched and wicked creatures the Dreaded Old Ones, boiling and writhing in dark emotions that did fuel devious minds. And Great Ones craved servants and worshipers, thus they spawned a host of races to worship and serve them. Sad, mortal creatures made into slaves, food and playthings.

All manner of beasts most foul and creatures most pure were thus born in the wake of the Old Ones' wickedness, or thus summoned from beyond the mortal coil. Space and time bent to the

whim o' the Dreaded Old Ones to build that which they did envision. Thus, were born **Elf** and **Titan, Changeling** and **Minotaur,** man-beasts and demon-beasts all far too numerous to list, for they numbered into the thousands, and still did they come to fill the Ranks of Darkness.

So it was that the Old Ones did assemble a host the likes of which no man can envision. And upon this host, the Dreaded Ones inflicted terrible pain and misery, causing their thralls much despair and sorrow. For fear, pain and sorrow were the sweet nectars the Old Ones sucked from the marrow of their chattel.

So it was that the Age of Chaos did come to pass with the Dreaded Old Ones lords of all. Among their ranks stood Xy **"The" Great Old One,** symbol of power incarnate and the Greatest of the Great Old Ones; **Netosa the Eternal Darkness,** symbol of suffering, despair and the undead; **Agu the Deviant,** symbol of life, death and rebirth, **Al-Vil the Foul,** symbol of envy and jealousy, **Erva the Void,** symbol of darkness and death; **Ya-Ahk-Met the Schemer,** symbol of power and light, of blinding greed and crushing ambition, of the unbridled power and anarchy such ambition brings; **Tarm-Kin-Toe the Vicious,** symbol of hatred, treachery and vengeance; and **Ya-Blik the Terror,** symbol of pestilence, betrayal and pain.

Together, these forces of evil stood invincible atop this world they had crafted in their image, and lo, did it seem to all that the reign of the Old Ones would never cease.

Even empires born of gods rise and fall, and so it was that the Age of Chaos would come to an end. But not an easy end. For the Dreaded Ones were powerful beyond the reckoning of man, and the birth of a new age, like the birth of an infant, must first gestate and grow like a smoldering fire. It then comes with convulsion and spasming pain before bursting forth screaming unto the world. And so it was with an end to the Age of Chaos.

Howbeit that the light was born to force the darkness into retreat is a question that shall fall from the lips of every generation to follow.

Thus, let the answer be so written. Things did come to pass by the Old Ones' own hands. For Chaos begets chaos. Darkness brings only darkness; envy and lust breed hatred and murder; and so it was that the boastful and cruel Old Ones did bring about their own destruction, brought about on the whisper of the Serpent.

Understandeth this, the Dreaded Old Ones thy name is power. This is what the Dreaded Ones did themselves decree. All lesser beings were vanquished or seduced to serve the Consuming Darkness as their chattel, playthings, or food. So it was the Old Ones did conjure all manner of beast and being from the darkness; and those not thus created were called forth to serve with bowed head and bended knee from the recesses of the universe. Among the multitude the mighty Wrym ... the wizened Serpent ... they whom man calls the Dragon, were summoned and seduced by the promise of power and arcane knowledge so that they might willingly serve the Chaos Lords. And serve the Old Ones they did; as counsel, as herald, as slave master and as assassin. The Great Wyrm clawed their place among the chaos and though they retained some measure of power and freedom, they were slaves unto the Old Ones as were all others. So it was that the mighty Wryms fell to be mere lap dogs of the Dreaded Old Ones. And throughout the consuming darkness the anguish and regret of the Serpent echoed amidst the laughter of their masters. And thus, by so enslaving and bringing low the mighty Wyrm did the Dread Lords sow the seeds of their own destruction. For it was the Serpent who whispered treachery into the ears of Envy and Betrayal to strike against their brother, Xy, the Great Old One who reigned supreme over the Chaos and Darkness. It would be the Dragon to bring forth the rebellious rise of the archaic races against the Darkness, and 'twas the wizened Wyrms to lead the charge to smite the Old Ones down and give birth to the light of man. For when Xy, the greatest of the Evil, was made to fall victim to magic of his own making, and banished to the realm of sleep, the world of Chaos and Darkness was vanquished though its other masters and minions did fight on.

With Xy, The Great Old One, gone, the other Chaos Lords fell upon each other, making them more easy prey for the wrath of Wyrm and righteous warriors. Old One fought against Old One, and the endless legions of their slaves were made to war upon each other as well as to smite down the growing light. In the maddening clash of arms, entire peoples were snuffed out like candles before the storm, even their names remembered nevermore.

It was during this time that the Gods of Light and even some gods who reside in shadow, rose up against the Chaos and Darkness of the Old Ones to banish it forever from the world. For the Great Dragons called forth to all points of light beseeching them to join the battle; and join, many so did. By their

courage and their words, the Mighty Wyrms did ***bringeth*** *a mighty army of light ready to do battle. Beings man* ***would*** *call gods, angels, and creatures most alien from beyond the Dreaded Old* ***Ones'*** *reach; and they brought with them mysterious forces of magic, engines of war, machines wondrous in design and ability, and heroes of every imagining thundering forth to assault the evil that was the Darkness. Therefore the battle was joined with one common goal: to defeat the Dreaded Old Ones.*

'Twas that moment the first spark of light burst into a blaze, and the retreating Darkness drew a heavy breath and trembled for the first time. But the Chaos Lords were strong even without brother Xy, and the battle ***twixt*** *light and dark* ***raged*** *for an eon. A multitude would perish, and many a time did the Darkness seem to smother the Light. So it was during one such time that he who is now known as* ***Thoth*** *did appear, with a whole family of gods commanding power like none other had seen before. Thoth struck a mighty blow against the Armies of Chaos in an hour of* ***need,*** *and brought forth the fruit of victory so that the battle might rage on.*

And a brief moment of calm fell over the ***battlefiled,*** *and the light of hope did shine. The respite created by Thoth gave the rebels time to stoke the fires of hope and promise, and bring forth the likes* ***of Osiris, Isis, Set*** *and others of* ***Thoth's*** *family to join the fray against the Dreaded Old Ones. But as strong as Thoth* ***and*** *his kin may be, the Lord of Knowledge and Imagining knew that the Alliance* ***of Light*** *at his command was not enough to tip the balance of the conflict. For too long they had fought, and now these valiant warriors were growing weary. They had drawn upon every weapon and used every trick known to them. And though they wrought havoc among the Old* ***Ones'*** *minions, they did nothing to the Old Ones themselves. This sorely troubled the Alliance, for unless the Old Ones did fall, the Age of Chaos would be everlasting. Something had to be done, and Thoth swore he would find a way to break the* ***deadlock.***

With the forces of Chaos in disarray, Thoth sent his best and brightest to the far corners of the universe so that they might find some means ***of*** *forever ending the Chaos* ***Lords'*** *reign. After a time, three of these heroes emerged from the haze of the war with news most wondrous; they had gained the means by which the Old Ones might finally taste defeat. They could not destroy the foul Chaos Lords, but they could place them in an eternal slumber. The world would never be truly free of their presence, but then no world can ever be so. For how can goodness shine if there is no darkness to illuminate?*

So it was decided for these three great heroes - ***Lokum the Angel, Kym-Nark-Mar the Dragon Lord*** *and* ***Lictalon the Elven Master of Magic*** *- to work their secret* ***magicks*** *and put the evil to rest.*

On the eve of the last day of the war, the forces of Chaos rallied once more, and did seem as invincible as ever before. Indeed, many soldiers of the Alliance faltered before such a mighty host. Were it not for the valor of a small pantheon of gods, the alliance might not have stopped the war that day. Indeed, the beings known later as the ***Lost Pantheon*** *did charge the Old Ones themselves, without allies or great magic. Willing to die if for nothing more than to spur their brethren to action. Such was their spirit that the Lost Pantheon came as close as any might to slaying one of the Old Ones before they faltered (some say betrayed by one of their own) and were vanquished by the Darkness. But while the Lost Pantheon fell under the heel of the Old Ones, their valiant actions had won the day, for as the Chaos Lords looked up to bellow with victory, their voices turned to cries of disbelief, for in the wake of the Lost Pantheon* ***'s*** *carnage thundered the entire Alliance of Light, driving the Minions of Chaos before them like leaves blown by the wind. At the head of the armies of light rode the three heroes, who had their magicks ready and at hand. The Old Ones turned to do final battle with their enemies when the light struck.*

For all there to see, the world did skip a heartbeat in that wondrous and terrible moment whereupon the heroes of light did cast forth their magic. And ***lo,*** *for one terrifying instant, nothing moved for every living thing on that field of battle knew their fate would be decided in that moment. None knew the true effects of the Great Magic unleashed, not even the Three Heroes who did wield it. Some feared it would tear the universe asunder, while others thought it would purge reality of all evil (thereby taking the Chaos Lords and all on the battlefield along with it). Others believed it would snuff out all life, good and bad, or from thence would come forth a force even greater than the Old Ones that would devour them like a hungry shark. And should the magic leave the Old Ones standing, the Darkness would consume them with a terrible vengeance.*

Could anyone have trembled in that moment when the world held still, they would have, but all waited, breath held tight, for the Long Moment to pass, for then they would it be decided if the world would be quick or dead.

The Three Heroes were willing to destroy the world in order to save it. But save it they did, and debating the cost of the Great Magic had it worked differently is a fool's journey. ***It worked,*** *and the world was saved.*

In the space of a heart's single beat, it was over.

The Great Magic dealt the Old Ones such a blow that it rendered them senseless for all time to come, casting them in a slumber so deep 'twas unto death itself. And as the Old Ones fell, so did the enchantments with which they had built their vast, dark empire. Thereafter, the host of Chaos scattered like insects before the light. In the upheaval, vast hosts of Chaos Minions were destroyed. Those who survived the Great Magic fell before the swords of the Alliance, and the vengeance of the just was terrible indeed.

After the Reckoning, those Minions left standing quit the field, ready to accept the punishments they so richly deserved. At long last, the Chaos War was over, and the Alliance of Light stood battered and weary... but triumphant.

And so it was that the Light did breach the Darkness, first as a spark, then as a blaze; and the world did tremble and bleed, as many a creature, good and evil, did pass from existence in a war most terrible. A multitude of beings consumed; perished as though they had never been. But their sacrifice won the light and reshaped the world.

The Damned

Wherefore the Old Ones slumbered, the Alliance of Light took their place as the rightful lords of the world, and set about to build both a New Order and a means of making certain the Old Ones and their host would trouble the world no more.

Therefore following the triumph of the Light over Darkness, the next year was spent quelling the violence and evil of the host who yet survived and still served the Lords of Chaos. Creatures most foul, who confounded the Gods of Light and who vowed to raise They Who Slept to return the world to the Age of Chaos and Darkness. The enemy divided and scattered to the winds where they brought about great mischief and suffering to all whom they touched. The host of Darkness became a pestilence over the land causing lamentation and sickness of spirit, and cast a profane pale upon the world. All who rebuked them and their slumbering masters were targets for sin, corruption and evil. As long as more than a handful dwelt upon the land, Chaos and Darkness lived on and prevented the light from shining in all its glory.

Then Thoth said to his comrades, Behold, our enemies are many and assemble themselves together across the land. Let us go forth and cleanse the world once and for all, lest they achieve their goal and bring forth the slumbering Darkness. And when they heard his words and saw his resolute visage, they knew he spoke true and wise. So it was that the Light once again assembled a great army that rode down upon the host of Darkness, for they would not see their work undone nor have those who hath perished to have died in vain.

And there was a mighty slaughter.

Armies of Darkness took to fortresses and spat in defiance, until they were pulled down from their desolate sanctuaries, put to the sword and burnt to ash. Where the dark host did gather to hide among strangers, they were sought out; an end to which the shape changers performed. Being cast in the unrelenting light made the host to be of no courage and caused the boldness to drain away from their limbs. Quaking in fear of destruction, the army of the dark host found itself at the end of the world. There they did throw down their swords and plea for mercy. Looking out upon the hundreds of thousands they had put to flight, the Lords of Light could not be brought to slaughter them wholesale. To destroy so many who refused to take up arms would be an injustice, and the gods pondered if it might not be a ploy to bring them all down and deliver the world back to barbarism and chaos. And yet, the gods knew they could not let the Darkness loose upon the world. The Age of Chaos was done, and must remain done. It was decided that the deliverance of mercy would stay the hand of retribution and the dark host would for ever be imprisoned at the end of the world.

So it was They who Slept were placed in the womb of the earth, hidden and sealed away in places said unknown to all but Thoth and the Heroes Three; Lokum, Kym-Nark-Mar and Lictalon. And then the Gods of Light looked upon their enemy and the ground fell flat, then rose up to the heavens to the sound of trumpets until the stone seemed to touch the stars, sealing the host from the land to the east, and populating the mountains with beasts and dangers that made easy escape impossible. Around the rest of the land ... this land of the damned ... the seas were made to boil with sea monsters, serpents and peril. Wind and waters seethed with raging storms that appeared with no warning and put ships and flyers to their doom. And still there was not enough to keep the host of Darkness at bay, so a magic was worked to keep them from leaving lest they perish within a fortnight.

When the host saw their prison was a good one without means of escape, they charged the ramparts and dared claw at their keepers. Enraged by the host's lack of appreciation, the Gods of Light tore the forsaken land in two; sending a Great Rift from mountain to sea. And inside the belly of the Great Rift, where many did fall, the hell spawn waited to greet them and carry them to fates worst than death and places best left alone by man. Then Thoth, Lokum and Kym-Nark-Mar and all those who stood for Light looked upon the profane as Lictalon did bellow, Let this be both warning and punishment, that those who seek escape or retribution against the blameless find escape only at the bottom of yon abyss. And lest thou numbers grow too great, or thy spend thy time in escape or plots against the innocent, we bestow a darkness of thy own to face. That which lurks within yon abyss, and in this way thou may come to know the suffering thee have inflicted upon the innocent lo this past Age of Chaos. Send thy rage against the dark forces of the Great Rift where awaits beings as black and without heart or conscience as thy own damned souls. This is thy fate until ye forsake the Darkness and abandon thy Masters of Chaos. Until that day, this prison stands strong. Let any who come to here know that they shall live and die in this Land of the Damned, and no god nor man shall mourn their passing.

And behold, the ***Land of the Damned*** *was made.*

But still there was one more thing yet to be done. Thoth the Wise knew that no prison could be ordained escape proof, and that some would, indeed, escape to bring suffering to the world and seek to awaken the Old Ones. And so the gods chose to inspire and empower mortals who champion the cause of Light as hunters of demons and witchery. Champions who seek out the Darkness for the sole purpose but to smite down those who call the Darkness master and draw upon its cursed power. For while evil is the brother of good, forever joined at the hip, they would hope the world might never again know the Darkness of the Age of Chaos nor have to call the dreaded Old Ones lord and master.

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This is where the Aurora Tristinium stops. Much debate over the ominous last words has occupied a good deal of scholars for years. The consensus is that the Aurora Tristinium was a warning that one, mortals should avoid the place like the plague, and two, eventually some of the monsters living in the Land of the Damned will find a way out of their prison home and that people must be ready to battle them. The very last passage is believed, by most, to speak to secret societies and groups like Undead Hunters, Witch and Demon Hunters, Holy Crusaders and even the Rahu-Men and Titans who dedicate their lives to seeking and battling evil forces. Some extend the reference to include Priests of Light. Indeed, most ordinary (and largely uneducated) people outside the Great Northern Wilderness don't even know the Land of the Damned is real. They know little about the world around them. The life of most hard-working peasants revolves around their family, work and a world that is seldom larger than a fifty to one hundred mile (80 to 160 km) radius. Beyond that are people and places they only hear about in stories and will never see for themselves.

Among the common folk who *do* know about the Land of the Damned, it is only in a religious or mythological context. A place of punishment created by the gods for the worshipers of the Old Ones and their demonic hordes, monsters and evil minions. The common folk accept it as a place of evil and forbidden secrets that could destroy the world if ever let loose, thus it is a place to be feared and avoided. Many clergy use tales of the Land of the Damned to promote their own particular gods and religious philosophy, and/or as a means to frighten the faithful into supporting the church and being ever vigilant for dark magic, death cults, witchery and those who dare to worship the Old Ones. It is a tactic that keeps the faithful loyal and true, and makes them an army of willing watchmen quick to alert their clergy to any hint of demon worship, the supernatural, black arts, forbidden practices and opposing views. It is a most effective way to truly keep "the Darkness" in check as well as keeping an eye on outsiders and rivals.

On the other hand, scholars, clergy and nobles (people with means) are most likely to have a more extensive knowledge of the Land of the Damned, including its history, legends and rumor. Yet even among this group, perhaps no more than 25% know considerably more than the common man, and virtually none have any first-hand experience with the Land or any of its denizens. Rare is it for a Priest of Light to engage in actual battle against anything more than mortal minions of Darkness, the occasional lesser demon, or cultists. It is only the Holy Crusaders, Demon Hunters and those who make a career out of hunting and destroying demons, monsters and worshipers of the Old Ones (priests, wizards, and adventurers among them), who know the most about the Land of the Damned, its history and its host of darkness. For it is their business to know of such things. Likewise, men of arms and daring adventurers may hear and see things not commonly available to those living in civilized places, and may even come face to face with the denizens from the Land of the Damned as well as battle against forbidden magic and demonic beings. Again, however, such folk (the player characters probably counted among them) are few and far between.

Of course, there are those who believe the Land of the Damned presented in the Tristine Chronicles to be nothing more than a fairy tale, and the genuine lands men call the Land of the Damned to be little more than a harsh wilderness yet to give up its secrets. A place for the bold to explore and conquer. Some, like the Order of Ages, completely refute the Aurora Tristinium and call it a fake. A work of fiction with no basis in fact. Such extremists suggest that whatever creatures live in the Land of the Damned, they will probably never plague the rest of the world, and that anybody who tries sticking their nose into a region where it is not wanted (or needed) will only get it bitten off. It is a good argument, one that has no small number of supporters. But among the adventurers of the world, there is a growing sense that the Land of the Damned is very real, and that all is not well in that part of the world.

Whether the Land of the Damned was created as a prison by the gods or be it a natural place, it is nearly impossible to reach and plagued by monsters and demonkind. Those who have journeyed to its edge along the Great Northern Mountains know this as *fact.* For many have seen the standing stones, twisted trees, weird things and horrid monsters of the *Northern Hinterlands* there "in the shadow" of the Great Mountains. Creatures and things found nowhere else in the world. Creatures and land said to be corrupted by the evil that waits beyond the mountains of stone. It is a sentiment loudly seconded by those who have dared to explore or try to cross the treacherous mountains. Such adventurers and fools speak with conviction about forbidden magic, monsters and demon clans who live in the mountains and prey on fools such as they. Those who go deep into the Northern Mountains are seldom seen again, or found possessed by madness. And so the mountains keep hold of their secrets.

According to those who live in the Hinterlands, the problems with monsters and demons grow with each passing year. Rumor has it that crusaders, holy men and demon slayers fear the evil within has found a way out and is slowly leaking into the domain of man. In answer to that fear, many such "hunters" have taken up posts within the foothills and mountains to thwart the danger. They are joined by treasure seekers and adventurers who come to the land for personal gain or their own reasons. Incredibly, many of the heroes who enter the Land of the Damned do so with no real set agenda. Their idea is to penetrate as deeply into the region as possible, destroy whatever monsters they encounter, learn what they can, and come home to tell of their adventures and bask in the glory of their accomplishments. When most vanish never to be seen again, it only adds to the reputation of the region and generates more wild stories about the horrors that "must" lay beyond. Even the inhabitants of the *Shadow Coast* know nothing of the fabled Land of the Damned, except for countless myths, legends and rumors. (See the Northern Hinterlands sourcebook for information about the Shadow Coast, Barbarians, and the denizens who inhabit the lands on the doorstep of the Land of the Damned.)

Meanwhile, prophets speak of a growing evil in the Land of the Damned, and warn that the heroes of the world must step up and take care of it before it is too late. Sadly, exactly what the evil is or how the danger may manifest itself remains hidden from their vision.

The big problem is that though certain heroes feel the need to battle evil in and around the Land of the Damned, there is a near-total lack of information on the region or what is actually there, let alone any specific plots being hatched or villains afoot. All manner of tall tale, rumor, legend and myth prevail, with little idea as to which may be fact and what may be fiction. Strangers come and go. Barbarians and bandits account for more mishaps and death as any monsters, and death cults and worshipers of the Old Ones have been known to inhabit the foothills and mountains of the Land of the Damned for as long as any can remember.

Over the years, believers in the Tristine Chronicles have managed to gather a small body of knowledge cobbled together from the brief exploits of rare heroes who managed to come out of the region alive. The general consensus is that the Land of the Damned is everything the Tristine Chronicles says it is, and more. Much more. For now, whatever evil forces are locked within are their own worst enemy, fighting amongst themselves and railing against the wind. Most remain safely imprisoned. However, there is no denying that the evil is, somehow, finding its way into the mountains. From there, some have made their way into the Hinterlands and beyond into an unsuspecting world. If there is some breach in the gods' defenses or a portal

that circumvents the mountain wall of the prison, it remains yet undiscovered by mortals on the other side. If such a breach indeed exists, and the minions of the Old Ones persist to enter the world of mortals, an ancient evil may well seep into the world and bring about a new Age of Chaos. For now, it is unsung warriors, mystics and intrepid adventurers who oppose them in the frozen wilderness that is the Northern Hinterlands and the stony face of the Great Northern Mountains.

THE LAND OF THE DAMNED

Tall Tales, Folklore & Damned Lies

The following report is from the secret archives of the **Bizantium** Scouting Corps, an elite group of soldiers and scholars who explore the world in the name of the Bizantium monarchy. The prime mission of the Scouting Corps is to develop new trade routes and to expose mysterious hazards that traditionally trouble Bizantium merchant vessels. To a lesser extent, the Corps is responsible for developing military applications for the information it uncovers - secret attack lanes, ambush sites, secret passages, defensive measures, and so on.

The Bizantium Scouting Corps has had a passing interest in the *Land of the Damned* for close to a century, but it has never launched any "official" investigation into the realm. Though the Island Kingdom is the closest human realm to the Land of the Damned (the colonies of the Shadow Coast belonging to Bizantium), it considers the place so dangerous that to send scouts there is a blatant waste of life and valuable personnel. To quote one senior Bizantium official: "You might as well send them into the Wolfen Empire with steaks around their necks." (Besides, though Bizantium knows the Land of the Damned seethes with horrible monsters and dark magic, the region has never troubled the Island Kingdom or any other region outside of its borders. Even its Colonies of the Shadow Coast suffer no direct harm from the cursed land beyond the mountains. Thus, the Crown believes it should leave well enough alone.) It is interesting to note that most people in the Kingdom of Bizantium believe the **Tristine** Chronicles' claim that the Land of the Damned is a demon haunted prison and land of chaos. And a well built prison at that since very few manage to get in, and even fewer seem to come out.

Despite all that, a small group of die-hards within the Scouting Corps is appalled at their **organization's** lack of knowledge and complacency about the Land of the Damned and have committed themselves to investigating the region as best they can. Most of these individuals believe that the Crown's ongoing policy of ignoring the Realm of Monsters is a gross oversight for national security, and that if the Island Kingdom is ever to be safe from *all* its enemies - present and potential - then the Crown *must* have detailed intelligence on the Land of the Damned, for one can not defend against an enemy one knows nothing about.

At first, the Crown forbade any scouts to investigate the Land of the Damned, but after years of lobbying and continued pressure from the Corps' greatest members (and some secret deal-making behind closed doors that reportedly involved everything from bribes to threats of coups and assassination), the Crown relented and gave the go-ahead for secret exploration of the Land of the Damned by its famed Scouting Corps.

To **date,** the Scouting Corps has engineered three successful incursions into the Land of the **Damned,** which is to say nothing of the two dozen unsuccessful attempts that came before. Two of the incursions were land approaches into the Northern Mountains. A third was a naval landing onto the northern coast just beyond the Northern Mountains in the lowland area known as the *Grand Valley.*

All three of these incursions were short lived, however, with under a week's duration actually inside the forbidden land. Thus, they have all been the most cursory of visits. None of the landing parties ever ventured more than a day's hike from their landing site, and no scouts ever traveled in groups of less than four individuals. Despite their short range and restricted movement, the scouts yielded a considerable body of fact and rumor about the Land of the Damned. Most of this information came from other beings they had met along the way. Humans and monsters who lived on the shorelines (mostly shipwreck victims) or in the mountains; many of the mountain hermits admittedly lunatics driven mad by their experiences. In fact, the Scouting Corps reports there are dozens, perhaps hundreds, of madmen living like animals in the mountains or kept as slaves by tribes of **nonhumans.** It's from these "madmen," castaways and misanthropes that the Corps has brought back to Bizantium a wealth of (questionable) information. Some of it is supported by the scouts' own observations, other bits gleaned from conversations the scouting party deemed reliable and credible from sane residents, woodsmen and adventurers they met along the way. All of the information has been compiled in a single, "secret" report (already stolen by nefarious agents and sold to powers within the Western Empire, Wolfen High Command, Lords of the Eastern Territories and the Library of **Bletherad).** It is considered by most to be the most comprehensive description of the Land of the Damned on record (beating out the Library of **Bletherad's** previous writings) made by any outsider. Without question, the famous and admired *Defilers* could reveal volumes about the Land of the Damned, for it is said they spent half a year trapped in its confines, traversed the Great Rifts and beat the lords of The Citadel to win their freedom. However, the **leg-**

endary heroes would say nothing of their experience other than warn it is indeed a haunted and demon filled land of hopelessness and despair. A time capsule that harkens back to the Age of Chaos and a place where men should never dare to tread.

At present, various factions within the Bizantium Scouting Corps are planning new missions into the Northern Mountains (generally considered the vertical limits of the Land of the Damned) and deep into the lowlands. Any of these scouting parties will be ready for departure over the next six months. As usual, the Corps has clearance to hire or recruit outside adventurers to join the scouting parties, provided their honesty and willing cooperation can be assured. Though payment for freelancers depends on reputation and skill, the average hero can expect at least 10,000 gold for his or her part in a successful excursion to the Land of the Damned. "Successful" meaning that the party makes it there, disembarks, and returns with some kind of valuable "information" about the place. Since no expedition ever consists of more than one-half freelancers, the Scouts in the group can be trusted to make sure freelancers don't simply make up stories about the Land of the Damned just to collect their freelancer's fee. However, unlike previous incursions with groups of 4-6, these parties may consist of as many as a dozen men.

The first step in planning any such expedition is to consult the Corps' archives on the Land of the Damned. The Corps assembled this information by copying every text on the subject in the Library of Bletherad (a massive undertaking, since Corps scouts did all the copying themselves and in secret) and then supplementing it heavily with first-hand observations from the successful scouting trips. The archives also include a huge body of rumor and second-hand information taken from regional legends and lore, unverifiable sources (e.g., sailors' stories and tall tales), rumors and the like.

While the Scouting Corps has compiled a good bit of information about the Land of the Damned, it still provides only a sketchy portrait of the outer edge of the place, especially when compared to the wealth of information available on other parts of the world. Given the spottiness and unreliability of much of the Corps' archives, their veracity has been publicly questioned by a small but vocal minority of Bizantium scholars and explorers (most of whom are in direct competition with the Scouting Corps to chart the Land of the Damned). Still, the majority of the adventuring community believes (and rightly so) that the Bizantium Scouting Corps has the goods when it comes to entering the Land of the Damned, and if anybody wants to learn about that region, they had better schedule a trip to Bizantium first with tribute in hand to pay for valuable data.

The problem is, neither the Scouting Corps or its archives officially exist! Both the organization and its records are considered "State Secrets" of the Island Kingdom of Bizantium, and are closed to the public (and to most of the Bizantium government as well). Since so much of what the Corps does (outside of its dealings with the Land of the Damned) directly impacts the economic and military security of the Realm, the Crown has classified the whole thing with the sort of secrecy typically reserved for spy agencies or assassins' guilds. It might seem odd that such an innocuous-seeming agency would be enshrouded in official secrecy, but that is the way it is. At the same time, though, the Scouting Corps remains one of the Crown's worst kept secrets. Anybody adventuring in the northern half of the world is not only likely to know about the Corps itself, but they can probably spot its operatives as government agents and spies with relative ease. This is because the scouts see themselves as explorers, not spies, and have never been much inclined to keep secrets or maintain false pretenses with their fellow travelers. Thus, they conduct themselves with such seriousness and aura of self-importance and secrecy that their purpose is self evident, even if their exact purpose and master remains unknown to the casual observer. Still, the Crown considers their work secret and will punish any scout caught spilling the beans about himself, his employer (the Bizantium government), or his work. This goes for outsiders hired by the Scouting Corps, too. Anybody who works for the Crown in this regard is expected to keep it secret or suffer the consequences.

While the Scouting Corps archives cover every aspect of the Land of the Damned (history, monsters, geography, magic, etc.), separating fact from fiction has been, so far, impossible. As a result, there are substantial portions of the archive that the Scouting Corps does not trust and wishes to examine further to verify its truth or falsehood. Below is a sampling of the sort of information the Corps would like to know more about.

G.M. Note: The extent to which any of this is true is left to the G.M.'s imagination. If something here looks cool, make it real and build an adventure around it. Or the G.M. may present some effect or result contrary to the rumor. The Northern Mountains alone cover thousands of miles, so virtually anything is possible, and a group could spend *years* of adventuring in the Mountains without ever actually making it down into what most would consider the Land of the Damned proper. Of course, G.M.s are welcome to take anything from this list and present it as fact to the player characters when it is really untrue. But then rumor, innuendo and damn lies can lead to adventure as much as the truth. Incorrect information is a frequent occupational hazard of the adventurer, especially in the Land of the Damned.

The following rumor lists pertains only to the main focus of this book, i.e. the *Northern Mountains* and the *Great Rift*. Rumors regarding the **Northern Hinterlands** are found in that sourcebook, and other sections of the Land of the Damned are to be covered in the subsequent sourcebooks, **The Eternal Torment and The Citadel.**

A touch of evil. Some of the most prevalent rumors and tales about the Northern Mountains and Land of the Damned are about the presence of demons, monsters and other dark forces. Indeed, demons, Winter Storm Ice Demons, Deevils, Worms of Taut, Melech, dragons, Minotaurs, Angel-Demon Serpents, and hitherto unknown "demonic" beings (many described elsewhere in this book) are known to inhabit the Northern Mountains, especially its middle and upper reaches as well as the Land of the Damned proper. Many are the tales of these foul creatures, how they got here, what they want, why they kill, who they serve and so on (most unsubstantiated fiction or rumor). Elementals and other strange and nefarious beings may also be spoken of or encountered. Some of these creatures make the mountains their home, others come to escape the pressures or prying eyes of civilization, and many are *summoned* to do the bidding of masters of magic.

Voices of madness. It is a fact that madmen roam the mountains. Most are said to be adventurers whose minds have given

way to madness from their experiences in the Land of the Damned or the Northern Mountains. What secrets may be pried from their shattered minds is difficult to say, and varies dramatically from individual to individual. The madness is so deep rooted for most, that it is beyond the cure of magic or psionics. Some are little more than blithering lunatics or slobbering animals. Others are semi-functional, although they may speak in riddles, converse with themselves or beings that are not there, warn of dangers, engage in mad quests or plots, tell of evil or see things that do not exist. One must remember that the "truth" held by a madman may well be a delusion or fiction torn from a tortured mind.

Rumor Mill: The Northern Mountain Lowlands

01-04%: On the *south* face of more than half of all mountains in the area can be found large piles of reptilian skin. These huge sheets of translucent, discarded material come from an enormous race of serpents that live on the mountains and feed on small humanoids. The skin is particularly well suited for use as a durable and appealing *scroll parchment.* It is also rumored that any spell written on the parchment and then cast will enjoy a bonus of +1 to its spell strength.

05-08%: There are passages through the Northern Mountains that are perfectly safe and easy to travel through, only they are so perfectly camouflaged that they fade entirely into the stony background of the areas they crisscross. These "invisible routes" are unknown to virtually everyone living *outside* the Northern Mountains, even in the foothills of the Hinterlands, but known to "some" of the mountain tribes, crusaders, and madmen. Most can be used without fear of running into hostile humanoids or monsters. At least one such secret passageway has been discovered by one faction of the host of Darkness, and it is through that route that demons and foul creatures make their way into the Domain of Man. If it could be uncovered and sealed off, it would stem the flow of monsters.

09-12%: The best way to traverse the Northern Mountains is to thread a path through the many Lowland valleys throughout the region. To prevent this from becoming a well-trod byway through the mountains, a creature wielding incredible elemental force routinely calls down a torrent of water that floods all of the Lowland paths connecting the valleys to each other. Those caught in this flood will be drowned or dashed upon the rocks. Those living in the Lowland valleys have built special cisterns and retaining walls to keep these floods from washing them out, too. Who or what the force behind these water surges is remains unknown, but some think it to be an incredibly powerful (and evil) arch-Warlock who has utter mastery over the element of water.

13-16%: Every twenty years, a killer blizzard descends upon the Northern Mountains, blanketing it with over ten feet (3 m) of snow and lashing it with hurricane force winds for more than a week straight. This storm is part of the magical defenses set up by the Gods of Light to make the mountains impassable and to exterminate any who may have escaped into its valleys. However, the killer storm is now a year overdue. Could it be that these defenses have begun to falter?

17-20%: Under one of the mountains lies a secret mausoleum containing the crypts of none other than the bodies of the legendary ***Prestida Kings***! Only ... what are they doing ***her e***? Shouldn't they be in the Western Empire or Old Kingdom Mountains? (See Island at the Edge of the World for details about the Prestida Kings and history of the Changelings. Don't forget, according to the Aurora Tristinium, "shape changers" served the Alliance of Light to infiltrate and ferret out servants of the Darkness. Could these shape changers have been the feared and hated Changelings?)

21-24%: Huge veins of precious metals and gemstone deposits run through these mountains from top to bottom. However, there exists a curse that promises to destroy anyone who dares extract these riches from the rock. So far, the most notable victim of this curse is *King Lomig XIV,* the lost monarch of the Timiro Kingdom. He came here looking for a fortune to finance a triumphant return to the throne. All he found was agony and death.

25-28%: Western Empire explorers are pouring into the southern reaches of the mountains at an unprecedented pace. This suggests the West is combing the Northern Mountains in search of its secrets and treasures. Presumably, they are searching for something to aid them in realizing the Empire's resurgent dreams of conquering the world. Many an ancient ruin is found scattered throughout the Northern Mountains (and Hinterlands). Some are man-made, others ancient Dwarven retreats, Kobold tunnels and the abandoned abode of the ancient Minotaurs who once served the Old Ones. Additionally, dragons, practitioners of magic, Cults of the Dreaded Old Ones and other dark forces make their home in the mountains where they

study forbidden magic, pray and/or wait for opportunity. The Western Empire could find any or all of these valuable allies or dangerous pawns in their quest for power.

29-32%: Anybody entering the Northern Mountains begins to age at roughly ten times their usual rate. Those who get through the region in less than two weeks are unlikely to notice any ill effects, but those who stay for much longer than 1D4 months will quickly feel their life fading away like a shadow in the dawn.

33-36%: The Northern Mountains are losing altitude at a rate of 2D6 feet a year for reasons unknown to the scientific community. While few people do not seem to notice this or care about it, a few heroes believe this to be the work of the semi-latent Old Ones. The oldest creatures living here think it is because the magic used to create the mountain chain is fading at last, and the wall of stone to hold the monsters in the Land of the Damned will one day vanish.

37-40%: Ley lines throughout the region tend to come and go, fading in and out of existence. At their height, they connect the summit points of every mountain in the region, forming a ley line net that energizes the whole range to incredible magic levels. The nexuses alone form inter-dimensional doorways that let creatures enter or exit the Mountains and the Land of the Damned at will. At the same time, the great surging of ley line energy on the Northern Mountain summits drains virtually all the juice out of the rest of the ley lines within a thousand miles (1600 km), leaving them dry for spell casters and other folks who manipulate magical energy. It is said that at these times a great festival and blood sacrifices take place at The Citadel, and to the south, the Devil's Mark glows with light and energy and can deliver those who dare enter it to **anywhere** within the Land of the Damned or the very pits of Hell itself.

41-44%: The Northern Mountains exist simultaneously on over a dozen different worlds spread throughout the **Megaverse!** That is why so many different alien creatures and **humanoids** can be found here, an aspect used by both sides of the Chaos War when looking to recruit new soldiers. The trick is figuring out how to shift dimensions while in the Northern Mountains so that when one comes out, he is in the new world he wishes to explore. It is said that so far, those who have been able to do just that have done so only by accident and that many a Diabolist and **Summoner** search the Mountains for the secret of doing so at will.

45-48%: The Northern Mountains hold many secrets, and among them are secret rune forges deep within the mountains' foundations. Only these forges were not built by Dwarves, but by an unidentified race that was ancient when the Dwarves were still mere children. Hideous, insect-like beings who molded magic weapons of stone rather than metal. It was from these alien beings that the Dwarves learned their craft, but some legends have it that these people learned the arts of rune smithing from creatures so old that they predated even the Old Ones. Dwarves have long denied this legend and scholars had long considered such tales to be pure fiction until the fabled **Defilers** returned from the Land of the Damned with two such weapons in their possession.

49-52%: Towards the southern reaches of the Lowlands is a large natural opening in the mountains that any group of monsters could just waltz their way through. However, the lay of the rocks here camouflages the "secret entrance" to the passage so well that 99% of those who pass it never notice it. For that 1% who do, there is an interesting surprise waiting for them on the inside. Guarding this passageway, named *Guardians' Gate*, are three monsters: a **Ki-Lin** named Mareth, a Sphinx named **Otimus,** and a Za named Urgex. Mareth represents good alignments, **Otimus** represents selfish alignments, and Urgex represents evil alignments. Heroes could try to fight their way past the creatures, but these three are rather powerful (even among their own kind) and will have no **qualms** about vaporizing those who seek to cross swords with them. More commonly, those wishing to get past the Three Guardians must first pass a test devised by each of them.

Mareth's test is that he will want the player group to tell him three truly good deeds that they have done - deeds that have absolutely no selfish or evil motives or consequences attached to them. If the players can not do this, they will have to go out and do some good deeds and then return with news of them.

Otimus' test is for the players to tell him three notes of lore that he has not heard yet. Otimus is extremely well learned, so this is no easy task. First, the player character must make a successful Lore skill roll (it can be any kind of Lore skill; or he can draw upon past gaming experiences). If the player character is successful, the G.M. rolls percentile dice for Otimus; if Otimus scores a 33 or less, then the Sphinx has not heard what the player has to say, and the party is that much closer to getting past Guardians' Gate. If the G.M. rolled 34 or higher, Otimus has already heard that bit of lore and will ask for another one. Otimus will only tolerate hearing three things he has heard before. After that, he will send the player characters away and will not entertain an audience from them for at least 30 days. During that time, the player characters are urged to adventure and discover things they are sure Otimus does not know but would love to learn.

Urgex's test will be that one of the party members must impale himself on Urgex's soul-drinking rune sword ***Baladin,*** thereby sacrificing his soul for the benefit of the rest of the group. Really, this is just a mind game. Whoever impales himself on Urgex's sword will only take superficial damage. For this test, the treacherous Za will use an **illusionary** sword to mimic his real rune sword. This test is just a way to make the players fight among themselves as to who will jump on the sword, or to discover which among them is the most valiant. It is also a means of seeing if the player characters are cunning enough to try to get around this test, or if they will simply stand up to Urgex and refuse. Since all Urgex is looking for is some cruel entertainment, any of these actions, including open defiance, will be enough to satisfy him and let the group pass.

53-56%: There exists certain places in the region where anybody passing through will travel back in time by exactly one day and then go forward in an alternate time line from that day forth. The end result? The hero will co-exist with a fully autonomous duplicate of himself in two worlds.

57-60%: Ten years ago, a crew of adventurers calling themselves the *Joyous Gard* entered the Northern Mountain Lowlands in pursuit of the notorious arch-mage ***Vilnus Nightheart.*** Neither mage nor the Gard have ever returned, but Magic Pigeons from both parties asking for help continue to fly out of the region to guild houses in Bizantium.

61-64%: In the heart of the Lowlands is a fortified village built in a small "holler," or cleft in a large cliff face. This place is called *Venture's End*, and it is a village entirely populated by high-level adventurers and their offspring! Venture's End was **founded by** a large party of heroes who penetrated the Northern Mountains but got lost and decided to settle down here instead of kill themselves trying to find a way out. In time, additional lost parties stumbled upon the place, adding to its numbers. Today, the village has nearly **100** powerful adventurers amongst its ranks, and perhaps another 200 or 300 family members and children. The place is walled off and heavily guarded against attack. Genuinely friendly visitors might be let inside to rest and swap information, but those looking for trouble will most certainly get it (and in spades!) from the fiercely independent inhabitants of Venture's End. Fellow lost souls looking for peace and a place to call home are always welcomed to stay. Or so the story goes.

65-68%: The ghosts of the Soldiers of Light who died in the Chaos War stalk certain ranges in the Northern Mountains, but the greatest among them is a creature known as ***Kubali Kohja***, an ancient god who was the first being not native to this world to die in the war. He seeks his heart, which the Old Ones magically removed from his body. The heart is rumored to have been turned into a gigantic ruby and rests at the bottom of a deep crevasse. Until Kohja retrieves his heart, his restless spirit shall continue to trouble those who travel in the Northern Mountains, routinely challenging the living to duels (even though in his spectral form he can not actually hurt people with his sword). He is also believed to be responsible for sudden winds, storms of rain and snow, and fog.

69-72%: Throughout the mountains, there are areas where huge stones have been carved into curved pedestals. These pedestals are all arranged in a ring and point inwards. These places are thought to be ancient temples or sites where mysterious workers of magic would **teleport** from place to place. All of these sites radiate with magic.

73-76%: Thanks to an unusual element in the rock of the mountains, all mental telepathy works twice as well (will go twice as far, last twice as long, and cost only half the usual **I.S.P.** cost) as usual when performed in the mountains' valleys! It is also said that such telepathic communications reach the dreaming Old Ones and give them glimpses of the modern world.

77-80%: Under the full moon, all **humanoids** in the Northern Mountain Lowlands will sleep very deeply for a full 24 hours, during which time they will not dream. Their dreams are stolen by a mad wizard (or the Old Ones themselves) who uses these mental energies to serve as a kind of a blueprint for a surreal magical dimension he is crafting. When it is completed, he shall leave this world and rule the dimension of dreams he has made. His subjects will be the characters gleaned from everybody's dreams.

Others tell how the light of the full moon banishes the **undead**, but calls forth werebeasts and Ice Demons to hunt those not born in the mountains, slaying interlopers from both sides of the great stone wall.

81-84%: At night, in certain parts of the mountain, the cracks and crevasses glow with a soft green light. This comes from an exotic moss that grows within the mountains, feeding off the nutrients of the dead humanoids contained within. Should one eat any of this moss, it will prevent aging for 10 to 20 years. The moss can not be kept by any means and loses its magic properties seconds after it is scraped from the rock where it grows.

85-88%: Deep within the Lowlands is a secluded valley walled in on all sides by extremely tall and sheer mountainsides. Within this idyllic little place is a thriving village known as *Sussuria*, so named for the constant moaning wind that is heard throughout the village, caused by the wind rushing over the surrounding cliffs. Sussuria is a very multi-racial village, consisting of many individuals from the various Dying Races as well as outside adventurers who got lost and miraculously found their way to this village. Apparently, the **Sussurians** are almost never attacked by hostile creatures because their valley is so well secluded that most creatures do not even know the place is there. But if monsters did wish to lay siege to the village, they would be in for a rude shock, as the Sussurians have supposedly invented a new method for creating mechanical devices that store and expel magical energy in ways never before seen by any Wizard, Scholar or Alchemist.

89-92%: Veteran adventurers have long known of the *Place of Magic* in the Old Kingdom Mountains. What they might not know is that a *twin* facility can be found in the Northern Mountain Lowlands! Exactly how closely this **doppleganger** place resembles the true Place of Magic can only be determined by those with the skills to locate it and the courage to explore it. According to local legend, it exists in a secret valley that no **humanoid** has ever seen or set foot in, and is populated by **Minotaurs** and demons, many of whom still worship They who Sleep. See the Old **Ones sourcebook** for adventures, details and maps of the Place of Magic found in the Old Kingdom thousands of miles to the south.

93-96%: At the base of every mountain in the region can be found a massive treasure trove cleverly camouflaged from view. Most of these troves are actually small caverns or vaults dug into the mountains and then covered over with boulders. These places contain the riches of an ancient family of kings whose empire was in the Northern Hinterlands to the east. Fearing to be overthrown, the kings hid their greatest wealth here, where none have found it since.

Others claim this tale to be stupid lies and that any cavern or vaults carved into the stone will be the lair of a wild animal, Worm of Taut, **Bearman, Melech,** Giant Scuttle Crab, Winter Storm Ice Demon, Killgore or some equally foul and dangerous monster.

97-00%: In the northern reaches of the Lowlands, where the mountains fork and lead into a great plateau known as the Grand Valley, there is a natural corridor in the mountains that is, in effect, a giant roadway leading from the Grand Valley directly into the heart of the Northern Mountains! This alone is not so bad for adventurers (who would appreciate not having to climb all those mountains), but where it becomes worrisome is when one considers that the monsters and villains of this realm could just as easily use this "secret passage" to get *out* of the Land of the Damned and wreak havoc on the rest of the world. Thankfully, this corridor is sealed off right at the Grand **Valley's** "entrance" to the Northern Mountains by a small fortress-city that calls itself ***Northgate***. This citadel is a living remnant of what used to be the *Garrison*, an army of Holy Crusaders and

Demon Hunters inspired to police the Northern Mountains and slay those demons and hosts of Darkness who might escape their prison west of the mountains. Over the years, the Garrison waned in strength and nearly ceased to be. A small contingent of Garrison crusaders constructed a small walled town that filled the corridor connecting the Grand Valley of the inner Northern Mountains. In such tight confines, the Garrison remnants could easily defend against hordes of invading monsters, and as a result, the Garrison blockade actually worked. Over the years, the fortress town has built up more and more until it became what it is today: a mighty citadel consisting of enormous stone walls and an army of warriors and priests sealing off the Grand Valley passage, with numerous towers from which guardsmen can attack approaching invaders and intruders. Northgate is populated by the direct descendants of the Garrison and like minded heroes. The town is governed by a Council of Heroes, decorated combat veterans and learned men and women well versed in the ways of Darkness so that they might defeat it. At present, the Council consists of 12 high-level Holy Crusaders led by a powerful yet mysterious figure named *Lord Eldritch*, a 10th level Undead Hunter with simply astonishing psychic abilities. The Garrison is also home to a monastery that trains both Holy Crusaders and Undead Hunters, and a temple dedicated to the Pantheon of Light. A tribe of some two hundred Minotaurs who have long forsaken the Old Ones and a clan of thirty Titans are counted among its defenders and champions.

Rumor Mill: The Northern Mountain Midlands

01-04%: Throughout the Midlands, one will find the stone faces of the mountains to be terraced, like a huge staircase. This must have been done by an ancient civilization (some say the Minotaurs) who terraced the mountains so they might live there more easily. Terracing provides space for building houses and planting crops. But there are also those who insist that the Midland terraces are just another manifestation of the *Artifex Effect,* a weird phenomenon in which seemingly artificial things, like terraced landscapes and freestanding stone columns and megaliths, are actually formed naturally. Most reject this explanation and attribute the "architecture" to lost civilizations, giants, Minotaurs, and even Dwarves and Gnomes.

05-08%: There exist, especially in the Midlands, small communities populated entirely by members of the *Dying Races* (also known as the Archaic Races) who manage to put aside all of their differences so they might survive together. Many of these have been carefully hidden amongst the rock faces so wicked monsters and racist adventurers will not find them and start trouble. Chief among such settlements is the village of *Czaetse* (sih-ZAYT-see), which supposedly has a contingent of nearly every single Dying Race found in the Northern Mountains, including a remarkable number of races who once served the Old Ones as minions (Minotaurs included). There is also supposed to be six or seven races present within the city that *no* mortal from outside the region has ever seen nor learned of before.

09-12%: The iron ore pulled out of these mountains is so pure and strong that it does not have to be alloyed with other metals in order to make great weapons and armor out of it. In fact, the raw iron here is twice as hard as steel when tempered, and just as flexible.

13-16%: It is said, that any Goblin, Hob-Goblin, or Orc who ascends any higher than the Midlands will die of suffocation because of their lungs' inability to survive on thin air. As such, the Midlands has a large contingent of these folk, most of whom are from the remnants of the Barbarian hordes that came into the Northern Mountains generations ago and never found their way out. These people live a savage, barely civilized life in which any creature they happen upon is seen as prey. Even among their own kind, these savages are barely more than animals.

17-20%: Every year, *a falling star* lands somewhere in the Northern Mountains. The site of its landing glows like a burning ember and anybody who draws near to it or breathes the fumes given off will sicken and die! A select few, if exposed to the strange magic of the stone from the skies, will not die but instead develop strange and terrible powers and deformities like a Gigante! Could it be the Gigante are keepers of stars, gathering them up so they might give them power? Is there a secret community of Gigante Star Keepers somewhere in the mountains? Many claim there is.

21-24%: One of the more recent additions to the Northern Mountains is a renegade faction of Giants, exiled from the Nimro Kingdom after they tried to seize power there but failed. Numbering only one hundred, these staunch warriors have holed up on a mountainside where they are trying to figure out where they can establish a permanent base camp.

25-28%: There lives on a distant ledge a sullen Titan named *Sandubal* who came back to the Northern Mountains when he reached old age. As the lone descendant of a legendary warrior from the Chaos War, Sandubal has done all he could to help police the Mountains against monsters from the Land of the Damned below. It is said he knows many of the mountains' secrets, the name of every crusader and demon slayer who roams them - knowledge that can neither be purged from his mind with psionics, magic or torture (many have tried), nor will he give even the tiniest bit of information freely, except to the rare few he, and he alone, deems worthy. Sandubal is said to have lost all hope and retired from fighting. He now lives alone in some secret place in the mountain Midlands, awaiting a death that can not come too soon.

29-32%: There stands a prophecy that one day a stranger with blue hair and black eyes will enter this region and convince all of its creatures to stop fighting and victimizing each other. An era of peace unlike any before will follow and will last for 99 years. Once the stranger dies, the violence shall renew and the end of the world will be immediately at hand.

33-36%: Huge fields of mushrooms grow in the Midlands, especially on the sheer rock faces where only mosses, lichens, molds and other exotic fungi are found. These particular mushrooms are noteworthy because subjecting them to any jarring impact, such as smacking them with a hand or stepping on them, causes them to explode, inflicting one point of damage to everything within a five foot (1.5 m) radius. But the blast will also detonate neighboring mushrooms, and a chain reaction may (01-60% chance) ignite the entire field, often killing whatever living things are located within it.

37-40%: There are numerous ruined fortresses, strongholds and lairs throughout the Midlands, built by all manner of creatures over the ages - humans, Minotaurs, Trolls, Giants, Dwarves, Kobolds and countless others. Most have been long abandoned, others claimed by monsters, beasts or new generations. Those that remain abandoned or lay in ruin are said to be inhabited by the ghosts of the defenders, who offer assistance to those they find worthy to receive it and drive away, frighten to the point of madness and even bring about the death of those they do not. Of special note are the *Defenders of Crossguard*, a cadre of heroic Garrison soldiers who were wiped out during the *Battle of Draverse*. All thirty of the soldiers reportedly roam the surrounding area as ghosts, haunting the old fortress they once inhabited, and doing their best to harass the descendants of the monsters who slew them.

41-44%: Many claim the Old Ones can still reach out from their slumber and communicate telepathically with those willing to listen to them. In the Northern Mountain Midlands there can still be found small enclaves of *Minotaur Chaos Priests, Witches,* and *Cultists* who actively worship the Old Ones, receive instructions from them, and who are currently working on plots to bring their dreaded Chaos Lords back into the world. Such groups and individuals despise law, order and beauty, often harass and kidnap travelers and sacrifice them to their dark masters and to summon forth demonic terrors to plague the innocent.

45-48%: Atop a craggy outcropping, often enshrouded in a perpetual cloud bank, is the hidden city of *Sherezan*, best known as a secret training facility and monastery for Adepts, Warrior Monks, Undead Slayers and Witch Hunters. Sherezan's location is a closely guarded secret, and it is said that the best way to access the place is from the air or by teleportation, since the rocks leading up to it are just too precarious to climb. (Note: It is difficult to fly or teleport in the upper reaches of the Northern Mountains, however, due to harsh conditions, strong winds and sudden storms). Of course, few know its location, and the only way outsiders can find it is if led by one of its residents or by accident. Sherezan has been training monster hunters and "defenders of the blameless" for generations. When the current force of warriors, which currently number 999, receive a sign, they shall sweep down from their mountain top retreat as they do every fifty years and wage war against the evildoers of the Northern Mountains, cutting a swath of justice all the way to the Great Rift. Once there, the Army of Sherezan will confront the Minion Warriors of the Great Rift directly, doing battle with the hordes of demons and Deevils who have come to this world in such huge numbers. According to some, Sherezan has also been secretly sending its agents throughout the world, teaching willing students the ways of monster hunting in the hopes of getting more people from the outside to return to the hidden city and take up a life of endless training and righteous warfare against demonic forces of evil. Or so it is said. Less popular tales told by monster races, suggest Sherezan has fallen upon hardship, their monastery half in ruin and their numbers pitifully small. Many scholars are convinced the place is pure myth and never existed at all.

49-52%: Chiseled into the sides of some the region's higher cliff faces can be found extensive tombs containing the mummified remains of creatures who served the Old Ones but rebelled against them. Many such creatures defected to the Alliance of

Light, but some could not. Those who never managed to escape the clutches of the Old Ones built secret tombs for themselves and committed suicide there. They brought with them all of the riches and magic items they had, which is why so many freebooters in the region eventually try their hand at finding and raiding these places. But looters should be warned: climbing to the tombs is dangerous, defeating their many booby traps is only more so, and confronting the *Mummy Immortalus* bodyguards is sure death for all but the most skillful of warriors.

53-56%: Rumor has it, somewhere in the Midlands, a recent landslide has exposed a huge natural cave extending deep in the earth. This cave system is part of a much larger underground network of caves, labyrinths and catacombs that are home to a wide variety of subterranean creatures, including *Kobolds, Minotaurs*, and even a few races almost nobody has ever seen before. Chief among these peoples are *Troglodytes,* which can be found in huge numbers beneath the Northern Mountains. Ordinarily peaceful folk, there has been discovered an offshoot of Troglodyte society that seems to pose a serious threat to the surface world. Possessing lean, muscular bodies, larger teeth and claws, and an armored hide, a sub-race of ultra-aggressive Troglodytes (or something like them) has begun popping up in small clans all over the Northern Mountains, raiding whatever settlements they can find and generally making life miserable for any surface dweller that crosses their path. This exposed cave mentioned before provides a circuitous underground path to the city of *Rathgard*, the headquarters for the bulk of these "new" Troglodytes. Whether this approach path is used to invade and exterminate these new creatures or to try to figure out what makes them tick is a decision left to bold adventurers. Of course, they should keep in mind that any information on new forms of Troglodytes is bound to have a wealthy buyer somewhere in the world, so perhaps it would be worthwhile to take a look around and grab a prisoner or two for no such creature has ever been proven to exist, and Bizantium Scholars believe they are a fairy tale boogeyman with no basis in reality.

57-60%: During the Elf-Dwarf War, it is said the Dwarves built a series of ingenious underground tunnels and a citadel in the Midlands. Nobody is quite sure what purpose this place once served or whatever happened to this secret complex or those who built it. All that is certain is that more than one Dwarven text mentions its creation, but nothing more. It has never been uncovered. Whether it is empty or filled with magic or treasure, destroyed, abandoned, or occupied by some other race is anybody's guess.

61-64%: The Gnome freehold of *Grayvale* is perhaps the greatest remaining gathering of Gnomes in this part of the world. Reports of the settlement's size vary from 1,000 to 10,000 inhabitants, but one thing remains certain: Grayvale possesses a tremendous concentration of all kinds of spell casters, from ordinary Wizards and Warlocks to more esoteric practitioners of magic, to sinister Summoners and Diabolists. The village is almost like a big time capsule for all the types of magic practiced in the world at any given time. As the stories go, Grayvale's prime mission (aside from survival) is to examine the magical mysteries of this land and find out what shreds of magic knowledge might have been lost that they can recover and put to good use. Grayvale is also said to be a rather militant town, which might seem odd coming from Gnomes, but considering that race's history of being slaughtered by others, one can see why they may have become so touchy about security. Those who are welcomed into the settlement are treated like visiting dignitaries, but those who wrong the settlement or attack it outright shall be dealt the swiftest punishment, devoid of compassion or mercy. While many outsiders discount the existence of a place such at Grayvale, it is a fact that Gnomes live in the Midlands and magic abounds.

65-68%: Every few nights, a hideous, spectral laughter can be heard echoing throughout the valleys and ravines of the Midlands. It is said this voice belongs to a long-dead warrior named *Chucaban* who lost his life in a contest against a demon lord of untold strength. After the fight, Chucaban's ghost so haunted the demon that the infernal creature eventually took its own life. Satisfied, the ghostly Chucaban roams the Midlands, laughing at his final victory. It is said, anybody who confronts this ghost will be forced to fight it in a single duel, for which Chucaban will marshal all of its Ectoplasmic energies and assume a solid form of its old human self. This manifestation behaves exactly how his real body once did and responds accordingly. If his corporeal form can be defeated or slain, the body vanishes and the ghost goes on its way, laughing heartily for the good sport. If Chucaban wins, he will slay his opponent, taking the head as a souvenir, and walk away laughing about his new triumph. Typically the ghost challenges inhuman creatures, particularly those of Anarchist or evil alignment, but the spirit will accept a challenge from any who demand it. It is said once in a great while, Chucaban will spare the life of his opponent if he finds him a worthy adversary with goodness or a chance for redemption. Chucaban was a 9th level Warrior Monk when he died. He was once part of the *Fellowship of the Spinning Leaf,* but was expelled from that order on account of his brutality and arrogance.

69-72%: Periodically, travelers will come across large human faces etched into the rock of a mountainside. These faces stand about five feet (1.5 m) tall, and when asked a question, they will truthfully answer it, whatever it is. These faces are apparently all-knowing, and can answer questions on *anything.* However, a person may only ever ask them one question, after which none of the "talking faces" of the Midlands will ever speak to that character again! Never.

73-76%: There once was a sizable contingent of Dwarves in the Midlands, but they all mysteriously disappeared many thousands of years ago. It is thought they built a secret underground city for themselves and retreated into it, leaving their access to the surface well hidden. There in the ground, do they continue to practice the ancient ways of magic and craft rune weapons, like they did during the Time of a Thousand Magicks. This legend has persisted for centuries even though Dwarves insist no such community exists and not the slightest trace of it has ever been found.

77-80%: Ten years ago, a horde of inhuman barbarians attacked several colonies along the *Bizantium Colonies of the Shadow Coast*, along the sea in the Northern Hinterlands. Fleeing from Bizantium soldiers, the barbarians entered the Northern Mountains and were never heard from again. However, a ranger who recently came out of the mountains insists he sighted the remains of the barbarian party living well somewhere within the Northern Mountain Midlands. The Bizantium government has put sizable bounties on the heads of any of those barbarians who are brought to justice *alive*.

81-84%: At ley line nexus points and places of magic, the very rock reverberates with evil energies, and any psychic who uses Object Read on the mountains themselves is besieged with visions of the Old Ones, demon hordes and terrible atrocities from during the Age of Chaos! The result is traumatic to say the least. Roll on the following table to determine the outcome of the experience:

01-20% The psychic screams and passes out for 6D6 minutes. Thankfully, the character successfully recovers with no clear memory of what he has just experienced, but knows never to do that again.

21-40% The psychic bellows and moans as he falls into a trance state and speaks in tongues (the language of the Old Ones?). The ordeal lasts for 20 minutes and nothing can break the spell, not even removing the character far from the location. When the psychic recovers, his hair is streaked with grey and he knows he has been embraced by evil. If the character did not already have them, he now possesses the psychic powers *of Sense Evil* and *Sense Dimensional Anomalies.* He also suffers from *Phobia: Old Ones* and from paranoia and revulsion regarding all people, things and places "stained" by the Old Ones, including the Northern Mountains themselves, the Land of the Damned proper, evil artifacts, Witches and Minion Races - doesn't like, approve or trust them even if the character was or is evil himself. In fact, if the character was a selfish or evil alignment, he or she is so repulsed by the experienced that the character is likely to consider forsaking the ways of evil (change alignment to Unprincipled, Scrupulous or Principled; player's decision).

41-60% The psychic screams and convulses in agony before lapsing into a coma. When he recovers 1D6 hours later, he is permanently changed. Roll for one Random Insanity, plus the character is *Fascinated with Death in All its Forms* (see Psychosis 01-15 on page 27 of *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®),* and suffers either from the *They're Out to Get Me* syndrome or *Superman Syndrome* (both also found on page 27 of *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®).*

61-80% The psychic doesn't say a word but collapses. When he recovers 2D6 hours later, he is permanently deranged. Roll once on the Neurosis Table, once on the Psychosis Table, once on the Phobia Table and once on the Obsession Table (tables are found on pages 26-28 of *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®).* Plus the character tends to see conspiracy and evil behind every rock.

81-90% The psychic doesn't say a word but collapses. When he recovers 2D6 hours later he is permanently changed. Knows everything in the Tristine Chronicles is true, although he can not remember details, knows there are portals to more than one hell in the Land of the Damned, and knows the Old Ones, even in their defeat and slumber, dream of returning the world to darkness and chaos. Even if an evil alignment, the character will NEVER trust or believe any creature that worships or supports the Old Ones (likely to extend to those who associate with or command any supernatural evil). Perhaps most debilitating, the psychic refuses to use his *psionic powers* except under the most dire of circumstances!

91-00% The psychic shrieks, grabs his head and collapses into a catatonic state that lasts for two days. When he recovers, the character is effectively lobotimized, a drooling, walking turnip. However, at random moments, the character may begin to ramble incoherently (warnings, information, suggestions, etc., but in a crazed, unclear way) or even seem lucid. During rare lucid moments, the character can engage in conversation, feed himself and even use his psychic abilities at half their normal strength. However, these semi-functional moments seldom last for more than 3D6+12 minutes and never more than once a day. Only a god or other powerful supernatural being has any hope at restoring the individual, but I.Q., M.E. and P.E. attributes are permanently reduced by half, the character has no memory of what he saw from the Object Read or his experiences while catatonic, and loses *all* psychic abilities. Select a new O.C.C.

85-88%: Somewhere within the Midlands lies an abandoned workshop in which dozens of amazing mechanical devices lay half-built. Among them are numerous devices to aid in mountain climbing, primitive gliders, flamethrower-like weapons, and a variety of other gizmos. Most people will not be able to figure out what these things are meant for, much less how to finish building them. But those who do, could make quite a name for themselves finishing these mysterious inventions. Heck, the design notebooks left behind here are worth a fortune and provide complete schematics for every invention in the workshop. If such a place is real, that is, and if real, if the documents and gizmos have not been destroyed by the elements, brutish intruders or the passage of time.

89-92%: A huge ring of stone obelisks can be found atop a large terrace in the heart of the Midlands. Those who stand in the center of this obelisk ring under a full moon will be cursed with *lycanthropy* and will become a Were-Beast! Already, entire tribes of newly made Were-Creatures, formed by these mysterious obelisks, are said to roam the area, terrorizing any humanoids they come across, and showing particular viciousness to Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes and humans.

93-96%: In the southern Midlands, there is an enormous sheer cliff, roughly the size of a small mountain itself. On this cliff is a huge black, sooty blast mark, as if some terrible explosion went off in front of the cliff and stained the rock with its blast. All throughout the blast mark are the full-body silhouettes of people shielding themselves from some kind of blast of light or heat. Their "silhouettes" are as if people were standing in front of the cliff and were incinerated, leaving only their silhouette image on the rock behind them. Who were these people and what was this explosion? Who did it and how?

97-00%: At certain places on the western side of the Northern Mountains, lesser peaks of the Midlands are splitting in two. Large, seam-like cracks form down their center, and with a terrible shudder, the mountains crack open and fall apart, revealing their core. Sometimes the core of these mountains is a huge hive of monsters awaiting release. Sometimes it is a massive treasure trove. Sometimes a tunnel network or ancient ruin. Sometimes it is a doorway to another world or dimension. And sometimes it is a perfectly spherical piece of magma-like stone, glowing white-hot, yet entirely solid. Some say these are the hearts of the mountains, and that they shall burn like this for a thousand years after their mountain has split apart. Demons and Deevils supposedly like to use these "mountain seeds" as weapons, while mountain folk use them for heat and to cook their food. It is also said these "seeds," if buried, will actually give rise to a magnificent new mountain peak within 1D6 years.

Rumor Mill: Northern Mountain Highlands & Death Zone

01-04%: High above the Northern Mountains, there can be seen floating in the air a magnificent castle of apparently Elven architecture. The only way to access this *Palace of Dreams* is from the highest summits in the range, but even then, the Palace will be several thousand feet/meters out of reach.

05-08%: Warlocks who enter the Highlands will find that they are 33% more likely to summon a Greater Elemental! Summoners and Diabolists, on the other hand, will find that any summoning circle will *not* work in the highlands at all.

09-12%: Over the eons, Kobolds have dug many extensive catacombs into the heart of the Northern Mountains. Most of these catacombs are standalone structures, but a few actually have long, winding tunnels that connect to other catacombs and even to the underground habitats of Troglodytes, Minotaurs, and other subterranean creatures.

In the Highlands, there are surface entrances to three particularly noteworthy catacombs, collectively referred to as the *Skoltuk Trinity*, all of which had once been homes to thriving Kobold communities, but now might very well be abandoned. Until scouts examine these places for themselves, there is no telling what state they are in. The Trinity Kobolds were a remarkable group of builders, known for their exceptional weapon smithing and designing skills, for their great success at mining (having tapped deep veins of precious metals throughout the Highlands), and for their skill as architects. Their skill as architects is their greatest, for the Trinity catacombs reportedly contain entire cities built into the stone foundations of the mountains. These metropoli are a perfect mixture of form and function, enough to make even the most biased Dwarven builder to grudgingly acknowledge that among their kind, the Trinity Kobolds were some of the most brilliant and skilled.

Rumor has it the Trinity Kobolds were wiped out by a mysterious magical scourge, or that they were driven out of their homes, and now wander the surface of the Mountains in ragtag barbarian tribes. Still other tales insist that these Kobolds have dug even further underground, where they are hard at work building a secret Kobold Empire so extensive that should it ever decide to surface, it might very well take over a substantial part of the Northern Mountains, and even the Northern Hinterlands, for itself. Of course, such fears might be ill-founded. After all, if the Trinity Kobolds can build a mighty empire without going to the surface, why would they want to?

13-16%: A fallen Spirit of Light named *Getrecchi* lives atop one of the minor peaks, having been expelled from the celestial realm he once served. Getrecchi was a soldier in the Chaos War and knows part of the incantation used to put the Old Ones asleep. Now embittered by his fall from grace, he will sell his knowledge to anybody who might wish to use it to reawaken the Chaos Lords. For Getrecchi, it is better that the world be destroyed than for him to have to live in it among mortals.

17-20%: One of the mountains in the region is actually a volcano of world-shaking power. Only it has never erupted in recorded history. When it does, it is feared to blow a hole in the Northern Mountains large enough to march an army through. Cultists and prophets of questionable character insist the eruption is long overdue and could happen at any time unless somehow prevented ... but how? And could it be that this eruption is not a natural event, but a sinister plot put into motion by one of the dark powers from the Land of the Damned? Or could it all be a lie to frighten people away from that region? If so, why is that? Is something going on there? Then again, tall tales about the Mountains flourish and this could just be one of them.

21-24%: Deep within a cave in the upper altitudes of the Northern Mountains lives a Minotaur who gained immortality as a gift for its dedicated service to the Old Ones. This wicked creature has actually been around since the last days of the Chaos War and has been in hiding ever since. Isolated in the mountain depths, this villain is convinced if he ever shows his face in the light of day, the gods will smite him down like a bug. Despite such fears, the villain has been plotting the return of the Old Ones since the war ended, and frequently offers advice, magic and aid to fellow agents of evil. He will do just about anything that promises their return to glory.

25-28%: Pegasus nests are on virtually every mountaintop, where hunters can usually find up to a dozen eggs. On any open market, each egg can fetch a king's ransom (at least 10,000 gold each, often three or four times that). Eggs bearing a speckled, mottled or spotted shell pattern are said to house twins or triplets. Such twins and triplets tend to be telepathically linked and have even more powerful psionic abilities than usual. Such eggs can fetch 10 times more than an ordinary one, sometimes more. Of course, Pegasus are protective parents who guard their nests well. Besides, Gryphons, Dragondactyls and other flying creatures (the dragon, Sphinx and Za among them) also inhabit these heights and do not appreciate intrusions by humanoids.

29-32%: Dragons love to perch atop the peaks of the high mountains and meet with each other, like old friends catching up on past times. These **wyrms** are usually adults and ancient beasts, some, it is said, are even veterans of the Chaos War come back to reminisce about their glory days. Given the solitary nature of most dragons, these creatures must be hyper-social aberrations or proof positive that truly ancient dragons show a radically different personality than younger dragons. Apparently, most of the dragons of this sort are fairly congenial and will even tolerate the presence of mortals if those mortals show a genuine interest in hearing about the dragons' exploits and do not pester them for favors or secrets of magic. A word of warning: dragons can spin yarns for weeks before getting tired and do not appreciate being ignored or deserted in mid-yarn.

33-36%: Somewhere near one of the great peaks of the Highlands there exists a hidden treasure cache that includes many wondrous things, not the least of which is a scroll containing detailed instructions on how to construct a spell that will close the Great Rift (and all other inter-dimensional portals leading to and from the Palladium **World**) *forever*! All that one must do is actually get the spell to work, which reportedly requires so much P.P.E. one would have to sacrifice a thousand people or more at once to get it.

37-40%: The next time a hurricane rages across the western oceans of the **world,** it shall create such a storm surge that the waters will breach the western coastline of the Land of the Damned. When this happens, the world's oceans will begin flowing into the Great Rift, filling it up and pouring through the inter-dimensional gateways to other worlds. This process will not stop until the oceans of this world run dry, and entire worlds across the **Megaverse** lie under many **feet/meters** of water. When the oceans are dry, the Minions of the Old Ones will spread across the world to cause suffering and death.

It is said from the top of the Highlands, one can see this killer storm way off on the horizon. Whoever knows of the storm will have three days to stop it, turn it back to sea or get out of the region before it hits. Ordinary elemental magic is powerless to stop it, but legend says the storm *can* be turned or destroyed, only none knows how. This story has been told every time a bad hurricane season occurs for the last four hundred years, and the Great Storm has yet to appear.

41-44%: Somewhere in the southern half of the Northern Mountains, in the Highlands, there exists a massive Minotaur labyrinth named **Vazhkoth.** This place was the greatest of the Minotaur underground citadels during the Age of Chaos. It was here that many of the highest ranking Minotaur servants of the Old Ones carried out their part in the war against the Alliance of Light. On three different occasions, the Alliance besieged this place, and every time the Vazhkoth **Minotaurs** held out, inflicting grave casualties upon their invaders. When the great wall of mountains was raised by the gods, Vazhkoth was torn from the ground and raised to the top of them.

Today, the existence of Vazhkoth is fairly well known within and without the Land of the Damned, even if only as a topic of rumor and legend. The labyrinth was thought to have been abandoned near the end of the Chaos War, and many of its tunnels collapsed when it was pushed toward the heavens, but nobody knows for sure. Some scholars believe the site contains a massive underground Minotaur graveyard, where the Vazhkoth legions were finally cornered and dealt their final blow. Others believe the labyrinth was indeed overrun by the Alliance of Light, but they never had the time (or the desire) to loot the place's vast store of evil magic weapons, armor, spell books or treasures, all of which await collection to this day. Still others believe that a small contingent of Vazhkoth Minotaurs still live in the labyrinth, perhaps in suspended animation, perhaps in prayer, or perhaps in sorrow for their past sins, awaiting the call from their slumbering Old One masters or the right moment to redeem themselves.

Whatever rumor one believes, Vazhkoth is a place that very few adventurers seek out, largely because they fear it more than any others. Minotaur graveyards are almost always haunted in the worst way. Abandoned treasure troves are bound to be so extensively trapped one would do best to leave the place alone. And if the labyrinth is still inhabited by fully empowered *Chaos Priests* or other such disciples of the Old Ones, there is no telling what horrors await those who intrude upon this evil place. No, many adventurers think, the Northern Mountains provide enough challenge without searching out a place where the Old Ones' touch is still present. Thus, it is said to have remained lost and gone unexplored for tens of thousands of years. (Or so people think. It might have been looted to the bone by now or serves as a central gathering place for demons and other dark forces loyal to the Old Ones. It may even be responsible for the demons that are currently escaping from the bowels of the Land of the Damned! Provided it even still exists at all.)

45-48%: There exists no disease in the Northern Mountains outside of what certain creatures living there might be able to inflict as a special natural ability or putrid magic. Those who come to the region already sick or wasting away will find themselves miraculously cured within a week without having to do anything about it at all. Ironically, this phenomenon is especially powerful on any **mountaintop** within the so-called "Death Zone." One only need stay on a Death Zone summit for a full 24 hours, and any sickness or disease they have will vanish forever. Of course, actually surviving the cold and wind up there is another matter. Those who are cured by the region's odd anti-disease properties remain cured as long as they remain in the Northern Mountains or the depths of the Land of the Damned. Those who leave are said to perish within a year, although most die from violence and misfortune, *not* the disease from which they were cured. This has given rise to talk about curses and how those cured by the mountains are forever indebted to them and must remain.

49-52%: Among the northernmost peaks of the Northern Mountains, visible from the Colonies of the Shadow Coast, *gold* will spontaneously change into silver after 3D6 days! After another 3D6 days, that silver will again transform, this time into copper. After another 3D6 days, the copper will turn into iron. And after another 3D6 days, that iron changes into stone. This explains the occurrence of millions of coin shaped stones found throughout the region, which locals frequently use as sling stones or fired by catapult and **ballista** as a kind of siege-scale buckshot weapon. Enormous piles of these stones can be found all throughout the Northern Mountain Highlands, fueling speculation that there once was a great empire that stashed its collective treasure there. The precious metals might be gone, but what

of the vast piles of gemstones and magic items this empire must have owned?

53-56%: There exist secret empires of the so-called "Minion Races" that have not committed themselves or been drawn into the *Minion War* that has engulfed the *Great Rift* region of the Land of the Damned with renewed intensity. Many of these people are good or selfish alignments, and wish to establish a civilization of their own, not fight endlessly in some insane conflict between the greatest of the infernal powers. They will handsomely reward those adventurers who can help them in their quest to break free of the Minion War and live a peaceful and separate life. Those who have already escaped the Great Rift can be found living in small communities on the western side of the Northern Mountains; mainly in the Midlands and Highlands, where they can use the mountains' desolation, steep inclines and rock faces to hide and deter any attackers from approaching.

57-60%: If one listens long and hard enough, the howling winds of the "Death Zone" are actually saying something very, very slowly. Some believe the eolian voice is a long and plaintive cry for help by the Mountains themselves, who wish to be returned to the earth so that they may contain the world's evil no longer. Others believe the winds carry messages from distant parts of the world, or maybe even from other worlds, the gods, or the ghosts of gods slain in the struggle against the Old Ones (or even the Old Ones pleading, "let our people go")!

61-64%: Atop several of the highest peaks are massive, indestructible, freestanding crystal pillars, and when light is shined upon one, an intense beam comes out the other side. These crystals are thought to be an ancient message-sending device, for if a light beam is aimed right, it can hit the crystal atop another mountain, which can angle the beam to another mountain, and so on down the mountain range. By using a kind of Morse code-like signaling system, one could send instant messages throughout the Highlands and Death Zone using these crystals.

65-68%: High atop *Mount Shreva* in the Highlands lies the **Shapers' Realm,** a secret kingdom of Changelings where they do not hide their shape changing abilities. Life is good in the Shapers' Realm, which is largely powered and defended by all sorts of magic. Fully 66% of the population is some sort of shape changer (including some were-beasts and a few young dragons) and a good 22% are spell casters, with many of those being *Protean Mages,* the natural choice for this race. Although the elders of the Realm fear that one day the outside world will learn of its existence and spare no effort to destroy it, the younger generation feels that their home is in no jeopardy from anyone or anything. Rumor suggests that many are the descendants of the "shape changers" who once served the Alliance of Light. What the people of this community fail to realize is the group of Changeling renegades exiled from this place years ago for trying to overthrow it, now plot its destruction. These black-hearted individuals are willing to say or do almost anything to see the Shapers' Realm ruined.

69-72%: Any intelligent creature that ascends into the "Death Zone" will begin to glow all over. This makes them instantly identifiable, impossible to hide, and easy to see and attack, especially in the dark (attackers are +3 to strike). Those set aglow are easy marks for animal predators, demon slayers, bandits and the local monstrous inhabitants. It is said that this is a means of alerting the gods themselves that the forces of evil or foolish outsiders have reached the top of the world and are about to enter or exit the heart of the Land of the Damned. Those who manage to remain and survive for more than three nights in the Death Zone will see it fade away. Likewise, traveling 1000 feet (305 m) below the summit of the Death Zone will make the glow vanish.

73-76%: Anyone who ascends to a summit in the Death Zone will return with stark, white hair. This transformation often goes unnoticed by the climber because they are too bundled up to take stock of their personal appearance. In many cases, a freaky facial marking, sort of like a geometric pattern tattoo, marks the climber's face as well, in a color just one or two shades darker than the climber's skin. This is called the *Mark of Ascension,* and it is a means for the world to know who has managed to do what is supposed to be impossible - scale the uttermost heights of the Northern Mountains and survive. As a reward for this, those who bear the mark will live approximately twice as long as their kind normally does - barring death from combat, accidents or other sudden causes, that is.

77-80%: Legend has it that those who die in the Highlands are often frozen where they lay, their bodies kept in remarkably good condition. But for the dead, their suffering has only just begun, for while their bodies can not decompose, their souls remain trapped in their useless carcasses, doomed to view the world forever through dead, frozen eyes. Psychics might be able to contact passers-by telepathically, but other than that, the only hope for the frozen dead is for somebody to bring their body to a lower altitude so the body might thaw and run its course, and the spirit can finally rest.

81-84%: From atop one of the great peaks of the Death Zone, it is said that the wind stops, and reality no longer plays quite the role that it does elsewhere in the world. From such a vantage, an archer can fire an arrow that will land *anywhere* in the Palladium World, provided the archer knows the location! The arrow can not be used for attack, but to send messages.

For over a hundred years, mysterious notes attached to arrows have turned up in every major nation of the Palladium World, usually signed by somebody calling themself *Ghasa the Vigilant.* The letters are long, rambling treatises about how the end of the world is at hand and if the world knows what is good for itself, then people will learn to live in peace and harmony, lest they succumb to evil and darkness. Could these arrows all be coming from somewhere in the Death Zone? And if so, what exactly are they referring to? And who is this Ghasa the Vigilant?

85-88%: Hidden just on the threshold between the Highlands and the Death Zone on one of the Great Peaks is a small enclave where some of the most visionary magic research in the world is underway. This is the village of *Seven Sages,* named after the seven enigmatic figures who founded it. Their true identities and abilities are unknown to those outside of the village, but they are believed to be true Sages, those demigod-like creatures of power whose understanding of magic can make even the mightiest alchemist seem like a novice in comparison. Those same seven still rule their town to this day, but they spend most of their time not in governmental affairs but in unraveling the deepest magical mysteries from the Time of a Thousand Magicks! What they do is consult ancient magical texts that describe what the old arts could do, and then try to "reinvent the wheel," to make a form of spell casting that will produce the results they read about. So far, the Seven Sages are said to have rekindled over twenty unique and largely unknown magical disciplines that most Wizards, Diabolists and Summoners would kill to know. However, the Sages recreate magic for their own amusement and are wise enough NOT to share it with the world. It is one such magic that is said to shield the village of Seven Sages from the outside world. Still, many a mage seeks it out in hope of stealing even a few of their secrets. A fool's quest if such place does not really exist.

89-92%: Atop one of the great peaks lives a forgotten god of incredible strength and power. This figure lost his entire pantheon during the Chaos War, and now he sits alone, sullen, wallowing in self-pity for the friends and servants he lost so long ago. This god is merely biding his time before dying. But who knows? Maybe if a mortal were to meet this figure and begin worshiping it, the Palladium World would find itself with a new god in its midst, one not afraid to directly interfere in the affairs of mortal men and perhaps to craft a realm for itself in this world. Whether this god's motives would be good, selfish, evil, or driven by sorrow and madness is yet to be seen, but those mortals who choose to worship the ancient god and lure it back into the world can expect to be rewarded with great power and privilege, indeed.

93-96%: One of the mountains of the Highlands is also known as the *Mountain of Curses,* and those who climb it will all suffer a randomly determined curse that will to begin taking effect when the climbers reach the Midlands again. Once the curse begins taking effect, the only way to get rid of it is to ascend to one of the so-called *Great Peaks* - the tallest mountains the region has to offer - and make an offering to one's god or goddess. Should the deity find the offering worthy, the individual will be instantly relieved of the curse. Furthermore, the entire experience will make it impossible for that individual to ever be affected by that particular curse again. It is sort of like having mystic chicken pox. Once one is cured of it, the character can not be cursed again by the Mountain of Curses and any curse brought upon him by some other source or means of enchantment can not be cured by this strange place.

97-00%: Locked away in secret chambers on the highest peaks, one can, occasionally, find the dreaded Zavor! A living plague that if unleashed, could overwhelm the world of man. The horrid creature instinctively heads toward the human world, never down into the Land of the Damned. Fewer than a dozen Zavor as said to be hidden way in such stone chambers, said to have been placed there by heroes from ancient times.

Rumor Mill:
The *Great Rift*

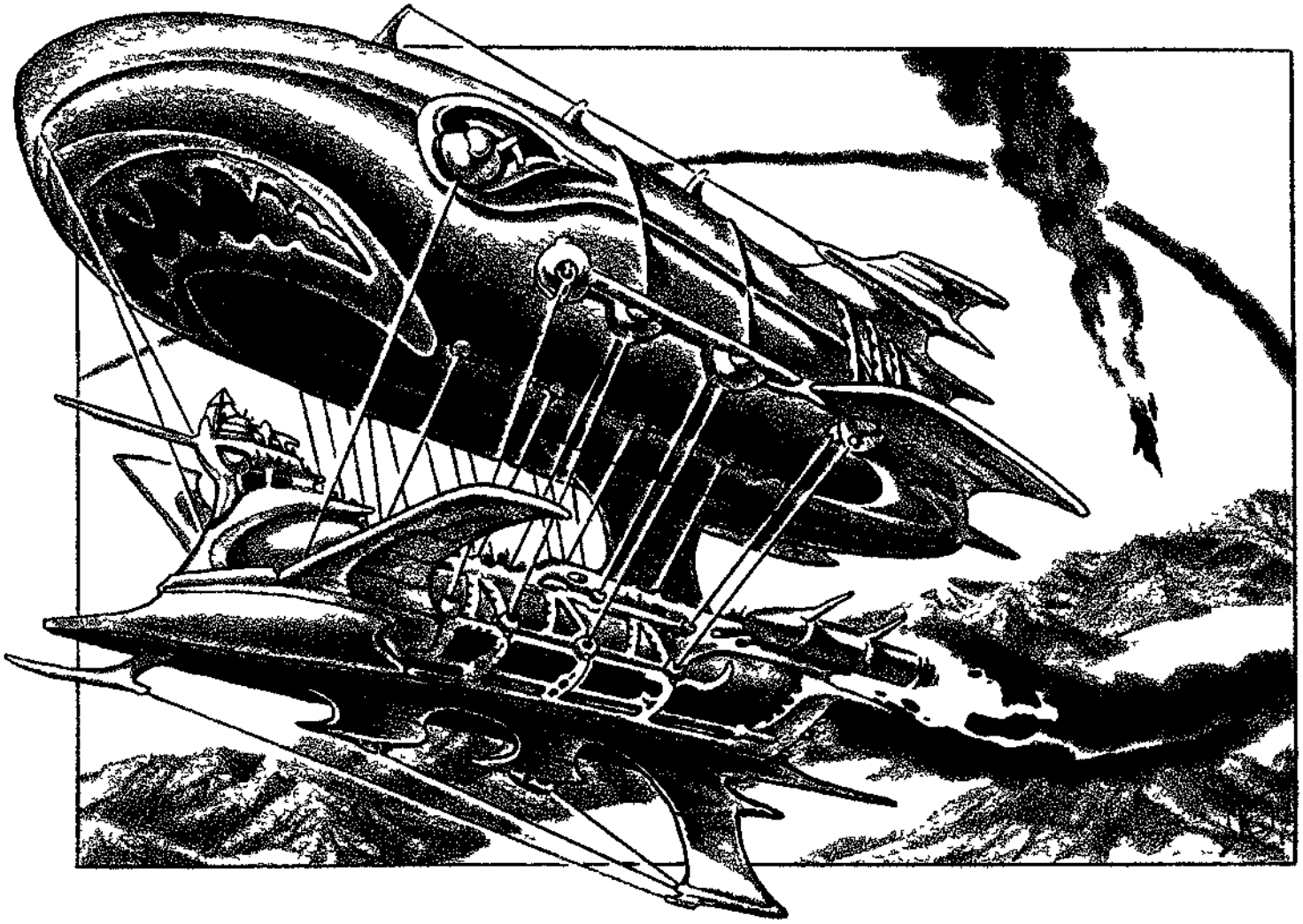
Note; The Great Rift is a massive canyon, wider, longer and deeper than the Grand Canyon of North America. It is found on the other side of the Northern Mountains in the depths of the Land of the Damned. Within it are portals to Hades and Dyval as well as other hellish realms (and elsewhere?). From these portals are unleashed demons and Dyval infernals (Deevils), rivals who loathe one another and clash in eternal war. They also torment and slay those trapped in and visiting the Land of the Damned. Since the day of its creation the imprisoned host of the Old Ones have been plagued by these warring and vindictive factions emerged from the Great Rift. And while portals to other hells and other worlds are said to lay within the Great Rift, few survive to make the trip, for those who enter are inevitably besieged by one side of infernals or the other. One portal inside the Great Rift can be accessed by the *Devil's Mark* in Ophid's Grasslands, and transports those standing in the Mark to the lip of the canyon. Exactly how this is done is unknown, and only a handful know the Devil's Mark is capable of such a feat. Fewer still know it is a one way trip to the Land of the Damned (to return to the Devil's Mark, one must find and use a particular magic circle in the basement of The Citadel).

Remember, the following are rumors, legends and stories that may or may not be true, or carry only a tiny kernel of truth.

01-04%: The Demon Lords who fight in the Minion War (the endless conflict between demon and Deevil) do so because their home dimension of Hades is under attack by an even greater force than they. They must win this war so they can take over the Land of the Damned and begin an earnest colonization of it before their home falls into enemy hands.

05-08%: A cadre of Spirits of Light secretly controls the Minion War and is doing so to keep the forces of evil at each other's throats so they can not plague the rest of the world. Thus, any fools who try to stop the Minion War will make enemies of these Spirits and the Gods of Light, and must defend against their murderous onslaught.

09-12%: There flies in the air above the Great Rift a kind of magical warship that resembles a Bizantium Frigate, except it hangs from an immense balloon and has broad, jagged wings to



steer with. The Demon Ships of the Western Empire appear to have been modeled off these vessels, which contain even larger demon and Deevil crews than their Western mortal counterparts. It is even thought that huge engagements of these ships take place over the fields of the Minion War at infrequent intervals. Fleets of up to a three dozen on each side fire catapults, ballistas, bolts of magic and offensive spells at one another, then ram and board. The ships that do not survive the fighting often fall to the earth or into the abyss that is the Great Rift, as flaming wreckage.

13-16%: Any Elf or Dwarf who enters the zone surrounding the Great Rift will suffer terrible blisters all over his body unless he shields *all* of his skin from the *moonlight* (takes 3D6 damage per night and an additional 5D6 damage when the moon reaches its zenith or is full) For some strange reason, in this part of the world, these two humanoids are as vulnerable to the light of the moon as vampires are the light of the sun, but only within one hundred miles (160 km) of the Great Rift.

17-20%: The Great Rift is bottomless. Those who fall inside, fall forever unless they are swooped up by a flying demon or Deevil or other horrid beast, or land on a ledge somewhere within. The deeper one falls the darker and colder it is, and psychics will feel surrounded by evil and sorrow. Climbing its walls is possible, but takes three times longer than usual and climbers may be pelted and cajoled by passing demons or Deevils (who may bet on their success at climbing out). Typically such climbs require scaling a sheer wall 2D4x1000 feet (610 to 2438 m) high.

On one of the ledges, deep within the Great Rift, legend says there rests ten silver boxes, each covered with runes and magically indestructible. Somewhere in that canyon is a silver key that will unlock the first box. In the first box lies the key to the second box which contains the key to the third box, and so on. Already entire armies of demons and Deevils have been sacrificed in the search for these silver keys. Despite all of this effort, one burning question remains unanswered: What does the tenth box contain, and why must one go through nine other boxes to get to it? Might it actually be the *Apocalypse Seed,* a diabolical magic device that if planted in the earth will bring ruination to all life on this planet? Or is it *Wisendal's Potion of Immortality* or *Zantyr's Wand of Power* that gives its wielder dominion over the hordes of Hades or Dyval (demon or Deevil), or does the final box bring its opener eternal peace?

21-24%: Repentant Demons and Deevils, Minotaurs and other diabolic creatures who once served the Old Ones are said to be found huddled in and around the Great Rift. Outcasts who have forsaken both the Old Ones and their evil ways (reducing them physically in magical power by half; typically Anarchist, Unprincipled or Scrupulous alignment). Such "traitors and weaklings" are hated and tortured by minions on both sides of the war, and tormented by being trapped in the awful Land of the Damned. Thus, they seek out those who might believe and trust in them and deliver them to safety *outside* the Land of the Damned. But who will come to aid these once treacherous and monstrous villains? Besides, it is written that a leopard can not change its spots, so one must wonder, once set free among mor-

tals, will these infernals remain repentant and good, or slowly return to their evil ways?

25-28%: A young woman who looks like a beautiful Elf with vestigial bat wings - surely the spawn of a greater demon or Deev'il (or perhaps both!) - has appeared and is marshaling the forces of darkness to create a single super-army within the Great Rift. Not only will she defeat all of the demon and Deevil forces fighting the Minion War, but she will bind them to her own service, and then use this mighty force to break loose from the Land of the Damned and conquer the world. Once that is done, she will establish an infernal court and transform this world into one of misery and death, not unlike Hades or Dyval.

29-32%: In certain places along the Great Rift, the air is flammable! Any open fire will ignite it, causing such a conflagration that anyone caught in the blast will be instantly vaporized. The Minion Lords are hard at work trying to figure out how to use this phenomenon against their enemies without destroying their own forces in the process.

33:-36%: The demons of the Great Rift all perform strange rites of worship at the base of a massive stone obelisk brought to this land from Hades. Carved into the face of the obelisk is the relief of a long-dead and nearly forgotten Lord who exists still only as an object of sinister worship. It is said that if this obelisk were destroyed, the demons would be so demoralized they would quit the Minion War altogether.

37-40%: Wolves with supernatural powers prowl the flat lands around the Great Rift, preying upon the wounded lying stricken in battle, and feeding upon mortal and infernal both. These creatures (Fenry, Alu, werewolves, or something worst?) exist purely to finish off those who have fallen and are too weak to defend themselves. Those who put up a good fight are allowed to live. Witnesses to the wolves' grim work are likewise attacked and judged. When they are finished, these wolves disappear from view, returning only when there are more to test and devour.

41-44%: The Minion Lords are very fond of outsiders. In fact, any who come across their path will be treated cordially as if they are visiting dignitaries. They do this because they hope outsiders can figure out a way for them to escape the Land of the Damned or vanquish their opposition. Those who offer no help are tortured, slain and eaten, or put to slave labor.

45-48%: A recent development in the Minion War is the use of enormous and terrifying siege engines. The devices are thought to be imported from somewhere across the cosmos where they were designed and built by devious alien minds. Weapons of war so hideous that no civilized people would ever dare use them. None of the engines being used in the Minion War have yet been seen by outsiders, but names like the *Eviscerator,* the *Flight of a Thousand Arrows,* the *Bloody Screw,* and *Rawhead and Bloody Bones,* have been spoken of in hushed whispers.

49-52%: Demons and Deevils will gladly pay humanoid outsiders a fortune to fight in their war for them, but all who do so are always betrayed in the end. Most often, freelancers are simply killed before they are paid. Or, outsiders are rewarded with golden coins that are enchanted to burn through the hands of whoever grasp one. On a similar theme, freelancers are also sometimes paid with gold coins that turn to dead flower petals within 72 hours after leaving the Land of the Damned, or tricked into their service with the promise of magic or information that is never granted or never really existed in the first place.

53-56%: It is said, any Priest of Light who sets foot on, in or near the Great Rift (within 50 miles/80 km) must be of absolutely pure heart or else he will spontaneously burst into flame and die! Those who are indeed worthy and faithful shall also burst into flame, but it will be a cleansing fire, one that will not hurt them, but heal any injury, melt away any despair and burn any evil creature they touch for 2D6 damage. This holy burn damage will be in addition to any weapon strikes the priest might inflict upon those worthy of his wrath or punishment. Lasts 24 hours per level of experience. Characters of good alignment are unhurt by the "cleansing fire."

57-60%: Across the Great Rift, the armies of The Citadel stand poised, looking for the slightest show of weakness among the Minions of the Damned, so they might come forth and invade this lower land. The majority of The Citadel's soldiers are zombie-like Minotaurs whose skin has been turned to an ashen gray, and whose eyes look like featureless metallic orbs. There are also soldiers of many other races fighting for The Citadel, but they all share the same gray appearance.

61-64%: To cross the Great Rift, one must fly or climb back up into the mountains to go around, or use magic. Moreover, any who try to fly over or build a bridge will fall under constant attack by both sides of the conflict. Thus, the land and its people are forever divided.

65-68%: The Deevils have a secret weapon in their clutches, a mechanical device from another world that when activated, will disintegrate everything within its area of effect. That which is beyond the immediate zone of destruction shall be rendered uninhabitable forever; anyone just passing through the area around the Center of Death will mysteriously sicken and die within days! According to demon spies, the Deevils have but two of these devices, which they have named the *Gluttonous Nobleman* and the *Knobby Goblin.*

69-72%: Mortals who have sold their soul to an infernal force are being called to fight in the Minion War. This is causing a huge exodus of Witches throughout the world so they might fight here, in the End of the World. Many try to resist their summons, but those who do will be visited by the *Soulhunters,* sinister creatures which invariably punish those who try welshing on their infernal debts.

73-76%: Any mortal, evil outsider who suffers a cut wound in the Great Rift's vicinity (50 miles/80 km) will not bleed blood. Instead, steaming hot tar pours out, sealing quickly and healing at a rapid rate (1D6 Hit Points per hour). The hot tar burns the skin of anybody else who touches the stuff!

77-80%: Worms of Taut make their nest around the Great Rift, feeding upon mortals and animals as well as the slain infernals. Tomb Worms, Fire Worms and Tri-Fang are most common, but others may be present as well.

81-84%: Periodically, the Great Rift will actually close up for a day, crushing whatever is inside of it and bridging the gap that has traditionally kept the upper and lower halves of the Land of the Damned from interacting with each other. No one knows when this may happen, it just occurs randomly.

85-88%: Great prisons exist where the many factions of the Minion War interrogate, torture and murder their prisoners.

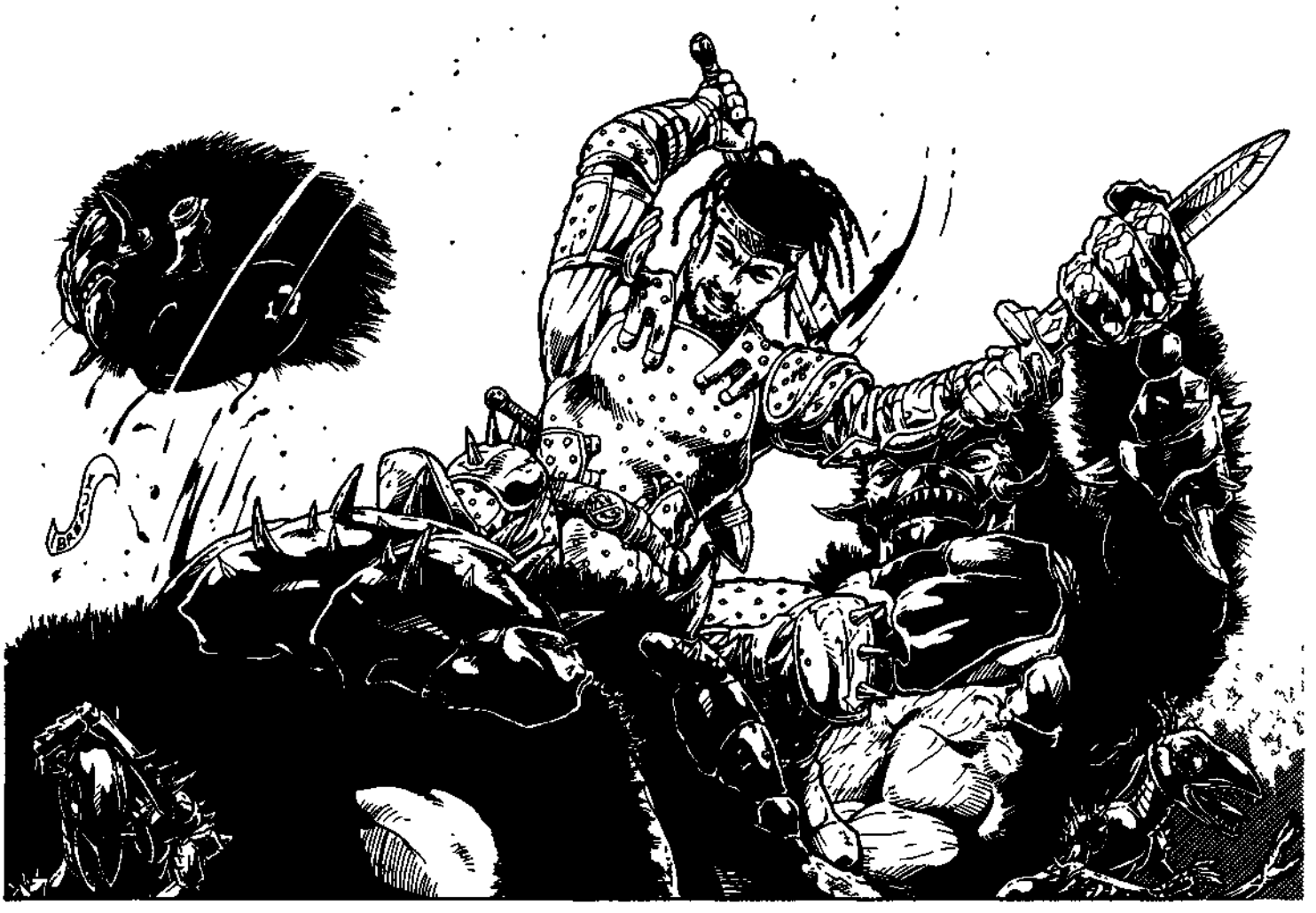
These horrid places are like hell within hell, a place where even demons and Deevils fear to end up. Such prisons are so full of dark magic energy, caused by the constant deaths of evildoers there, that it is said no creatures can tap the P.P.E. escaping this place without it contaminating the heart and corrupting the soul.

89-92%: Enormous suicide attacks have become popular with the Minion Lords, who delight in sending hundreds to thousands of their lackeys to certain death in massed attacks upon the easily defended positions of rival warlords. Soon, though, the Minions of the Damned will tire of being sent to meaningless deaths, and a vast mutiny of those fighting the Minion War might very well bring the fighting to a halt, or only add to the carnage.

93-96%: Behind every warlord, behind every faction, behind every action in the war there is a shadowy secret Lord who is actually calling the shots. This cabal of king makers is using the Minion War as an elaborate war game for their own wicked, twisted amusement. They care not that endless millions shall die to suit their dark appetites.

97-00%: One by one, the great gods are returning to this world, acting once more to suppress the forces of evil and the Armies of Chaos. ***Thoth*** himself has been sighted sweeping across the battlefields of the Minion War, destroying vast hordes of the infernal soldiers, and causing widespread havoc. ***Rurga*** likewise returns from time to time to do battle, as have several others. So it is said that any stranger might be a god in mortal guise. And a fallen god, imprisoned or beset by **infernals,** may look toward mortals to save him.

Denizens of the Damned



Despite its great nations and wondrous cities, the Palladium World remains one largely covered by hostile and unexplored wilderness. Though the world's scholars, explorers and adventurers have catalogued many of the world's exotic monsters and animals, many more remain unknown; the subject of folklore and tavern tales. Places like the ***Baalgor*** *Wastelands,* the *Yin-Sloth Jungles,* and the *Great Northern Wilderness* are famous for hosting a wild variety of strange and dangerous creatures most adventurers have never even heard of, much less encountered. But even these great bastions of unknown creatures pale before the grand-daddy of them all: The Land of the Damned.

Monsters & Animals

Here, in the "Realm of Monsters," there are more undiscovered creatures than anywhere else in the world. During the Age of Chaos and now in the ongoing Minion War, huge numbers of races and creatures were either created or brought to this world from elsewhere in the **Megaverse.** As a result, the Land of the Damned has spent most of its history as a great menagerie of weird, monstrous and freakish creatures of every size, shape and form. This continues to the present day, much to the delight of explorers (who love cataloguing new creatures), monster hunters and exotic game hunters (who usually have more courage than common sense).

Though the number of such creatures surviving today is relatively small compared to what it once was eons ago, it still comprises a sizable body of peoples, beasts and demons for the civilized world to discover for the first time. Over the years, a few explorers have managed to learn of the wild variety of creatures living in the Land of the Damned, but since these accounts are few, far between and frequently exaggerated by their authors, the world at large has no real sense of what lives in the Land of the Damned. For most adventurers, it is enough to know that all manner of wild monsters and the like roam the region, ready to give the worst kind of trouble to those who come looking for it.

Though the creatures of this region, the so-called "Denizens of the Damned," come in many different shapes and sizes, and with unique powers and abilities, all of them fall into one of three basic categories: Monsters and Animals (the bizarre wildlife, both dangerous and friendly, common to the region); the Dying Races (those **humanoid** peoples who are remnants from the hundreds of like species that inhabited the world during the Age of Chaos and fought in the Chaos War); and the Minions of Darkness (evil humanoids often generically referred to as "demons" who have been brought to this world through the inter-dimensional portals of the Great Rift so they might fight in the never-ending Minion War or serve other dark powers in the Land of the Damned).

Note: All of the creatures presented here may be found anywhere in the Land of the Damned, but are most commonly found in the Northern Mountains and around the Great Rift. The natural barriers that divide the **land,** coupled with the thick population of hostile creatures, make any kind of mass migration almost impossible, but periodically, individual or small groups of creatures with grit, strength and luck, do **find** their way across the region, usually to die far from home when they are discovered by something bigger, tougher and nastier than they are.

There are plenty of other undiscovered creatures inhabiting the other regions of the Land of the Damned, including new Were-Beasts, **undead,** new Minotaur races, and additional creatures from the Age of Chaos. They are covered in the other two **sourcebooks** on the Land of the Damned — Book II: The **Eternal** Torment and Book III: The Citadel. Likewise, only the most notable and dangerous creatures are presented in the pages that follow, leaving additional strange, but mostly harmless animals for scholars to discover.

The Land of the Damned is best known for its monsters, and the Northern Mountains is no exception. Some of the most common, or "major" creatures found here, such as the ***Melech,*** *Pegasus,* ***Dragondactyl,*** and ***Waterbat,*** will be familiar to outside adventurers (see the Monsters & Animals **sourcebook).** Many others, such as the ***Gullikin, Sundog*** and ***Waghalter,*** are particular to the Northern Mountains and require caution when first encountered. One of the main reasons why the attrition rate is so high for adventurers in this part of the world is the death rate in just trying to *cross* the Northern Mountains. The terrain is rugged and unforgiving, then, throw into the mix the dangers from unknown wildlife and predator life forms and you have one of the most deadly and inhospitable environments on the planet. It is little wonder that so many are quick to accept that the Land of the Damned is a hellish prison designed to keep people out and monsters in.

Most of the creatures who have made their home amid the Northern Mountains and their foothills have adapted especially well to it and excel at hunting and preying upon whatever crosses their path, so it should come as little surprise that most adventurers find themselves at a distinct disadvantage when encountering these creatures. By the time the predators of the Northern Mountains launch their attack on a traveler, chances are the poor soul is already tired, lost, **confused,** and in poor shape for battle. Once a predator hits, the outcome of the fight is hardly in question, which is just how the predators like it.

Not all creatures of the mountains are man-eaters, monsters or evil. A few are content to live by themselves and will only lash out in self-defense. There are even one or two that are good creatures who strive to preserve life and vanquish evil. But such distinctions often are lost on adventurers in the mountains. For them, it is far safer and simpler to assume that everything they encounter is in some way hostile and should be avoided or destroyed. Ironically, sometimes this approach leads adventurers into conflict with beasts and races that would have left them alone or helped them out, but such is the way of these cursed mountains; where danger, fear and fatigue can trick the mind into thinking that there is no way out except by carving one's way with a sword. Greenhorns encountering them for the first time *should* be cautious, as the creatures of the Northern Mountains are full of surprises, many of them unpleasant or downright deadly.

The following are some of the more notable monsters and animals commonly encountered in the Northern Mountains **and/or** in and around the Great Rift.

Beedle
Diatryma
Gullikin
Lhotse
Shadow Stalker
Slag Hag
Sundog
Tyrannoth
Vyle
Waghalter
Wastrel's Bane

Beedle

Beedles are deadly little insectoids thought to have come to this world long ago from another dimension. Whether they swarmed through a dimensional portal at the bottom of the Great Rift or came through when some other race was recruited for the Chaos War, the fact remains that no one and nothing in the Land of the Damned is safe from Beedle attacks.

Living, moving and fighting as a swarm, Beedles present an unusual threat to most humanoids and large animals. Without some way of attacking the swarm cloud entirely (such as through fire, gas, or area effect magic), there are few defenses against one of these killer swarms. Beedles are infamously ravenous creatures, and they often descend upon a victim, taking little bites out of him until they reduce him to nothing. Beedles even eat the bones of their victims, making the specter of a Beedle attack all the more chilling, and may explain why so many adventurers seemingly vanish without a trace.

Beedles are unintelligent and can not be reasoned with. Some psychics think that an entire swarm might possess a crude collective mind that can be communicated with or at least reached psychically, but so far this remains to be proven. The big problem with testing such a theory is one must risk an encounter with a Beedle swarm in order to do it, something which is dangerous under the best of conditions and suicidal under the worst. Most people who have survived a run-in with a Beedle swarm feel that for anybody to seek out a Beedle swarm for any reason is an invitation to disaster.

Alignment: Animal predators, equivalent to Anarchist or perhaps Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q.: One point, M.E.: One point, M.A.: One point, P.S.: One point, P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: One point, P.B.: 1D4, Spd.: One point walking/crawling, 1D6+8 flying.

Hit Points/S.D.C.: A Beedle can sustain only *one point* of damage before dying. This makes Beedles very easy to kill when encountered alone (almost never) or in small groups. The problem is that Beedles typically swarm in groups of 3D6x100, and there is just no way to physically swat, smash and squish so many of these little creatures before they devour whoever it is they are attacking. The best defense for humanoids against Beedle swarms is using some kind of weapon or magic that might affect the entire swarm, such as hitting them with some kind of cloud, toxin, wind or fire weapon. Any damage inflicted by such attacks is done to the swarm *as a whole*. If a Beedle swarm is reduced to half its original strength, the swarm will disperse and flee its attacker.

Natural A.R.: 6

Horror Factor: A *single* Beedle has a Horror Factor of six, largely stemming form the horrifying realization if there is one, hundreds more are not likely to be far off. Beedle *swarms* have a Horror Factor of 14, which is all the more dangerous, because those who freeze in the face of a swarm are often overtaken and consumed by it.

P.P.E.: One point per Beedle.

O.C.C.s Available: None. Instinctive predators.

Natural Abilities: Flight, adhesion (can walk up walls and upside down), a tough carapace, the ability to track by scent (88%), need minimal rest.

Attacks Per Melee: Special! When encountered singly, a Beedle has just one attack per melee. When a swarm is encountered, the collective has one attack for every 100 Beedles in the group. Thus, a swarm of 300 Beedles (the smallest swarm to be encountered), has a total of three attacks per melee. A swarm of 1,800 Beedles (the largest to be encountered), on the other hand, has 18 attacks per melee, and can spell certain death for all but the most powerful and/or protected opponents. When swarming, Beedles generally take only offensive actions. They are unable to parry incoming attacks, and rarely dodge.

Damage: A Beedle has incredibly powerful jaws and inflicts a whopping 1D6 points of damage per bite. Considering the small size of these creatures, this damage is rather impressive. They do this by flicking out large scythe-like blades from their mouths and slicing and boring big gouges into their prey.

Bonuses: Individually, Beedles are only +2 to dodge, but only when in flight. Swarms have no such bonuses.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: Beedles live for 2D4 years. Upon their death, female Beedles release a cloud of eggs that will float upon the air and eventually hatch on their own. Thus, destroying a swarm is likely to ensure continued and increasing Beedle trouble well into the future unless the swarm is destroyed in such a way that released eggs would be destroyed too (such as fire).

Habitat: Currently, the swarming insects are found in the lowlands of the Land of the Damned, in and around the Great Rift and the lowlands of the Northern Mountains, particularly in cracks, caves and caverns. If these creatures were to break out of the region, they could flourish anywhere except during the deepest winter of the Northern Wilderness, during which time they would migrate to warmer climes. Thus, they are not active during the winter months, and the long, terrible winters of the Northern Hinterlands probably help to keep them on the other side of the mountains (the western, Land of the Damned side). They are almost never found at the higher, colder elevations even in the summer.

Languages: None. The bugs communicate amongst themselves by using a series of pheromone messages and cluttering.

Enemies: All other living creatures. Beedles see any animal life other than themselves as a potential food source. They tend to look for other targets first before hitting supernatural creatures, like demons. Perhaps the innate magical nature of such supernatural creatures is unappetizing to the Beedle, or they regenerate too quickly. Who knows? Beedles also feed upon carrion and skeletal remains.

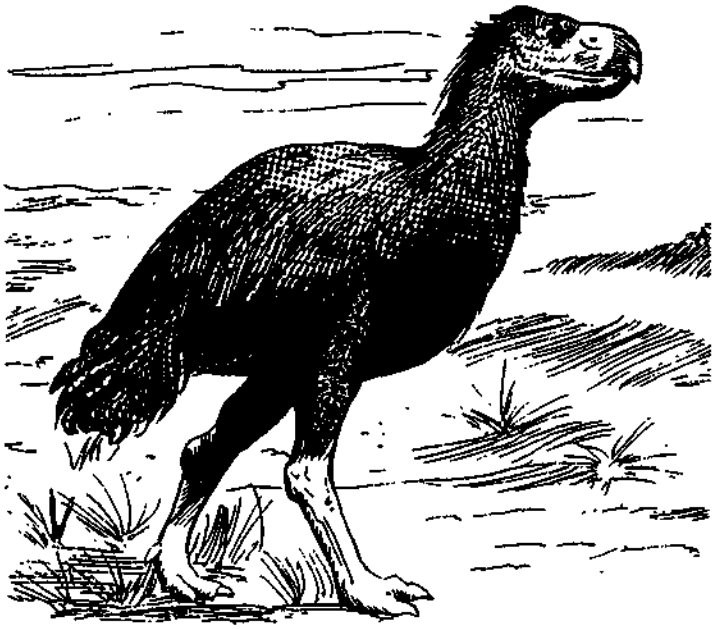
Allies: None.

Physical Appearance: Beedles come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, but all appear as large, powerfully built beetles of some kind. They usually have large, odd-looking horns or mandibles, and almost all have some kind of metallic sheen to their carapace. Many Beedles are jet black, but some have been seen to display every color of the rainbow, making them quite beautiful in their own sinister way. No doubt if these creatures were to escape to the outside world, collectors would seek to grab one of every specimen.

Size: Beedles are about two inches (5 cm) long. Some grow to twice that length, but the majority (60-70%) are the two inch variety.

Weight: Virtually weightless. Nobody has ever weighed a swarm, so there is no telling how heavy that might be, but it is not a crushing weight.

Notes: When Beedles encounter multiple targets, they will converge on one and attack it exclusively until their prey is dead and devoured, and then move on to another target, and so on. The only way to break up this murderous type of attack (which can quickly whittle even a large party down to size) is to launch the kinds of attacks that harm the entire swarm. Then, the swarm will split into two equal halves, one to continue the attack on its first victim, and one to attack the character who posed a threat to the swarm. If player characters keep attacking these swarms every time they split up, they will fragment into groups so small that the entire swarm will break down and dissolve for at least 3D4 hours. Thankfully, it does not take much to break up a Beedle swarm. Attacking it once will cause the swarm to split in half. Attacking both of those halves will force them both to split in half again, forming four groups at 25% the original swarm size and strength. As soon as a group with only 25% original swarm strength is "formed," it immediately breaks off any attack and either leaves the scene or falls apart into a disorganized cloud with no unified direction or purpose. More than a few adventurers have used this tactic to rob the Beedle swarm of its strength and then escape the area while these voracious insects fly about in utter confusion. Of course, adventurers without the means of affecting an entire swarm in a single attack are in grave danger. At that point, one's best bet is to flee and hope the Beedles find more stationary prey. Any prey that can outrun the swarm is usually abandoned.



Diatryma

These enormous, prehistoric flightless birds are pure trouble for anybody who encounters them. Diatryma are *ratite birds*, like ostriches, emus and rheas. That means their breastbone lacks a "keel," a vertical bone protrusion that enables the creature to develop the oversized chest muscles needed to fly. This is what keeps ratite birds grounded, but they are hardly out of the fight because of it. All ratites develop powerful lower legs, and in this regard, the Diatryma is king. These birds can run fast for long periods of time without tiring, enabling them to relentlessly run down their prey. Then the Diatryma uses its deadly foot claws and crushing beak to make mincemeat out of its prey.

Though they are fast and powerful, making them extremely dangerous in grasslands and open terrain, Diatryma are terrible climbers, which confines them to the Northern Mountain lowlands and the interior of the Land of the Damned. Periodically, a small group of people will try their hand at domesticating these enormous birds, but with minimal success. True, Diatryma

would make formidable war mounts, and Diatryma eggs would be an excellent food source (a single one has the equivalent volume of roughly two dozen hen's eggs). But the truth is these creatures are too surly to be broken and too stupid to be trained. They are best left alone.

Alignment: Considered Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D4 (low animal intelligence), M.E.: 1D4, M.A.: 1D6, P.S.: 3D6+6, P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6+6, P.B.: 1D6, Spd.: 3D6+22, but can run at a speed of 66 (about 45 mph/72 km) for 30+2D6 minutes before needing to rest.

Hit Points: 6D6+4.

S.D.C.: 3D6+10.

Natural A.R.: 6

Horror Factor: 10

P.P.E.: 2D6

Natural Abilities: Keen eyesight and hearing, can leap six feet (1.8 m) high or 12 feet (3.6 m) lengthwise, prowl at 55%.

Attacks Per Melee: Two for females, three for males.

Damage: Kick/taloned feet: 2D6+4 (plus possible P.S. damage bonus). Bite: 2D6, head butt or peck: 2D4.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +1 to parry, and +2 to dodge.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 12-30 years.

Value: The meat of the creature is worth about 80 gold total, despite the large quantities a single animal yields. While lean, Diatryma meat is tough and has a funky flavor most humanoids find objectionable. A trained adult might fetch as much as 5,000 gold on the open market, but even that would be a tough sell thanks to the cranky and aggressive personality of these difficult beasts.

Habitat: Diatryma are known to exist within the steppes of Ophid's Grasslands, but their greatest numbers lie on the other side of the Northern Mountains and the northern interior of the Land of the Damned.

Languages: None. They communicate amongst themselves in a crude form of squawking and shrieking. Diatryma can utter a piercing cry that can be heard over two miles (3.2 km) away, conditions permitting.

Enemies: Anything it can catch, kill and eat.

Allies: None, per se. Occasionally permits itself to be ridden by small humanoids, but this is a tricky endeavor, as Diatryma do not respond to commands well, and any rider who is too persistent in enforcing its will upon the bird risks having the Diatryma rebel and try to kill the rider and any who try to restrain or cage it.

Physical Appearance: Like a huge ostrich-like bird, except with a stockier build, larger and thicker legs, and a blunt, almost parrot-like beak.

Size: 8-10 feet tall (2.4 to 3.0 m).

Weight: 400 to 700 lbs (180 to 315 kg).

Notes: Diatryma primarily feed on snakes, small birds, ground dwelling mammals (including small humanoids such as Gnomes, Goblins, Kobolds and Faerie Folk) and carrion. Though they can attack larger animals, they stick to smaller prey unless desperate or feeling threatened. They are capable of sustained running at great speed and can usually outdistance their prey, making them very efficient hunters in the long run (no pun intended). These wingless giants are found alone, in pairs or in small family groups of 3D4 members. They nest on the ground and are fierce in the protection of their young.

Diatryma are difficult to capture, train and raise in captivity, but those who have done so have turned these killers into wonderful war creatures. Monstrous humanoids such as Orcs have had the best success with Diatryma, raising them either as attack animals (to precede infantry formations as an expendable front line) or as battle steeds for their Goblin and Hob-Goblin allies.

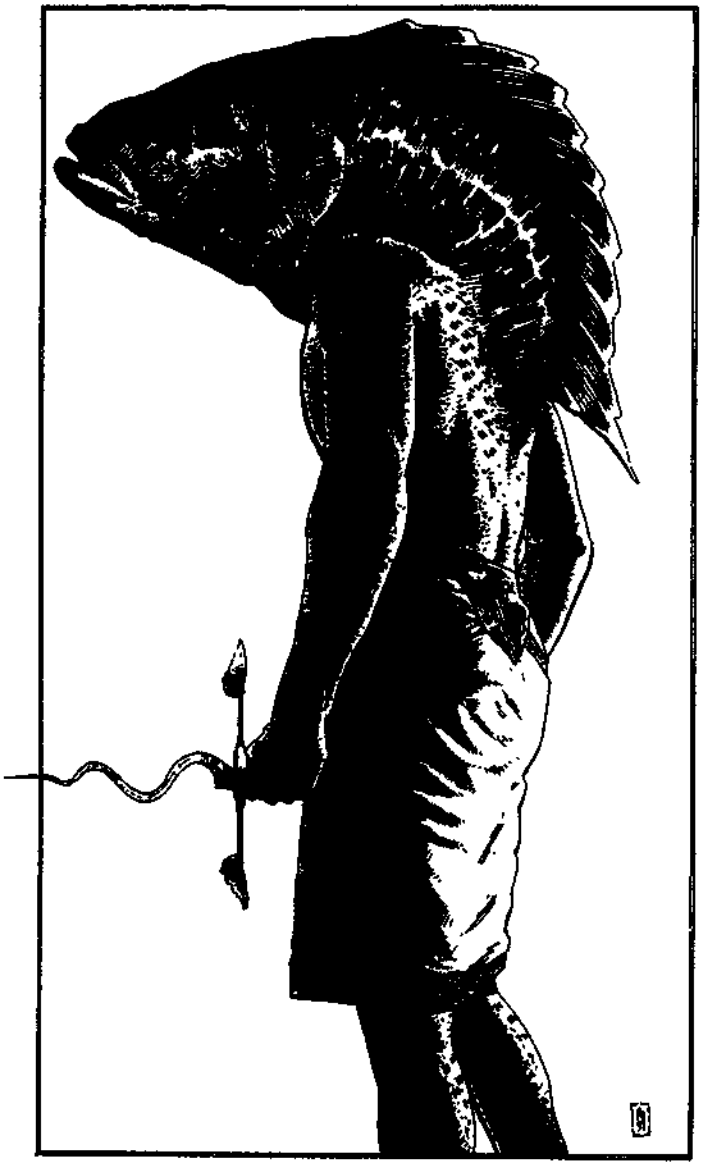
Gullikin

The Gullikin is a grotesque humanoid monster that sports a huge, oversized fish-like head with stunted arms and legs sprouting off of it. Their origin is unknown, but their bizarre appearance bears all the hallmarks of being an experimental creature designed by the Old Ones for fun. The Old Ones had designed dozens of freakish races like this one, beasts with wild and hyper-specialized bodies that were not really cut out for widespread existence. Most of these creatures perished in the Chaos War. A few, like the Gullikin (if indeed the Gullikin *is* a product of the Old Ones), survived and are doing quite well today.

Since walking is difficult for these grossly proportioned creatures, they spend much of their time lying in wait for their prey. They possess a pebbled, stony hide which allows them to camouflage themselves against rocky backgrounds. This makes the Gullikin an adept ambush hunter in the Northern Mountains, where it can stay still, blend in, and lie in wait of unsuspecting prey.

Gullikins are also sometimes known as *Springals*, in reference to their unusual method of attack. Like a frog, Gullikins have a long, coiled tongue they can shoot forth to capture prey and reel them back into their mouths. However, the Gullikin tongue is not tipped with a sticky blob, but a razor-sharp bony barb used to *harpoon* its victims. Once hit by this unusual biological weapon, the victim is often is affixed to the harpoon and gets pulled into the Gullikin's maw before it has a chance to free itself. Gullikins swallow their prey whole, after which paralytic stomach enzymes immobilize the victim for a slow digestion process that takes a matter of weeks. During this time, the victim can still be cut out of the Gullikin and saved, but they will have suffered grievous wounds and often, severe mental trauma.

Demonic warriors of the Great Rift are fond of using Gullikins as living torture devices and as prisoner retrieval systems, taking full advantage of the creature's ability to transport an entire human-sized victim in its oversized craw. Demons have not the skill or patience to breed Gullikins for this purpose, so they routinely send hunting parties into the Northern Mountain Lowlands and Midlands where Gullikins are most often found, to capture specimens and bring them back to the Great Rift. Gullikins rarely put up much of a fight about this. First off, they really do not fare well in prolonged battle, and once they are brought to the Great Rift, they live a pretty good life (by Gullikin standards, anyway). They are not mistreated (much) and they get a steady supply of people to eat. Sure, sometimes they must give up a meal before it is entirely digested, but there are plenty of times they get to fully digest their meals, and they don't even have to work for it, they are *given* food.



Gullikin hides are tough and oily, perfect for tanning. A single Gullikin can be skinned and made into six humanoid-sized or four giant-sized suits of leather armor (soft or hard; no studded), each at double the ordinary S.D.C. All one needs to do is get the hide to an accomplished tailor and a fresh new suit of leather armor awaits creation. It will take the average leather worker 1D4 weeks of solid work to construct a suit of Gullikin armor, however. Since none have been sold on the open market, there is no fixed value for one of these suits of armor, but it is safe to say they would probably go for at least 3-4 times the cost of an ordinary suit of the same style of armor.

Alignment: Anarchist or Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6, M.E.: 2D6, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 2D6+12, P.P.: 2D6, P.E.: 2D6+12, P.B.: 1D6, Spd.: 2D6.

Hit Points: P.E.x2.

S.D.C.: 4D6+40.

Natural A.R.: 12

Horror Factor: 11

P.P.E.: 2D6

O.C.C.s Available: None. Instinctive hunters with the following skill equivalents: Prowl (76%), Detect Ambush (76%), Camouflage (76%), Track Humanoids (76%), Land Navigation (76%) and Swim (76%).

Natural Abilities: Chameleon Ability. When the Gullikin stays still, it becomes nearly invisible, blending into the background so it might better ambush its victims. Gullikins are 90% undetectable if unmoving (which is usually the case when they are "hunting"), 70% undetectable if moving two feet (0.6 m) per melee or slower, 20% undetectable if moving six feet (1.8 m) per melee round, and totally visible if moving any faster than six feet (1.8 m) per melee.

Attacks Per Melee: Three. Gullikins are better at ambushing, not open combat. Thus, in a fair fight, they will only put up a struggle for a few melee rounds before trying (usually without success) to flee.

Damage: A Gullikin's harpoon-like tongue inflicts 4D6 damage upon first striking. The tongue can strike out as far as 20 feet (6.1 m) away, and holds fast upon contact. Only beings with supernatural strength or a P.S. of 40 or greater can pull free from the tongue; otherwise, the victim must cut through the tongue or kill the Gullikin. The Gullikin harpoon tongue has 20 S.D.C. Even after cutting away a Gullikin's tongue, the barb will remain *in* the victim, causing another 1D4 points of damage per hour until the barb is removed or unless the victim remains perfectly still. After 1D4 days, the barb will work its way out of the victim's body. Other than that, Psychic Surgery or a similar method is the best bet for removing the barb. (Note: The barbed end will regrow within 2D4+6 days and even without the barb, it can be used like a whip, but only does 1D4 damage).

Once a Gullikin impales its victim, it can reel in the tongue, victim in tow, within a single melee attack/action (about 4 seconds). The next action, the Gullikin automatically swallows its prey whole, whereupon the victim falls under paralytic attack as the Gullikin's anesthetizing saliva goes to work, immobilizing the victim in the beast's massive belly. Each melee round the victim is in the Gullikin's mouth or belly, he must save vs poison or be immobilized. Once the victim falls to this paralytic effect, he stays paralyzed until he suffocates or until somebody cuts the person out of the Gullikin's stomach. Victims generally will suffocate after 1D4 minutes unless they do not need to breathe, in which case they will remain conscious the entire time the Gullikin slowly digests them (Owie!). Adventurers who wish to rescue their friend from a Gullikin stomach must act quickly to kill the creature and cut their friend out.

When not swallowing its victims/opponents whole, Gullikins can either bite for 4D6 damage or claw for 3D6.

Bonuses: +3 to strike when attacking from ambush or using its tongue, and +1 to strike in open combat. +5 to save vs Horror Factor, +6 to save vs poison and disease, +2 to save vs psionic attacks, and +2 to save vs magic.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 50 years.

Habitat: Gullikins are commonly found in the lowlands on the western side of the Northern Mountains. Should they break out from the Land of the Damned, Gullikins could thrive throughout the northern half and the midlands of the world. They would stay away from the oppressively hot zones of the south, such as the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Land of the South-Winds and the Baalgor Wastelands. This is academic, however, since Gullikins thrive in the Land of the Damned and show no signs of wanting to leave.

Languages: None. Gullikins do not communicate with any other creatures, since they are solitary hunters gathering only to mate. As a rule, they do not even attempt to communicate with their own kind.

Enemies: Anything larger than they or prey that gives them a hard time. Gullikins show special enmity for small humanoids, such as Dwarves, Goblins and Gnomes. Perhaps because they can fit more of these creatures in their mouth at once, they find them especially desirable prey and enjoy devouring them.

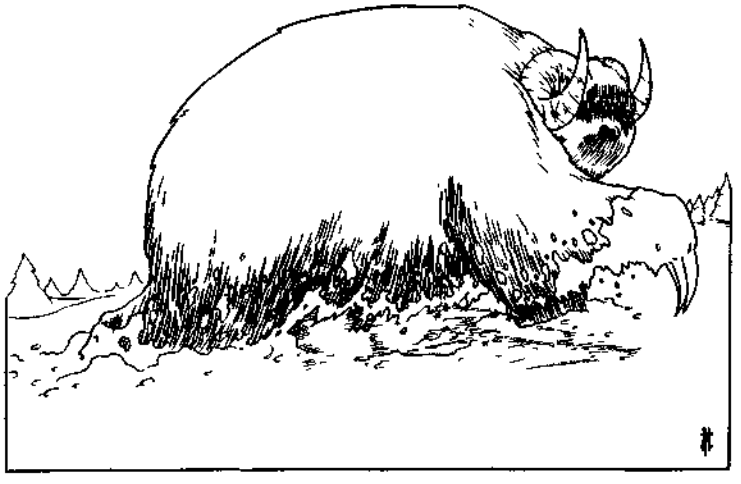
Allies: None. Demons often capture Gullikins and cultivate them as living torture devices, a fate many Gullikin, rather enjoy. Nearly a quarter of captured Gullikins resent their condition and end up being nothing but trouble for their new masters. Eventually, these individuals usually flee, seeking to escape and be left alone to live as they like in the Northern Mountains.

Physical Appearance: Imagine a huge fish-like head with a wide, grouper-like mouth, and stunted arms and legs sprouting off from the sides. That is the Gullikin. These are grotesque, almost comical-looking creatures that seem like they *had* to be designed by some chaotic alien intelligence rather than something that evolved on its own. Gullikins have big, bony fins that run down the length of their back, the back of their forearms, and the outer edges of their lower legs. Gullikins have oversized fish eyes with big nictating eyelids that close from the bottom.

Size: 8-10 feet (2.4 to 3 m) tall. Most of that is their head, though.

Weight: 300 to 600 lbs (135 to 270 kg).

Notes: Gullikins are exactly the kind of bizarre, dangerous creature that Western explorers would *love* to capture in quantity and export to the gladiatorial arenas back home. The spectacle of some poor fighters getting speared and gobbled up by these creatures is the kind of thing that would drive Western crowds wild. So far, Westerners have not found out about these creatures, but when they do, there is sure to be a sharp influx of profit hunters into the Northern Mountains.



Lhotse

Perhaps the slowest moving creatures in the Land of the Damned, Lhotses are also the only animals routinely found on the summits of the Northern Mountains. Possessing an extremely slow metabolism and needing very little food or oxygen, Lhotses are supremely adapted to the harsh climes of the Death Zone, that uppermost area of the mountains where there is hardly enough air to breathe, and almost no food or water to sustain life. These creatures are also thought to be a product of Old One experimentation, but a few explorers have supposedly made contact with certain ancient Lhotses that insist their race came to this world from another during the Chaos War. For what purpose, they would not elaborate, and given the Lhotse's lack of combat-worthiness, it is hard to imagine what the Alliance of Light or the Chaos Lords would need a creature such as this for. Maybe it has something to do with their psychic abilities or their liver, as described below.

Lhotses are incredible climbers, using a mix of supernatural strength and specialized claws to dig into rock faces and cling fast under the harshest of circumstances (especially high wind and snowstorms). Were Lhotses not so sluggish and peaceful, they would make fearsome predators. However, they are anything but.

The Lhotse is a vegetarian, feeding on mountain shrubs, mosses and lichens in the Lowlands and Midlands. Once full, they can live off their internal fat reserves for 12+1D6 months before requiring more food. They are rather non-aggressive and have no practical way to defend themselves. While they can claw and bite, their sluggishness makes them an easy target in close combat, so they reserve their claws and teeth for climbing and eating. No, the Lhotse stays alive not by fighting but by living in areas where ground-based predators can not reach them, and by using their incredible *psychic powers* to contend with flying predators. Lhotses are only semi-intelligent, but their psionic powers are the rival of any Mind Mage and are what really keep the animals alive. Were they non-psionic, they would have gone extinct long ago.

According to Scholars, the *liver* of these creatures is the central ingredient in an elixir that can halt the aging process of *any* humanoid! The recipe for this elixir is known to several Western alchemists, who are always in the market for hunters to bring back entire Lhotse bodies, or at least their internal organs. The last of the Lhotses that once inhabited the Old Kingdom Mountains is believed to have perished some 300 years ago. Finding a new supply in the Northern Mountains would be a most welcomed discovery.

Alignment: Unprincipled or Anarchist, but very slow, lazy and complacent.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D4+4, M.E.: 2D6+10, M.A.: 1D6, P.S.: 5D6 (supernatural), P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 6D6, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 1D4+1, but typically move at a Speed of one or two.

Hit Points: P.E.x3.

S.D.C.: 50

Natural A.R.: None.

Horror Factor: 6

P.P.E.: 4D6. I.S.P.: 2D4xlO+18.

O.C.C.s Available: None. Their impressive psychic powers make them the rough equivalent of a low-level Mind Mage. Aside from their psionic abilities, Lhotses can instinctively Climb/Scale Walls (98%) and Swim (50%).

Natural Abilities: A Lhotse can go a year to a year and a half between meals. Their incredible strength and endurance allows them to latch on to rock faces and hang in place for weeks at a time like a toad basking in the sun. They are also

immune to the effects or ordinary cold, and take only half damage from magical cold.

Attacks Per Melee: One (two in the Astral Plane). This is the absolute fastest Lhotses can move. Striking or defending once per melee (every 15 seconds) is like attacking twelve times per melee for most humanoids. Lhotses can only keep up this pace of activity for 2D4 minutes, tops, before the creatures peter out and must spend the next 2D4 hours resting.

Damage: A Lhotse bite inflicts 3D6 damage. Forclaw strikes as per Supernatural Strength (see page 17 of *the Palladium Fantasy RPG®).*

Bonuses: +6 to strike (+12 if the Lhotse carefully waits and aims, using up two attacks over a 30 second/two melee round period). +15 to damage in addition to Supernatural Strength damage. Impervious to disease and possession, +3 to save vs poison, psionics and magic.

Magic: None.

Psionics: Considered a Master Psychic.

Healing: Bio-Regenerate (self; 6) and Deaden Pain (6).

Physical: Death Trance (1), Impervious to Poison/Toxin (4), Mind Block (4), Nightvision (4), Resist Fatigue (2), Resist Hunger (2), Resist Thirst (6), Summon Inner Strength (4), and Telekinesis (varies).

Sensitive: Astral Projection (8), Clairvoyance (4), Commune with Animals (6), Commune with Spirit (8), Presence Sense (4), See Aura (6), See the Invisible (4), Sense Evil (2), Sense Magic (3), Sixth Sense (2), and Telepathy (4; and twice the normal distance).

Super Psionics: Bio-Manipulation (10), Empathic Transmission (6), Mentally Possess Others (30), Mind Bolt (varies), Telekinesis (super) (10+), and Telekinetic Force Field (30).

Average Life Span: Unknown. Some believe these creatures live for centuries. The Lhotses aren't saying.

Habitat: Extreme alpine environments; mountaintops. They have been hunted into extinction in the Old Kingdom Mountains (or so it is believed) and are only found at the highest reaches of the Northern Mountains. They are not known to be found anywhere else in the known world.

Languages: None. They communicate with others telepathically. They enjoy friendly visits from other life forms, and those who approach these gentle giants with respect and kindness can expect a lengthy and cordial telepathic conversation in return. Lhotses are strangely excellent sources of information on things going on amid the Northern Mountains, and they have no compunctions about sharing their secrets with others.

Enemies: Anybody who would hurt them. In the past they have been hunted to near extinction by evil humans and other mortals for their priceless livers which can be turned into a magical potion that extends life an amazing length.

Allies: Most humanoids. Lhotses are instinctively friendly creatures and unless they are openly harmed, threatened or mistreated, they will give any humanoid they encounter good treatment at first. With their psychic gifts, Lhotses have no problem picking out troublemakers which makes it easy for them to befriend the right people.

Physical Appearance: Lhotses look like monstrous sloths. They have huge, bear-like bodies rippling with thick muscles. They are covered by a thick, shaggy pelt and have a small pair of yellow, curling horns atop their head. They have huge, wicked-looking black claws coming off their fingers and toes. Their eyes are small, dark and beady, leading some to mistakenly assume these creatures are not that smart.

Size: Ten feet (3 m) tall.

Weight: 600 to 800 lbs (270 to 360 kg).

Notes: The Lhotse liver has unique properties that can radically extend the life span of most humanoids when the organ is specially prepared, liquefied and ingested. If prepared correctly, the *Lhotse Elixir* will effectively halt the aging process of any humanoid. After ingesting the elixir, humanoids will age only one year for every 25 that they live, making them nearly immortal (by human standards, anyway)! The Lhotse Elixir also make its users totally immune to poisons and disease of any kind. At present, only a handful of alchemists know the secrets to the Lhotse Elixir (including some in the Western Empire and the Island of the Cyclops, as well as a few Death Cults). None are willing to share their knowledge with those who would bring it to the outside world, for they fear it would encourage outside hunters to slaughter the peaceful Lhotses for themselves or to charge incredible prices and destroying any chance for making more of the Elixir in future years. So far, this Elixir has never made it onto any open market and even practitioners of magic who have heard tell of it, believed it to be nothing more than a legend. A single dose of the Lhotse Elixir sells for millions of gold, depending on the circumstances and the buyer. A single liver makes only one dose, and an alchemist will pay those who know what they have no less than one million in gold - or kill them and take it for nothing. After all, what is the cost of one or a few more lives for near immortality?

Shadow Stalker

The Shadow Stalker is a native to the same shadow dimension as the *Shadow Beasts,* but Shadow Beasts are bigger, stronger, and more deadly than their Shadow Stalker brethren. However, unlike the Shadow Beast, these creatures are beholden to no one, call no man or monster master, and are seemingly immune to any kind of summoning or circle magic.

What makes Shadow Stalkers acutely interesting to Summoners and certain Wizards and Scholars is their innate power to *know* if a spell caster has ever summoned a Shadow Beast to their service. To the Shadow Stalkers, such "enslavers" represent the greatest kind of threat imaginable, and so they will relentlessly pursue and destroy them whenever one is identified. Exactly how these Shadow Stalkers came to the world of man is a mystery. Many believe a Shadow Stalker appears every time a Shadow Beast is summoned, so that the sorcerer responsible might be put to death, Stalker-style. However, this seems unlikely as many a spell caster and Summoner calls forth and commands Shadow Beasts. A more likely prospect is that one or more Shadow Stalkers appear whenever Shadow Beasts are summoned en masse (three or more).

If this is the case, then why are so many Shadow Stalkers (well over 10,000) present in the Land of the Damned, especially in the Eternal Torment region and the Northern Mountains? The only theory for this is that Shadow Beasts, Shadow Stalkers, and many other shadow creatures, were enticed to fight

in the Chaos War of their own free will, or that the Old Ones were the only ones who could enslave them both. At some point, the shadow creatures decided they had enough and tried going home, only a cadre of evil spell casters (most likely minions in the service of the Old Ones) bound many of the shadow creatures to stay and fight, and were eventually slain "in the line of duty." The Shadow Stalkers remained free, however, and, according to theory, swore eternal vengeance upon any spell casters who would make another shadow creature do their bidding even as temporary servants. The Shadow Stalkers in the world today largely prowl the Northern Mountains and the Eternal Torment in search of offending practitioners of magic. They, like most of the evil denizens here, are unable to escape the Land of the Damned and no Shadow Stalker has ever been known to travel east, beyond the shadow of the Northern Mountains (about 20 miles/32 km beyond the base of the mountains). Surely the work of magic or a curse.

Shadow Stalkers are humanoid-shaped entities from the Dimension of Shadows. Like Shadow Beasts, they are entirely black, and appear to others as a kind of 3-D silhouette. In darkness, these things are virtually invisible. In bright light, their strength might be diminished, but make no mistake, these creatures are dangerous under any circumstance. They typically are encountered alone or in groups of 2-4. Occasionally, large bands of Shadow Stalkers ranging up to 20 individuals might be encountered, but they are almost always on the way to assault the stronghold of some Summoner, Wizard or Demon Lord. Rumor has it the Shadow Stalkers of the Northern Mountains have a long-standing vendetta against the forces of evil dwelling inside The Citadel, and though these alien creatures have little to do with the creatures of this world, they might be interested in forming a temporary alliance with whoever stands against The Citadel, the demon hordes of the Great Rift, or the Old Ones. It is believed the Xy once enslaved them as his personal assassins.

Alignment: Selfish or evil. Over half (65%) of all Shadow Stalkers are Aberrant evil.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6+6, M.E.: 2D6+6, M.A.: 1D6+6, P.S.: 2D6+10 (supernatural), P.P.: 3D6+7, P.E.: 4D6+8, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 6D6.

Hit Points: 46

S.D.C.: 22

Natural A.R.: 10

Horror Factor: 14

P.P.E.: 2D6xlO plus P.E. attribute.

O.C.C.S Available: None, but the Shadow Stalker's abilities make it the rough equivalent to a 4th level Wizard.

Natural Abilities: Invisible in shadows and darkness, Prowl in shadows or darkness (90%), Climb/Scale Walls (80%/70%), Land Navigation (60%), Track Humanoids (40%), Wilderness Survival (80%). Bio-regenerates 2D6 Hit Points/S.D.C. per melee round.

Attacks Per Melee: Five.

Damage: As per Supernatural Strength or by spell.

Bonuses: +4 on initiative, +4 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +8 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: All Wizard magic levels 1-2 plus select another 1D4+4 spells from levels 3-5. In the alternative, the creature may know the art of *Shadow Magic* (all its spells) and 1D6 Wizard spells from levels 1-2. Shadow Magic is a long-lost magic discipline from the ancient days. For information on

Shadow Magic and a slew of Shadow Magic spells, check out the **Library of Bletherad™** sourcebook. Spell are cast at 4th level proficiency (half in daylight).

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: Effectively immortal. Shadow Stalkers do not age. Scholars have no clue as to the ordinary life cycle of these creatures or their brethren.

Habitat: Anywhere. Most common in the Land of the Damned.

Languages: Magically speaks and understands all languages.

Enemies: Any intelligent humanoids. Shadow Stalkers seem to have declared war on all walks of life, and unless somehow bound to service, they will immediately and relentlessly wage war upon any humanoids who dare to summon their Beast kin. They also have no liking for **Summoners** and enslavers in general.

Allies: Few outside of Shadow Beasts, which they use as steeds and attack **animals**.

Physical Appearance: Shadow Stalkers are tall, muscular humanoids composed of pure shadow energy. They look like perfectly jet black silhouettes; the interior of their bodies show no details, and to the casual observer they seem two-dimensional.

Size: Seven feet (2.1 m).

Weight: 200 to 300 **lbs** (90 to 135 kg).

Notes: *All* attributes, Hit Points, S.D.C., A.R., skill ratios, bonuses and other such abilities and stats are at *half when* the Shadow Stalker is exposed to daylight of any kind. This means being exposed to the sun, or magically summoned sunlight as from a Globe of Daylight. The duration, range and damage of spell magic is also reduced by half when in sunlight.

Legend says that Shadow Stalkers answer to another race called the *Shadow Kings*, who are roughly twice the size and strength of Shadow Beasts, twice as smart and powerful as the Shadow Stalkers, and are clad in armor composed of pure shadow energy that adds incredible amounts of S.D.C. to their bodies. They also wield shadow weapons that possess strange and terrible magical qualities that make them utterly devastating in combat. Of course, Shadow Kings have not yet been verified, making scholars wonder if they exist at all (at least in our world). There *is* a disturbing reference in the **Tristine** Chronicles to an "army of darkness" working to "lay waste to all that would prevent the spread of shadows across a world of light."

Slag Hag

These potbellied creatures seem at first glance like a cross between a Minor Lava Elemental and some distant cousin of the Harpy. Though they possess only low animal intelligence, Slag Hags have the look of a cunning and devious adversary. In reality, they are merely dim-witted and vicious creatures content to harass passers-by and engage in lifelong gluttony.

Slag Hags exist by eating metal of any kind. Copper, steel, gold, even rare metals with magical properties (including finished metal magic items) are all fair game to these eternally ravenous creatures. Once something goes down a Slag Hag's gullet, it is subjected to the intense heat of its furnace-like stomach, where the metal is melted down and turned into magma, which is then assimilated into the Slag Hag's bloodstream. As a result of this bizarre bio-metallurgical process, Slag Hags radiate intense heat at all times, and a strong red glow emanates ftom. their stomachs, nose, eyes and mouth.

Some have thought that Slag Hags are some form of Elemental, but they are not. Warlocks have no **influence** over them, nor can they communicate with them. Even if they could, it is doubtful that the Slag Hags would have anything to do with those who try talking to them. These are notoriously foul tempered creatures that seem to enjoy only the company of other Slag Hags.

Unfortunately for these nasty beings, they have no mining or metallurgical skills and cannot pull metal ore from the earth, unless it is nuggets of ore found on the surface. If these creatures had the brains to mine, they could find metal veins rich enough for them all to live off of forever. But they will never know such bounty, and so they must find new sources of nourishment elsewhere. Thus, they are forced to scavenge, plunder and steal weapons, equipment and junk from other life forms. The best spots, not surprisingly, are the numerous small settlements sprinkled throughout the Mountains. **Kobold** settlements are particularly troubled by Slag Hags, since they are masterful metal smiths and have large stockpiles of ores, precious metals, weapons, tools and armor. A few of these Kobold communities openly try to attract Slag Hags, however. Their idea is that by keeping these creatures well fed with scrap metal, the community might benefit from having a powerful monster defending it, as well as a means of ridding themselves of useless junk.

Slag Hags are thought to have been one of the original minions of the Old Ones, **recruited/shanghaied** from another world to work their evils in this one. Slag Hags, for the most part, were probably too dim-witted to object. One world is as good as another to the Slag Hag, so long as there is plenty of metal to eat. They are almost certainly some sort of sub-demon or lesser supernatural being.

Alignment: Evil! Evil! Evil! Diabolic or Miscreant only.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6+2, M.E.: 2D6, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 3D6, P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 1D4, Spd.: 2D6.

Hit Points: P.E.+40.

S.D.C.: 40

Natural A.R.: 8

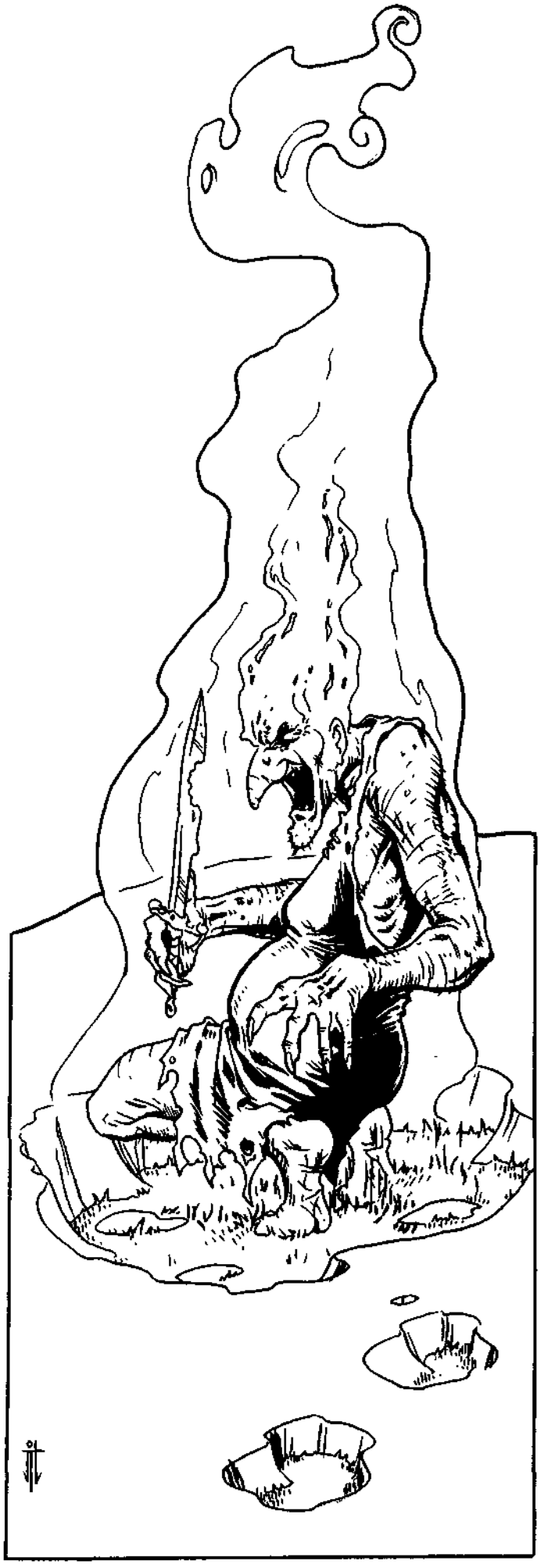
Horror Factor: 12

P.P.E.: 3D4x10.

O.C.C.s Available: Slag Hags are effectively natural Fire Warlocks with an equivalent level of experience of 1D4+2.

Natural Abilities: Slag Hags are utterly impervious to normal and magical fire and heat, but magical cold and ice do double damage. **Nightvision** 150 feet (45.7 m), can see perfectly in smoke and is unaffected by the smell of sulfur.

Slag Hags are constantly emitting great amounts of heat. In fact, their bodies are red hot to the touch, and will inflict 2D6 in burn damage to anybody who comes into contact with them. They have a **01-66%** chance of igniting combustibles (paper, straw, kindling, etc.) if they handle them. Aside from the danger they pose due to their ambient heat, standing near Slag Hags will definitely keep one warm, a fact that attracts lesser beings (Goblins, etc.) to serve the Slag Hags as underlings and workers if the creature will let them share its lair. This is especially true in the winter months.



When angry smoke emits from its nostrils and eyes, and the creature can blow or belch out small clouds of sulfur (equal to a first level magic cloud of sulfur/stench) as well as spit tiny clumps of molten lava (does 2D4 damage; range is only 10 feet/3 m. Each spat counts as one attack).

Attacks Per Melee: Three.

Damage: Slag Hags can use their claws for 1D6 or by weapon. However, they typically use their Fire Warlock abilities. In addition, Slag Hags can cast Fire Ball, Mini-Fireball and Fire Whip spells at will and with no P.P.E. cost! These abilities function like their spell equivalents and the greater the Slag Hag's level of experience, the greater the damage they inflict.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to disarm, and +3 to save vs magic and Horror Factor.

Magic: All Fire Warlock magic, levels 1-6.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 300 years. Oddly enough, Slag Hags *look* at least 100 from the moment they come into the world.

Habitat: Anywhere, but in a strange sense of irony, they are found most often in cold climates, including the Northern Hinterlands and Wolfen Empire (rarely found farther south than the Disputed Lands), but are most numerous in the Northern Mountains and Land of the Damned. Slag Hags are often found amid ice falls and snow-swept landscapes, where the ambient heat they generate keeps their lairs warm and dry.

Languages: Slag Hags speak a guttural tongue that adheres to no language spoken by intelligent beings *anywhere*, yet anyone who hears it can somehow get the gist of what the Slag Hag is getting at (and the creatures seem to *understand* all languages). Considering how hostile and grouchy these strange beings are, understanding where they come from is not hard. Almost 90% of what they are communicating to others consists of "Who are you?" "What are you doing here?" "Get out of here!" and "Give me your metal."

Enemies: Pretty much everybody who gets on their wrong side - it takes the average humanoid a mere 2D4 minutes to get on a Slag Hag's bad side.

Allies: None. Not even Fire Elementals will give these miscreants the time of day.

Physical Appearance: Slag Hags seem like bloated old crones with huge warty noses, long, stringy hair, toothless mouths, and wrinkled skin. In their big pot bellies, there seems to be a big fire burning, so their bellies glow red hot, like a stove that's been burning a few too many coals a little longer than it should have. The rest of the Slag Hag glows a dull red, too, and tendrils of smoke and steam constantly issue from this nasty creature's flesh.

Size: Five feet (1.52 m) tall.

Weight: 200 to 250 lbs (90 to 112.5 kg).

Notes: In ages past, Fire Warlocks joined together in a secret compact to eradicate all Slag Hags from the face of the planet. Somehow, this effort failed and ended up in the slaughter of a great many Fire Warlocks instead! Details of this disastrous attempt at genocide have been almost entirely purged from the collective history of Warlocks. Those today who wish to learn about the event will be hard pressed, since most Warlocks genuinely don't know about it, and those who do guard their information closely. For some reason, the few who have any information on the failed purge are suspicious of anybody who

inquires about it. Almost as if they fear some fool will try to mount another campaign against the Slag Hags, who, despite their evil and monstrous nature, hardly seem deserving of such treatment. After all, these creatures keep to themselves, have no sense of conquest, and do not seek out victims, living only on metal and battling only those who invade their lair or try to enslave them. So why were they targeted for destruction in the first place?

Sundog

When sailors speak of **"sundogs,"** they refer to the little segments of a rainbow that appear up in the sky, usually over water and usually near sundown. This phenomenon also occurs frequently in the upper reaches of the Northern Mountains, as well as a form of the aurora **borealis** that often is seen hovering above the tallest peaks of the mountain chain. Wherever these luminous displays might be **seen,** there are always found at least one or two dog-like creatures as well. These mysterious beings are presumed to be forces of good, since they never molest strangers, but at the same time, they never go out of their way to help them, either. They merely observe those around them, as if reserving their silent judgment for another time. These creatures have become known as *Sundogs,* and they are one of the more enigmatic creatures to be found in the Northern Mountains.

Since the existence of these creatures was verified ten years ago by the legendary explorer ***Rold Cargan,*** scholars have hotly debated the **Sundog's** true nature. Since little is known about them, even less can be postulated. According to **Cargan's** remarkable account (copies of which can be found in the Library of **Bletherad, Bizantium** and several notable universities worldwide), Sundogs can disappear at will, as well as fly through the air and emit a piercing wail that can cause nearly anything to shatter if exposed to it long enough (this last bit is an incorrect rumor; Sundogs can harm things with their wail, but they can not shatter them). Though Sundogs have shown no desire to help **humanoids,** they will attack any supernatural force of evil on sight and not let up until that enemy is dead. This leads some scholars to believe Sundogs are a force of goodness, just one that cares not for the presence of meddling mortals.

Others believe Sundogs to possess immense knowledge and wisdom, putting them in the league of creatures such as Sphinxes, **Ki-Lins,** and even young Dragons. Indeed, the few people who have run into these creatures attest that on those rare occasions when Sundogs do converse with **others,** they can speak in any language, command a sagely knowledge of many things, and also use a wide variety of magic spells.

Like so much else about these curious creatures, where the Sundogs come from is a mystery. They are thought to be natives to this world, and a race that fought for the Alliance of Light during the Chaos War. Rumor has it they remain in the Northern Mountains as a force of sentinels, to make sure the evil forces in the Land of the Damned do not break out of their prison and contaminate the rest of the world.

Alignment: Most **(85%)** Sundogs are of good alignment. A few (13%) are of selfish alignment, and are considered traitors and criminals by their good brethren. A very few (2%) are evil, a phenomenon that started just a few years ago. These evil Sundogs supposedly are creatures of darkness, not light, and possess

different abilities than ordinary Sundogs. The true abilities and extent of these creatures is unknown, even to other Sundogs, who are not yet aware that these mutants exist.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6+6, M.E.: 3D6+6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 3D6+6, P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 4D6, P.B.: 3D6+6, Spd.: 6D6 running (x3 in flight).

Hit Points: P.E.+1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 30 plus any gained from skills or training.

Natural A.R.: None.

Horror/Awe Factor: 12. Good creatures will be awed by these magnificent beings. Evil creatures will be horrified by them, largely because they know that Sundogs are the antithesis of evil.

P.P.E.: 6D6 or by O.C.C. **I.S.P.:** 3D6 or by O.C.C.

O.C.C.S Available: Sundogs may be Scholars, Wizards, Psi-Mystics or Mind Mages only.

Natural Abilities: Sundogs possess a wide array of special abilities to help them in their role of crusader, defender and avenger. These powers include:

Emit Sunlight: Sundogs constantly emit pure and potentially dazzling or even damaging sunlight. Usually, this is nothing more than a low, soft glow that enshrouds the Sundog and has no effect other than making him an easy target (+3 to strike the Sundog) at night or in darkness. If the Sundog "turns up" the glow, it can radiate light like a living light bulb equal to about 100 watts - enough to light up a room (20x20 feet/6x6 m) - plus 25 watts per level of experience, starting at level two.

Sundogs love to use this ability to dazzle their opponents. With the merest effort, they can momentarily enhance their softly glowing aura into a painfully bright flash. All creatures looking at the Sundog must roll to save vs magic. Those who fail to save are temporarily blinded by the dazzling light (-10 to strike, parry and dodge for one melee round). Sundogs can dazzle out to a radius of 10 feet (3 m) plus 10 feet (3 m) per level of experience, starting at level two.

Light Bolt: Sundogs can also focus their light expulsion into a concentrated, laser-like pulse that has a range of 300 feet (91.4 m) plus 20 feet (6.1 m) per level of experience, starting at level two. This energy attack inflicts 3D6 +1D6 per additional level of experience, and counts as a single melee attack/action.

Flight: Sundogs can fly through the air at will. Graceful fliers, they enjoy an additional +3 bonus to dodge and +1 attack per melee while aloft. Their flying speed is triple their running speed.

Teleportation: Sundogs can instantly transport themselves from one location to another in a blink of an eye. The weight limitation is the Sundog itself and an additional 100 lbs (45 kg) plus another 100 lbs (45 kg) per additional level of experience. If the Sundog is teleporting to a familiar location, or one that is clearly visible from his starting point, the chance of successful teleportation is 01-99%. The Sundog has an 01-88% chance of successful teleportation to a place seen only a few (2-6) times before. The Sundog has an 01-50%+1% per level of experience chance of successful teleportation to a place seen only once and a 01-38% chance of successfully teleporting to a place never seen but described in detail. The chance of successfully teleporting to a totally unknown place is a mere 01-12%.

Since teleporting is second nature to these creatures, an unsuccessful roll does *not* misplace the creature anywhere, as would happen with spell casters using teleportation magicks. Instead, the Sundog simply does not go anywhere, but will have expended a melee action's worth of effort for nothing. Sundogs teleport with no P.P.E. cost. The range for this ability is one mile (1.6 km) plus one additional mile for every level of experience starting at level two. Note: As will be explained later in this sourcebook, teleportation rarely works in the Northern Mountains. It is as if the mountains themselves make it nearly impossible for the teleportation process to execute properly. Those who use teleportation magicks often find themselves cast far off target, and in rare cases, teleported right into the ground! Sundogs are perhaps the only creature of the region that are *immune* to this effect. They can use their teleportation abilities in the Northern Mountains without undue difficulty.

Keening Wail: This is one of the Sundog's primary natural weapons, something it will often use before resorting to magic or psionics. They use their wail attacks to feel out their opponents when they do not already know their capabilities. Those that can shrug off the Sundog wail typically merit a full onslaught with the creature's other natural weapons and/or magical or psionic abilities. Sundogs can wail only once per melee round. This ability costs no I.S.P. or P.P.E. All wailing attacks have either an area or singular effect. Area effect wails have a radius of 40 feet (12.2 m) plus 10 feet (3 m) per level of experience, starting at level two. Singular Wails have a range of 200 feet (61 m) plus 20 feet (6.1 m) per level of experience, starting at level two.

There are three different types of Keening Wails, the *Stun Wail*, the *Force Wail*, and the *Death Wail*. The *Stun Wail* stuns any target for 1D4 melee rounds, during which time the victim can only defend himself, not attack. The *Force Wail* knocks back any target 2D6 yards/meters and the victim loses one melee attack and initiative as well. The *Death Wail* inflicts 4D6 damage. For all three wails, the Sundog does not need to roll to hit. However, the target *does* get to save vs magic (14 or higher). If he makes it, then the wail has no effect.

See Aura: This ability is identical to the Sensitive Psionic power (see **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition,** page 171), except that it costs the Sundog no I.S.P. or P.P.E. to use.

Sense Evil: This ability is identical to the Sensitive Psionic power (see **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition,** p. 171), except that it costs the Sundog no I.S.P. or P.P.E. to use.

Attacks Per Melee: Four by bite, claw, or natural abilities, or two by magic. Sundogs do not select Hand to Hand training as a part of their O.C.C. skills; they prefer to rely on their instinctive combat talents.

Damage: A Sundog bite does 2D6+2, and claws do 1D6+2, not including any P.S. modifiers.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +4 to strike, parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch, fell or impact, +1 to pull punch, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs magic and psionics, and +1 to all other saving throws.

Magic: Sundogs either possess magical or psionic abilities, but not both. Those that possess magic abilities can cast any 1-2

level Wizard spells. Sundogs may not learn or acquire additional spells unless their O.C.C. allows it.

Psionics: If the Sundog does not possess magic, then it has psionic abilities, but not both. Those with psionic abilities may select three powers each from the Healing, Sensitive, and Physical categories. Sundogs do not get Super Psionic abilities unless their O.C.C. allows it.

Average Life Span: Sundogs are thought to live between 50 to 75 years. This remains unverified for two reasons. One, Sundogs themselves are elusive creatures unlikely to give inquiring humanoids any details about themselves. Two, Sundogs live lives of danger, hardship and combat. Most die in battle and never get a chance to expire from old age. Since Sundogs ages 50-75 seem to have a much higher casualty rate on the battlefield, scholars believe this is when the creatures really start to show their age. Neither as fast nor as strong as they once were (reduce attributes and bonuses by 30%), the creatures no longer have what it takes to survive and are quickly disposed of by their enemies.

Habitat: Sundogs could live comfortably anywhere, but they steadfastly refuse to leave the Northern Mountains. This is their home and where their duty lies. They would only leave the region if somehow all evil creatures from the Land of the Damned were destroyed (fat chance!) or if some other means of containing them were to arise. The only Sundogs who leave their post are selfish individuals who have forsaken their duties. Should they ever run into another Sundog, the "traitor" will be attacked without mercy for his crimes.

Languages: Sundogs magically speak and understand all languages.

Enemies: Evil creatures of every kind but especially those that live in the Land of the Damned and are trying to escape it.

Allies: Sundogs are fairly cantankerous to humanoids and do not welcome their company. Most Sundogs' goodness makes it hard for them to not admire the work of noble crusading humanoids, and after a while, a Sundog might warm up to a particular group of heroic adventurers, especially if they are dedicated to battling demons and evil. Such heroes active in the North will find instant and lifelong friends among the Sundogs. In such cases, the Sundog might permanently join the group so it can add to the group's collective strength when battling evil, but only as long as they stay in the Northern Mountains or Land of the Damned.

Physical Appearance: Sundogs look like a mastiff - a large and muscular dog with a barrel-chest, big head and powerful jaws. They range from light tan to jet black in their coats, but they are all surrounded by a soft yellow-white light at all times. When Sundogs are angry or excited, this glow increases to such an extent that it can light up a room.

Size: Sundogs stand four feet (1.2 m) at the shoulder and are five feet (1.52 m) long.

Weight: 200 to 250 lbs (90 to 112.5 kg).

Notes: These creatures are grim and curt destroyers of supernatural evil. To them, there can be little joy in life outside of doing one's duty, which for them is smashing evil and slaying demons in the Northern Mountains (and sometimes in the lands below). That being the case, most Sundogs are very happy to live in such a target-rich environment as the mountains that border the Land of the Damned. Should goodness and light one day prevail in this forsaken place, some of these creatures might fan out to address the evil powers plaguing other parts of the world. Already, the occasional Sundog can be found traveling to other worlds and dimensions. These wanderers are usually either rogues who have forsaken their crusade against supernatural evil or they are the rare inter-dimensional raider who believes that the situation on the Palladium World is well in hand, and that his particular talents might be better applied elsewhere.

Tyrannoth

Brutal creatures in the extreme, Tyrannoths are neither humanoid nor animal but something in between. They were long thought to be the result of an alchemical experiment to create a warrior race or a super-powerful guard animal. However, recently discovered religious texts place them in the Northern Mountains shortly after the Age of Chaos came to an end. Nobody seems to know if the Tyrannoths were used in the Chaos War or if they came to this world as a side result of all the inter-dimensional traveling after the War ended. (Many of the races who fought the war went home afterwards, and they usually opened up dimensional gateways to do it. On more than one occasion, this dangerous method of traveling indeed brought people home, but in exchange it introduced strange new creatures to this world. The Tyrannoth could be one of them, but if they are not, how then did they come to inhabit the Land of the Damned?)

Tyrannoths spend most of their time on all fours, but they are capable of standing on their rear legs for fighting and brief sprints. Their hands and feet sport a strange combination of fingers and hooves; each appendage has three thick, strong fingers tipped with a fingernail so large it seems more like a hoof than a nail or a claw. The result are hands and feet that support these heavy creatures as they run, but can also be used for crude manipulation and fighting.

Tyrannoths also have long, spiky horns growing off their backs and shoulders reminiscent of a hedgehog. These provide the creature with a defense from being attacked from behind. For frontal attacks, Tyrannoths either ram with their horned head or by rearing up and smashing their opponents with blows from their front hooves/paws.

There are only 1,000 Tyrannoths left in the Northern Mountains, and scholars believe the race has dwindled so badly that it has passed the point of no return and will go extinct in another 50 years or so.

One of the things speeding the Tyrannoth's demise is its frequent use as a war steed in the Minion War - that never-ending conflict between demons and Deevils in and around the Great Rift. Periodically, slavers from the Great Rift raid the western side of the Northern Mountains, capturing any Tyrannoths they can find and pressing them into service. Once subjugated, these great beasts become the personal steeds of greater war chiefs for either side of the War, or are used as beasts of burden.

For combat, Tyrannoths have been taught by their demon and Deevil masters to curl up like a pillbug and to roll across the battlefield, letting their rack of spiky horns stick out and do a number on anyone unfortunate to get caught in the way.

Alignment: Any selfish or evil.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6+3, M.E.: 1D6+4, M.A.: 1D6+4, P.S.: 40+1D6 (supernatural), P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6+6, P.B.: 1D6, Spd.: 1D6.

Hit Points: P.E.+100.

S.D.C.: 120

Natural A.R.: 14

Horror Factor: 14

P.P.E.: 2D6

O.C.C.s Available: None. Instinctive hunters and warriors.

Natural Abilities: Tyrannoths have eagle-like vision, able to spot even minute details on something up to one mile (1.6 km) away. Its incredible nightvision extends as far as its daytime vision, making these creatures exceptional night hunters. Tyrannoths can also sense motion within a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius, making it impossible to surprise these creatures and giving them a hefty initiative bonus (see Bonuses, below). Tyrannoths can not swim, but they can hold their breath for as many minutes as they have P.E. points, so they have no problem simply walking across the bottom of rivers and small lakes.

Attacks Per Melee: Five.

Damage: For some reason, Tyrannoths refuse to bite living creatures, despite the fact that they have a maw full of wickedly sharp fangs. Instead, they will stomp or swipe at their foes for 2D6 damage on a restrained stomp/swipe, 1D6x10 for a full-strength stomp/swipe, and 2D6x10 for a power stomp/swipe (counts as two attacks). Tyrannoths specially trained to do so can curl up like a pillbug and roll at their opponents, steamrollering them and puncturing them with their long bony spines. When Tyrannoths attempt this move, it takes up all of their attacks for the melee round, and they may not do any defensive moves (parry, dodge, etc.) during that round. The damage for this "spike roll" is the same as a stomp or a swipe, except that if the Tyrannoth hits with it, it is an automatic critical strike (double damage)!

Bonuses: +5 on initiative, +4 to strike, +3 to parry, +6 to dodge, +3 to disarm, +6 to save vs pain, and +7 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 20 to 30 years.

Habitat: Preferably, temperate, dry climates, but it is thought these creatures can pretty much survive anywhere except extremely cold settings. That means if they break out of the Land of the Damned, they will head south.

Languages: None. They communicate with others through a simple code of grunts and huffs. They respond to verbal commands in other languages, though, and respond especially well to Gobblely for some reason nobody can explain.

Enemies: Anybody that gets in their way, but they show special enmity for any winged creatures (demons and Deevils included).

Allies: None, though they are often "domesticated" (using the term loosely) by demons and Deevils for use as a war steed or beast of burden, but are not happy about it.

Size: On all fours, a Tyrannoth stands seven feet (2.1 m) at the shoulder and is twelve feet (3.6 m) long (which is also its height when standing on hind legs).

Weight: One ton/2,000 lbs (900 kg).

Notes: Though demons and Deevils capture and raise these creatures, they can never be fully domesticated and require constant reining in to keep under control. If these creatures are not somehow restrained, after 1D4 melee rounds, they will break free and begin doing whatever they want. At that point, anyone who tries to bring them under control will have to physically subdue them. In this state, Tyrannoths are very touchy, and if they receive any harm or pain in the next 2D6 minutes, they fly into a blind fury, lashing out at any moving thing without mercy for the following hour. After that time, or if people simply let the creature alone during its "touchy phase," the Tyrannoth will settle down and can be controlled once more by its rider or trainer (but not a total stranger). Since the demons and Deevils who use these creatures lack discipline, they often let their Tyrannoths go unsupervised for too long and then try beating them into submission, which causes the creatures to go on a rampage. During any given week of the Minion War, Tyrannoth rampages can be expected to kill up to a dozen infernal warriors on either side of the conflict.

Vyle

The Vyle is a repugnant little quadruped found throughout the Northern Mountains and the Great Rift area. They possess a super-concentrated acid for blood, making them a dangerous creature to kill for fear of splattering oneself with super-strong corrosives. These creatures can also spit acid at their foes as a compelling defensive measure.

What makes the Vyle most noteworthy, however, is their ability to devour absolutely any organic material - again thanks to the acid that courses through their bodies. This makes Vyles the ultimate *carrion feeders*, something which helps keep the war-torn Land of the Damned from overflowing with corpses. In areas like the Great Rift, the never-ending Minion War produces thousands upon thousands of casualties every year, and were it not for the reducing work of the Vyles (and other carrion eaters), the area would be covered with the decaying bodies of the slain. They also feed at garbage dumps, eating all organic waste and refuse, but may also raid food storage depots, granaries, farms and chicken coops. (In the latter two cases, the Vyles eat eggs, and attack, kill and eat baby and aged or injured animals. Children under the age of three are also vulnerable to these creatures.)

Vyles are found throughout the Northern Mountains, where they live well, feasting on the remains of corpses left behind by other predators and fallen adventurers. In the Northern Mountain Highlands, where food is scarce, Vyles become really aggressive, gathering in packs and actively hunting "live" creatures if they can not find enough carrion to consume. They will even turn on each other if they get hungry enough, going into an internecine feeding frenzy that is truly frightening to behold.

Vyles are sometimes raised in captivity by various monster races who harvest the creatures for their acid. Such domesticated creatures are often overfed to the point of obesity, which makes them so docile they can actually be handled without fear of attack at all. Under such conditions, Vyle, are kept for up to a year before they are slaughtered, yielding several quarts of super-acid, which can then be used as a tool or (more likely) a weapon.

Alignment: The equivalent of Miscreant or occasionally Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6 (animal), M.E.: 1D6, M.A.: 1D6, P.S.: 1D6+2, P.P.: 2D6+10, P.E.: 1D6+6, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 3D6+6.

Hit Points: P.E.+10.

S.D.C.: 20

Natural A.R.: 8

Horror Factor: 8

P.P.E.: 2D4

O.C.C.s Available: None. Natural scavengers.

Natural Abilities: Vyles can digest absolutely any organic material, supernatural or otherwise. This is what makes them such great reducers of the dead bodies that would otherwise cover the Land of the Damned many times over. Vyles can also track by scent (60%; +20% to follow a blood or decay scent) and have excellent nightvision (300 feet/91.4 m). They are instinctive swimmers (85%), climbers (80%), and stalkers; Prowl (70%).

Attacks Per Melee: Three by claw, bite or acid spit.

Damage: Vyles can use their claws or teeth for 1D6 damage, but to spit acid is their instinctive response.

Acid Attack: Vyles' main method of attack is to *spit acid* on their opponents. The range for this is 20 feet (6.1 m) and it inflicts 3D6 points of damage upon initial contact, 2D6 points of damage at the beginning of the following melee round, and 1D6 points of damage for the next 1D4 melee rounds! The only way to stop this acid from burning is to douse it with *cow's or goat's milk,* which will stop the burning immediately. Nothing else is known to neutralize the acid.

Similarly, any wound inflicted on a Vyle will cause it to spurt acidic blood out to 3 feet (0.9 m). For attackers in range, this spurt effect has a base attack roll of 7, and unfortunate bystanders can a) let the acid eat through their armor/body, b) try to dodge or c) parry with an expendable object like a shield or club, which the victim had better discard before the acid burns through it. The acid blood is an active burning agent for 1D4+3 melee rounds. Touching it before it becomes inert will inflict the usual acid damage.

Bonuses: +3 to strike when spitting acid, no bonus to strike with tooth or claw, +3 to dodge, +1 to roll with punch, fall or impact, impervious to most disease, +7 to save vs poison and drugs.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 5-7 years.

Habitat: The Northern Mountains and the Great Rift area that divides the Land of the Damned into north and south. Should they break free of the Land of the Damned, they will seek temperate zones, neither too hot nor too cold. That would place them in Phi, Lopan, the Eastern Territory, Timiro and the Old Kingdom. Although they survive in the mountains and Land of the Damned, they do not thrive there and hate the cold.

Languages: None. They communicate to each other with clicks and a squealing bark that to most humanoids has the quality of scraping fingernails down a chalkboard. While this effect has no real combat impact, it is a highly distinctive sound and can be quite unnerving. That squealing bark is unmistakable to those familiar with Vyles, and when they hear numer-

ous Vyles barking together, they know that the area is unsafe and should probably be vacated - Vyles do not gather in large numbers unless they are at a feeding ground (the site of a recent battle or other cause of death) or hungry enough to gather in a pack to attack and eat large animals, humanoids included.

Enemies: Most monsters and animals instinctively dislike Vyles, recognizing them as the bottom-feeders that they are. Humanoids generally feel the same way, but evil races like keeping these repugnant creatures around as a form of waste disposal, as a living torture implement, and to harvest their acidic spittle and blood for military purposes.

Allies: None. Even the creatures that raise them in captivity rarely have any friendly feelings toward these disgusting and "vile" creatures.

Physical Appearance: Vyles are vaguely reptilian quadrupeds about the size of a small dog. Their leathery hide conies in a variety of drab colors, ranging from khaki and grey to dark olive. Usually, they have spots or stripes of the same color as the rest of their skin, just a slightly darker hue. Vyles have no neck; their stubby, conical heads seem to have almost been retracted into their torso, the way a turtle might withdraw its head when attacked. The Vyle head is all mouth, with two beady, dark eyes on top. Vyles have a stubby, segmented tail, and their legs each have clawed, three-toed feet. These creatures hold their bellies high off the ground, so they can run about quickly.

Size: Roughly three feet (0.9 m) long, stand only one foot (0.3 m) high.

Weight: 20 to 30 lbs (9 to 13.6 kg).

Notes: Any creature that can track by scent will be able to detect the presence of a Vyle up to one mile (1.6 km) away under optimal wind and weather conditions. To beings with such delicate olfactory senses, Vyles carry with them an unmistakable and unavoidable stench of death, decay, and burning. Theirs is a smell like none other (+10% to track by smell).

Waghalter

The insectoid stealth hunters known as *Waghalters* are widely considered to be one of the more dangerous creatures encountered in the Northern Mountains. Possessing wicked claws, thick chitinous armor, and great strength and speed, those who fall under attack from these voracious predators had better be prepared for the worst. Their name is a synonym for "assassin," in reference to their hunting techniques.

These creatures spend most of their day prowling about, echo-locating prospective prey. Leaping from rock face to rock face, the athletic Waghalter has little difficulty traversing the vertical environment of the Northern Mountains. In fact, it probably has an easier time moving around than any other non-flying creature in the mountain range.

Once a Waghalter has found some prey, it tracks them until it can get into a good ambush position and launch an attack. Waghalters always attack from above or, less preferably, from behind. Waghalters absolutely never conduct a frontal attack unless they have been somehow surprised by another creature or have been backed into a corner.

Once the conditions are right, the Waghalter goes into action, usually striking the last person or animal in the target group, or those who stray from the group. Under optimal conditions, the target will be alone, but the Waghalter will take what it can get, sometimes attacking a group of targets with the intent of snatching a straggler and running away with it. As the attack first gets underway, the Waghalter is at its most lethal. The target generally does not see the attack coming, since the Waghalter moves with lightning speed. In fact, for the first four melee rounds, Waghalters move at such an accelerated rate that many scholars thought the creatures to be under the effects of a permanent *Fleet Feet* spell. After that first minute, however, the Waghalter will tire and begin to move very sluggishly. At this point, if the animal has not made a kill, it must break off the attack, especially if that victim is a humanoid. The Waghalters have learned that "packs" of humanoids often do not scatter like animals, and will turn to attack in numbers even if their fellow pack member in the Waghalter's clutches is injured or dead. Thus, the Waghalter tries to avoid prolonged battle with irrational humanoids and will abandon its "catch" if relentlessly pursued or attacked in force. This also means the monster would rather retreat than stand to fight multiple foes, so only a vengeful fool will corner one and force it to do battle.

Historically, Waghalters usually hunted solo, but more and more in recent generations they have been sighted operating in packs of three to four, attacking small groups of target animals and slaying everything in sight. This may be a natural response to the fact that a small pack of Waghalters have a better chance at killing a small group of humanoids than trying to pick off just one. Thus, while a lone Waghalter is wary of humanoids and will often look toward easier prey, these group are unafraid of people, target them as easy prey, and retreats only if they give the beasts too much fight as a group.

After the hunt, Waghalters devour their prey on the spot and begin hunting again. It is said a Waghalter can devour the flesh and organs of a an average-sized humanoid within 1D6 minutes.

When Waghalters move into an area, they will relentlessly prey on everything until they are killed or the food source dries up. There have been entire homesteads and villages destroyed over the course of several months by a single relentless Waghalter who sees such gatherings of people as an alluring feeding ground. Thus, the monster will return to its "food source" over and over again until there are none left! People with a sense of self-preservation had better dispose of these unwanted predators posthaste, especially if it starts to snag victims from a permanent settlement. There are other benefits to hunting the Waghalter besides getting them before they can get you. First, their chitinous exoskeleton can be harvested and turned into plate armor, similar to the exoskeleton of the *Fyr-Kree Insectoids* from the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Second, Waghalter blood is also a precious commodity, as any alchemist and even Herbologist can take the stuff, add a few ingredients and turn it into a *Fleet Feet potion.*

Alignment: Typically Miscreant or Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D4+5 (more than animal, almost human), M.E.: 2D6+3, M.A.: 2D6+2, P.S.: 2D6+20, P.P.: 2D6+13, P.E.: 2D6+8, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 1D6x10+12.

Hit Points: P.E.x3.

S.D.C.: 3D4xlO.

Natural A.R.: 15
Horror Factor: 14
P.P.E.: 4D4
O.C.C.s Available: None. Instinctive hunters and killers.
Natural Abilities:

Stalking/Prowl: This is a kind of advanced prowl that the Waghalter excels at (88%). If the creature performs the ability successfully, then for the next 1D4 days, it can shadow and tail selected prey without being noticed. It does this by keeping a medium distance from the target, but at the same time never letting it out of its echo-location range. (See below for details on the Waghalter's echo-location ability.) When the Waghalter moves in for the kill, it must begin making ordinary Prowl rolls (it prowls at 76%) to approach the prey unseen.

Echo-Location: Using this ability, the Waghalter sends out high-frequency waves which bounce off objects, returning and indicating the direction and distance of the reflecting objects. This enables the creature to know automatically the location of objects and movements within 500 feet (152 m). Echo-Location is especially useful in the dark, over long distances, and during combat (providing the character has a relatively full view of the combat area). Echo-Location abilities include interpreting shapes (68%), estimating distance (78%), estimating direction (88%), estimating speed (58%) and estimating exact location (68%). The high-frequency is beyond the hearing range of humanoids and most animals other than bats and whales.

Echo-Location does not go through cloth, wood or people. Consequently, Waghalters can not use this to see or sense through walls or doors. Likewise, while it may sense a covered wagon, estimate its speed, direction and distance, it cannot tell how many people are inside it.

This ability is totally fouled in the rain, snow, dust, sandstorms and by other similar, multiple, obscuring images. If these conditions exist under darkness or while the Waghalter is blinded, Echo-Location is ineffective and the creature is blind and suffers from the typical -10 to strike, parry and dodge. *Smoke* also fouls Echo-Location, but not as severely as the aforementioned conditions. All the abilities to estimate speed, direction, distance, shape and location are at -30%. All bonuses are reduced by half.

Leaping: Waghalters with a Speed attribute of 40 or less can leap up to 100 feet (30.5 m) in any direction from a standing start (double that if from a running start). Waghalters with a Speed attribute of 50 or more can leap up to 200 feet (61 m) in any direction from a standing start (again, double that if from a running start).

Enhanced Metabolism: During the first four melee rounds of combat, the Waghalter cranks up its metabolism for a burst of super-speed. During this time, the creature's Speed attribute *triples* (their leaping attribute is correspondingly increased), and they gain an additional *two* attacks per melee round. At the end of the fourth melee round, however, the Waghalter runs out of gas and its Speed drops to *half* its normal level and they can no longer leap. They also have only

two attacks per melee round. When in this state (takes five minutes/20 melee rounds to recover), Waghalters do everything they can to get away from prey they have not yet vanquished. If they can not, however, the semi-intelligent predator must rely on their natural body armor to save them, play dead (a common ploy) or take some other tact.

Attacks Per Melee: Five (Seven when it has its Enhanced Metabolism working).

Damage: Waghalter front claws strike to inflict a devastating 4D6 points of damage. Their rear claws (hind feet) do 3D6 damage. These creatures can also bite for 2D6 damage

If a Waghalter successfully bites, it will lock its jaw and hold on to its victim, making any subsequent claw strikes automatic hits unless the Waghalter rolls a natural 1-4 to strike, or unless the victim breaks free. To do this, the victim must have at least an ordinary P.S. of 30 (or supernatural P.S., regardless of score) to pry the creature's jaw loose. This takes one melee action/attack. Then the victim will have to spend another action/attack pushing the creature off before resuming combat.

Bonuses (does not include likely Attribute Bonuses): +4 on initiative, +4 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to disarm, +4 to pull punch or bite, +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact. If the Waghalter is in a smoke cloud, these bonuses are halved (round down). If the Waghalter is in conditions that cancel out its Echo-Location entirely, then its bonuses are all negated.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 25 years.

Habitat: Mountain creatures, they are found throughout the Northern Mountains at every level, including the Highlands and Death Zone. They venture into the foothills and interior of the Land of the Damned and Northern Hinterlands only when food is scarce in the higher elevations. The Waghalters have never bothered the Colonies of the Shadow Coast because there are too many people living there. However, they have been known to pick off livestock and victimize travelers on the outskirts of town. Waghalters must consume half their own body weight in protein (meat) per day or they will starve. Given their insatiable appetites, these creatures can easily decimate local ecosystems unless they live somewhere with a food source plentiful enough to keep these creatures satisfied. Increasingly, these creatures are moving down from the mountains and into the Great Rift area, where the never-ending supply of demons and Deevils and numerous mortal races are like a never-ending smorgasbord to these monsters.

Languages: Waghalters communicate with each other through a series of clicking sounds, high-frequency whistles and squeals beyond the hearing range of humanoids, and pheromones. They have shown no ability or interest in communicating with humanoids whom they find to be a strange and unpredictable animal.

Enemies: Anything they think they can catch, kill and eat. When Waghalters gather in numbers, target creatures can include just about anything. Rumor has it a pack of Waghalters once took out an adolescent dragon somewhere in the Northern Mountain Lowlands and regularly prey upon Minotaurs, Trolls and Ogres.

Allies: Nobody except other Waghalters. These creatures are not pack animals by nature, so they prefer to travel and hunt alone or in small groups of 3-4. Only when their hunger forces them to consider really big animals as food do Waghalters instinctively seek each other out and form highly efficient hunting packs of 4-8.

Physical Appearance: Waghalters are quasi-bipedal insectoids. They stand on their hind feet in a perpetually hunched over, semi-crouching position with their hands barely off the ground. They have large, round shiny eyes and a mouth filled with multiple rows of razor-sharp teeth. Waghalters range from dull green to light gray in coloration, and though they bear a distinctly insect-like appearance, they have neither wings nor antennae. To certain scholars, Waghalters look like they might once have been a race of enormous mantis or locusts that somehow has begun evolving towards a humanoid configuration. Waghalters have crude, three-fingered hands that could be used to manipulate tools if these creatures were so inclined. However, all records on them show that they are not. They have no real culture of their own, and exist more as savage, quasi-intelligent animals than as a humanoid race in the making. Perhaps in another few thousand generations, or after some serious alchemical tinkering, the Waghalter will become one of the next major races to seek its destiny in the Palladium World. More likely, they will remain an obscure race of beings living in the sheltering Northern Mountains like the predatory animals they more closely resemble.

Size: Six to seven feet (1.8 to 2.1 m) tall.

Weight: 300 lbs (135 kg).

Notes: If harvested within 48 hours of death, a Waghalter's carapace can be stripped away and used to make a suit of highly protective, yet lightweight and flexible body armor. To do this, one must spend 2D4 hours butchering the Waghalter carcass, after which the cutter will have all of the major plates of the carapace in hand. This load will weigh nearly 50 lbs (22.7 kg). If taken to a tanner within the next week, the plates can be properly dried out and preserved. (During this process, the plates lose most of their weight as the fluids on the carapace dry out, leaving behind only the hard, flexible chitin.) Then, the plates can be taken to an armorer, who can shape them into a suit of full body armor that can cover any humanoid frame short of giant-size. To make giant-sized armor, the plates from at least two Waghalters are necessary. The whole operation usually costs somewhere around 1,000 gold, and the resulting suit has an A.R. of 16 and 60 S.D.C. The entire suit only weighs 20 lbs (9 kg), makes no sound, and does not adversely impact its user's Prowl rolls or movement.

Wastrel's Bane

This unusual parasite is thought to be a native to the Northern Mountains, a rarity among so many creatures either brought to this world by mystical means or directly engineered by the Old Ones. As far as anybody knows, the Wastrel's Bane is just an exotic animal that developed on this world and is found nowhere else.

Wastrel's Bane is a small, pink, fleshy worm that attaches to its host like how a lamprey might bite and suck the blood of its prey. These creatures live by attaching themselves *en masse* to a

single host and collectively sucking it dry. Once the host is dead, the worms take over the host body, crudely controlling it like a puppet in search of other prey. Optimally, the Wastrel's Bane will capture another humanoid (they dislike dining on anything else) and transfer themselves to it and suck it dry before repeating the whole cycle over and over again.

Should a Wastrel's Bane host perish before the worms can transfer to another person, they will simply huddle underneath the rotting host corpse in the hope that another victim will come along, overturn the body and fall prey to the worms' collective attack.

Wastrel's Bane got their name from the gaunt condition in which they leave their hosts. When Western explorers first found victims of these worms, they mistakenly thought the victims had overdosed on *Wastrel,* a popular recreational narcotic commonly used by Western nobility and top military personnel. When it was learned that the victims had fallen prey to bizarre worms instead, the explorers named them *Wastrel's Bane,* since the drug now had some competition as a ravager of bodies.

In the wild, Wastrel's Bane live and attack in large numbers, overwhelming their victims and quickly draining them of life. However, should a victim endure just one worm bite, then the effects are somewhat different. At first, a victim of a single worm bite feels nothing, since these creatures flood their victims with endorphins upon the initial bite. After three to four melee rounds, however, the painkillers wear off and the victim is subjected to excruciating, debilitating pain. This agony renders the victim at -6 to strike, parry and dodge, skills are down by 60%, Speed is down to a quarter its usual rate, and the character has just one attack per melee round. With results like these, it comes as no surprise to those living in the Northern Mountains that evildoers love to keep small numbers of these worms around for use as an implement of torture.

Alignment: Animal predators and parasites; rough equivalent to Anarchist or Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q.: One point, M.E.: One point, M.A.: One point, P.S.: One point, P.P.: One point, P.E.: One point, P.B.: One point, Spd.: 1D4, but they can *leap* up to six feet (1.8 m) in any direction from a still position. They use this ability to spring on their victims and attack.

Hit Points/S.D.C.: Like Beedles, a single Wastrel's Bane worm can endure just one point of damage before it dies. Basically, any attack on one of these worms will kill it, so long as the attack connects.

S.D.C.: One point.

Natural A.R.: 5

Horror Factor: 12

P.P.E.: One point.

O.C.C.s Available: None.

Natural Abilities:

Swarm Attack: Wastrel's Bane are typically encountered in groups of 4D6+20. Under optimal conditions, when they can surprise their prey - such as when they are hiding under a log or corpse and somebody turns it over, or when they control a humanoid and use it to overpower another humanoid - these vile worms will all leap on their new prey simultaneously. Upon initial contact, they each bite for a single point of damage direct to Hit Points! (Those wearing even leather armor will only see 1D4x10% bypassing it to strike flesh.)

Each subsequent round, the worms suck their victim's blood for an additional one Hit Point of damage (again, bypassing S.D.C.). They keep this up until the victim is either sucked dry (down to zero Hit Points) or until the victim somehow shakes them off or kills the cursed worms. Victims can do this by pulling off or killing *one* worm per melee attack/action, but since these creatures attack in such large numbers, pulling them off or killing them one by one usually is not a viable strategy unless the victim has some friends to help in the task. Wastrel's Bane can not abide the sensation of alcohol, so dousing them with wine or straight alcohol will make them drop off immediately. Likewise, they do not like fire, and will drop off if exposed to strong heat or touched by flame.

Host Control: If Wastrel's Bane *kill* a humanoid host, then they may collectively manipulate the body, using it like a crude puppet. In this state, the worms' host body is beyond rescue and is the puppet vehicle of the worms. It has two attacks per melee round, no combat bonuses, and no skills. The worms will move it in a clumsy, herky-jerky fashion, and will clearly seem to any observer that something is wrong. These worm hosts bodies are often mistaken for zombies, which they are, in a way (just not the undead kind). Most of the time, the Wastrel's Bane will have the host cover itself up with a cloak or other such garment and lie in wait to ambush another humanoid and overpower it. This way, when the first host stops working, the worms can just jump to the next and continue feeding.

Bodies taken over by the Wastrel's Bane will work for only 1D4 days before they begin to decompose. After that, the host body is no good to these creatures and must be abandoned immediately. If the worms do not have another host ready to go, they will seek the nearest hiding place and wait for somebody to stumble on to them. Though Wastrel's Bane like to eat constantly, they can go up to six months between meals, which enables them to wait very long periods of time for another victim to come by.

Attacks Per Melee: One as worms, two manipulating a humanoid host body (never an animal).

Damage: As per the Swarm Attack, described above.

Bonuses: None

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: The worms live for 3-5 years.

Habitat: The Land of the Damned and the middle and lowlands of the Northern Mountains, nowhere else. Like temperate to cold environments, preferably damp and dark.

Languages: None.

Enemies: Anything and everything. These creatures are not picky and will assault any target of opportunity. They will launch into any creature they can, even those they have no chance of killing. For them, latching on to something big and strong enough to withstand them is something of a blessing, since it gives them a never-ending food source.

Allies: None.

Physical Appearance: Like a small, fat, pink, smooth-skinned grub. Wastrel's Bane look like they could pop easily if squeezed between one's fingers.

Size: One to two inches (2-5 cm) long.

Weight: Just an ounce or two.

Notes: Though most humanoids find these creatures repulsive in the extreme, they are themselves a fantastic food source. Each worm will provide a humanoid with 400 to 500 calories and an entire swarm will give enough food to keep a person well fed and hydrated even when they are under the energy-intensive rigors of mountain climbing. However, the worms should be eaten raw and ideally while still alive to get the most out of them. Experts insist these worms taste like a raw oyster and pop in the mouth like a grape with a single bite. Exposed to fire, these worms split open down the middle and take on a consistency like shrimp, but only offer one third the nourishment/calories noted previously.

Other Notable Monsters

In addition to the monsters mentioned above, there is a variety of exotic creatures common to the Northern Mountains that are known to the outside world. These "known" monsters, such as *Bearmen of the North, Peryton,* and *Yema,* tend to be encountered in other regions, or they have been sufficiently documented that many adventurers at least know of them, if not actually encounter one or two in the course of their travels.

Rather than fill this book with reprint material, the descriptions and statistics for the following monsters will not be included here. Instead, we are just going to provide a brief overview of each monster, particularly the niche they occupy in the Northern Mountains and/or Land of the Damned. Detailed write-ups of these creatures can be found in the Palladium **Monsters & Animals** (M&A) sourcebook or **Northern Hinterlands.**

Alpine Monitor (Hinterlands)
Angel-Demon Serpent (Hinterlands)
Bearmen of the North (M&A and Hinterlands)
Bug Bears (M&A)
Canine Races (M&A)
Chig (Hinterlands)
Dragondactyl (M&A)
Emirin (M&A)
Entities (M&A)
Faerie Folk (M&A)
Feathered Death (M&A)
Giants (M&A)
Giant Scuttle Crab (Hinterlands)
Green Mold (M&A)
Gryphon (M&A)
Harpies (M&A)
Kankoran (M&A and Hinterlands)
Kappa (M&A)
Ki-Lin (M&A)
Melech (M&A)
Minotaur (M&A and Old Ones)
Pegasus (M&A)
Peryton (M&A)
Snaggled Tooth Gobbler (M&A)
Threkk (Hinterlands)
Waterbat (M&A)
Waternix (M&A)

Werebeasts (M&A)
Winter Storm Ice Demons (Hinterlands)
Worms of Taut (M&A)
Yema (M&A)
Zavor (M&A)

Alpine Monitor. A giant lizard reminiscent of the Komodo Dragon. Also known as "Snow Lizards," they are most active during the winter, love the snow, and feed on large mammals, humans and **humanoids** being among their favorite prey. Savage and deadly solitary hunters, they are drawn in numbers by the scent of blood and will battle each other for a piece of **another's** kill. They are found throughout the Northern Mountain lowlands on both sides of the mountains as well as the northern forests of the Hinterlands. See page 85 of Hinterlands.

Angel-Demon Serpent. An enigmatic creature that is said (and appears) to be half winged angel and half demonic serpent. There are many legends and stories about these magical beings. Several say they were appointed by the Gods of Light as the chief guardians of the Northern Mountains. Their mission: To patrol its length and smite down any of the Old Ones' host who tried to escape over the mountains. However, at some point these beings fell to dark magic **and/or** the very power of the dreaded Old Ones. Besieged by the dark magic these mighty guardians were tormented and forever transformed, but managed to fight back the forces of evil and hold the line in the mountains. They have since forgotten their origins, history and exact purpose but are compelled to remain in the mountains where they instinctively continue to battle supernatural evil. However, touched and stained by the Darkness, they are now confused creatures of duality, with an equal capacity for good or evil, and a split personality that can be an angel or demon! They are found throughout the Northern Mountains, particularly among the highlands, but are also scattered across the Northern Hinterlands and occasionally found in the interior of the Land of the Damned. Angel-Demon Serpents are both a blessing and curse, revered and feared by mortal beings. See page 88 of Hinterlands.

Bearmen of the North. These giants are found in much larger numbers in the Northern Wilderness to the east, but a good number are found in the Northern Hinterlands, Northern Mountains (mainly the Midland and Lowland areas) and Land of the Damned (mainly the northern half). Most are nomadic hunters, trappers and warriors who may travel alone, in pairs or as part of a larger adventuring group. Actual "clans" of Bearmen may have as many as **2D4x10** members, living very much like the American Indians of old. What attracts them to the Land of the Damned is anyone's guess, for they were never Minions of the Old Ones, nor is there any record of their having fought on the side of Light. Some believe the isolation, desolation and utter hostility of the Northern Mountains and Land of the Damned appeals to these powerful and short tempered beast men, and that if they are going to take out their tempers and anger on anybody, they'd rather it be demons and evildoers than fragile humans and Elves. Thus, the very challenge of these two forbidding lands makes them appealing. Additionally, despite the number of demons and monsters, both are lonely, remote regions lightly populated and hard to access, which also appeals to the solitary nature of these creatures. In fact, the upper reaches of the mountains on both sides are sprinkled with lone **Bearman** hermits who like the isolation the Northern Mountains afford them. These hermits don't take kindly to trespassers, and adventurers looking for shelter in a Bearman cave had better think twice about it. Note: Bearmen have clashed and won so many battles against Harpies that the wretched winged hags fear them more than any other creature. So much so that a flock of a hundred will leave a single Bearman or any group in a **Bearman's** company alone and without incident. However, they will swarm a Bearman who is injured or helpless and will gleefully tear him to pieces. See page 94 of Northern Hinterlands for details on this race and their place in the north (or page 23 of M&A).

Bug Bears. As vicious as they are strong, Bug Bears are indigenous to Ophid's Grasslands, where they are most at home. In the southern reaches of the Northern Mountains, however, increasing numbers of Bug Bears have begun to appear on both sides of the mountains. Many of them are intent on infiltrating or harassing the various valley and ledge settlements in the region. Some scholars believe that there is an ongoing Bug Bear "infestation" across both Ophid's Grasslands and the Northern Mountains. The theory goes that in the last 20 years or so, conditions favorable to Bug Bears have made it so these creatures have had a population explosion. This in turn has pressured them to fan out. The end result is more and more of these troublesome creatures are finding new places to live and are running across settlements and travelers region-wide. Cruel and aggressive, they find the Land of the Damned as agreeable as anywhere else. Found primarily in grasslands and mountain lowlands, but may also be encountered in the Midlands, in much smaller numbers. See page 96 of Northern Hinterlands for details on this race and their place in the north (or page 28 of M&A).

Canine Races. ***Coyles*** completely avoid the Land of the Damned and are seldom found even in the Northern Mountains.

The ***Wolfen*** have no misguided notions about the End of the World and tend to avoid it, though small hunting and scouting parties, adventuring groups and practitioners of magic in search of arcane secrets may be encountered in the Hinterlands and both sides of the Northern Mountains. Likewise, Wolfen seafarers (along with **Bizantium)** know about the secret route to the northeastern coast of the Land of the Damned and the Empire has established a secret outpost in the foothills of the mountains there.

Kankoran are sometimes called the "Forest Lords of the Hinterlands" and as such, know more about the Hinterlands and the Northern Mountains than any other creature living in those parts (with the possible exception of the Bearmen). Consequently, they live and hunt in the mountains and along the coast, and regularly scale the mountains to reach the side on the Land of the Damned. Kankoran can be found living in and on both sides of the mountains, though most are found along the northeastern **half,** north of the Great Rift. These nature-loving cousins to the Wolfen and the **Coyle** are the most numerous canine race in the Northern Mountains. Since Kankoran generally don't gather in force, they only travel in small groups. Those who befriend the Kankoran will have gained a valuable ally, for the Kankoran are simply the most skilled scouts and rangers working the region. With a Kankoran guide leading them, parties stand a considerably higher chance of successfully traversing the range. See pages 21 **& 32 of** M&A.

Chig. A weird arthropod that looks like a cross between a flea and a wood tick the size of an orange. These parasites attach themselves to their victim and drain it of P.P.E., for they feed on magic energy. Therefore Chigs target creatures and practitioners of magic as their preferred prey. Chigs are found throughout the lowlands of the Northern Mountains, the northeastern corner of the Land of the Damned and the northern coastal forests of the Northern Hinterlands. They can also be found in the southern half of the Hinterlands and Ophid's Grasslands but in considerably smaller numbers (a fraction compared to the north).

Dragondactyl. Like demonic versions of the Pegasus, the Dragondactyl is a flying horse, but with dark skin, large leather wings, a serpent's tail, and clawed feet. According to legend, the Nine Elven Lords of old, as well as human mages of incredible power, tamed and rode these powerful beasts as mighty war horses. While reputed to have once roamed the plains of the Old Kingdom in vast herds, Dragondactyls now are extremely rare and found almost exclusively in three areas. The first two are the lower regions of the Old Kingdom mountain range and the Baalgor Mountains. The third is the Northern Mountains, where they are found in their greatest numbers. These creatures are coveted by many of the humanoids of this region as war steeds, as they can easily fly around the mountaintops and they have a viciousness that comes in handy during battle. Trying to capture a Dragondactyl, however, is a harrowing experience. These fierce predators have the strength of a tiger, the speed of a horse and the grace of an eagle. They value their freedom and fight anybody who tries to take it away from them. There are, however, a few settlements in the Northern Mountains that have pioneered ingenious methods of capturing, training, and even breeding these strange creatures. Though they can never be fully domesticated, those who can tame these beasts to any degree would have a valuable cottage industry on their hands. Alive and untrained: 2,000 to 16,000 gold (possibly more), trained: 60,000 to 80,000 gold, though one has not been sold on the open market in over two hundred years. Those who actively breed, raise and train Dragondactyls generally do so for military/defense purposes, or to trade to select parties. They are not merely an expensive and exotic commodity to be purchased or sold for a sackful of gold. Otherwise Dragondactyls are counted among the predators found in the Midlands and Highlands. See page 39 of M&A.

Emirin. Possessing tremendous psionic powers, these great cats would at first seem well-equipped to survive the Northern Mountains. And for a time, they did. However, over the last century, the Emirin has slowly fled the region, supposedly because the intense evil radiating from the region known as the *Bleakness* causes a kind of psychic backlash that the Emirin are particularly susceptible to. The Emirin believe that if one remains exposed to the Bleakness and its evil fortress-capital, *The Citadel,* for too long, death or madness will result. For that reason, the Emirin are primarily found in the Northern Mountains Lowlands with their greatest numbers in the lower two-thirds. Predominantly creatures of goodness and empathy, they frequently scout and spy for monster slayers and champions of light, battle demons, Deevils and other terrible monsters, as well as come to the aid of people with a good alignment. Otherwise they keep to themselves and enjoy the solitude of the mountain Midlands and Highlands. The greatest population of Emerin remains on the western side of the Northern Mountains and its foothills in the Land of the Damned proper. See page 47 of M&A.

Entities are supernatural energy beings beyond human comprehension. Some are misguided and mischievous, others outright evil. They include the Poltergeist, Syphon, Haunting Entity, Tectonic Entity and Possessing Entity. Most folk consider them demonic forces or menacing spirits. One or more may haunt an ancient ruin or battlefield, or serve a Summoner, Greater Demon or other dark force. See page 48 of M&A.

Faerie Folk. Even evil Faerie Folk avoid the Land of the Damned and the haunted mountains that contain it. However, the occasional lone denizen of Faerie, or group of 2D4, may be encountered in the Lowlands and interior of the Realm of Monsters. On the other hand, all manner of Faerie Folk frolic in the forests of the Northern Hinterlands and Ophid's Grassland (see page 121 of Hinterlands). See page 58 of M&A for descriptions of all Faerie Folk.

Feathered Death: Wicked and cruel creatures, the Feathered Death is also known as *the falcon-man.* They are ugly bird-like creatures with bat-type clawed hands and ugly human-ish faces. Despite their small size, Feathered Death are incredibly strong and quick. They enjoy abducting and torturing small humanoids and children for their own perverse pleasures. Although found in small flocks in the northeastern corner of the Land of the Damned and coastal areas of the Hinterlands, they are mostly found in the forests of the Great Northern Wilderness. See page 79 of M&A.

Giants. Giants are dying all over the world. Don't let the strength of the Mount Nimro region fool you, scholars say. The Nimro Kingdom is merely the death throe of a race inevitably stumbling towards extinction. This process is really noticeable

in the Northern Mountains, where there once had reigned tremendous Giant populations, but now only a few miserable bands of Algor, Cyclops adventurers or treasure hunters and maybe a few lone Jotans and Titan heroes can be found. What happened to the Giants here is what continues to happen to them everywhere - they just cannot compete with the many smaller humanoid races of the world. Giants are especially under-equipped to wrangle with the Major Races of the Northern Mountains, who have themselves managed to adapt to one of the most hostile wildernesses in the world. Rumor has it that the few Giants remaining in the Northern Wilderness are actively searching for a way to leave the region and venture out to join those at Mount Nimro in the Baalgor Wastelands. These Giants will even accept the help of other humanoid races, it is said, so long as the diminutive helpers prove themselves to be trustworthy. Nobody knows what these Giants have to offer in reward, but the conventional wisdom is that *King Sunder Blackrock*, ruling sovereign of the Nimro Kingdom, would pay the deliverers of these Giants a good reward in gold and jewels. Nobody has yet to cash in on such a reward, much less verify that Blackrock would indeed pay off those adventurers who come to the aid of the Northern Mountains' beleaguered Giants.

Note: The only two races of Giants that have any numbers of consequence are the *Titans* and freakish *Gigantes.* Titans (perhaps a thousand total scattered throughout the region) are counted among the heroes and monster hunters that stalk the mountains and try to keep them safe from whatever denizen of the Damned manage to reach the mountains.

The Gigantes are the most successful of the giants with at least a hundred different clans and tribes scattered across the lower two thirds of the mountain chain. These war-like clans range from 6D6 to 3D6x10, with the very largest handful of tribes reaching nearly 400 strong. Large groups of Giants, even Gigantes, find it difficult to compete and find enough food, so they typically gather in small groups of under a hundred, living as nomads covering a range that can stretch for several hundreds of miles. Gigantes are highly aggressive and live as scavengers, hunters, bandits and raiders. Most are found on the eastern side of the mountains, usually in the Mid and Lowlands. Those in the Land of the Damned are as savage and fierce as demons.

See page 82 of M&A for descriptions of the various types of Giants.

Giant Scuttle Crabs. Giant carnivorous crabs that stand 4-7 feet (1.2 to 2.1 m) at the shoulders and 6-8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 m) in diameter. They are found mainly along the coast of the Northern Hinterlands and the northeast corner of the Land of the Damned. They are also occasionally found in the mountain Lowlands. See page 100 of Hinterlands.

Green Mold. This accursed stuff was created by a mad alchemist many thousands of years ago. It appears as a bright green, fuzzy mold, and it is absolutely deadly to those who come into contact with it. (A notable exception are the *Kaejor,* who will *intentionally* cover themselves with Green Mold when their Hit Points/S.D.C. are nearly depleted so they might enjoy the A.R., Horror Factor, and infectious abilities the stuff confers to them.)

The best method for treating Green Mold is to not contract it in the first place. If the mold touches the skin (usually contracted by touching a person or item already infected) it will automatically take root and cover the entire body in twenty minutes! Once the victim is completely covered, the mold stops growing and can be touched without consequence by other living creatures. However, the Green Mold germinates every two or three weeks and it again becomes infectious. The only way to detect germination is that areas of the mold will become mottled and rub off. This is also the time when it is extremely contagious. The germination period lasts about 24 hours.

The victims of Green Mold take 1D4 points of damage daily as the mold slowly feeds on its host body. Furthermore, the person's natural healing is negated, as the character slowly wastes away. Victims covered in mold suffer the following penalties: -5 on initiative, all combat bonuses are reduced by half, speed by 20% and skill performance by 10%. Once half or more of the Hit Points are drained, the victim's attacks per melee round, speed and skill performance is reduced to half, and the character is -2 on all saving throws. However, victims covered in Green Mold are impervious to fire and cold (no damage) and get a natural A.R. of 15. The mold stays active even after its victim dies, shriveling up and dying only after the body has completely decomposed (typically takes about six months when covered in mold). Healing touch, potions of healing, and similar magic will restore Hit Points lost by mold damage inflicted but won't kill or eliminate the mold. Only a Remove Curse spell can actually destroy Green Mold. *See page 93 of M&A for details.*

In the *Land of the Damned,* huge fields of Green Mold are rumored to exist north of the Great Rift up in the Lowlands and Midlands of the Northern Mountains. Explorers have noted seeing large patches of the mold covering mountainsides and rocky clefts through which ignorant travelers might pass. Though these patches do not expand in size, there are dozens upon dozens of them scattered throughout the mountains, ranging in size from a dinner plate to a jousting field. Some explorers insist that these "green barricades" are one more reason why so few ever successfully navigate the Northern Mountains, because many of the best pathways are covered in Green Mold and spell certain doom to those who trod through.

It is also *rumored* that elsewhere in the Land of the Damned are Gray Mold, Black Mold, Blue Mold, Gold Mold, Red Mold and White Mold, each with their own contagious infestations. None of these variants have been verified, and what they do to their victims can only be speculated. It should be noted, however, that at least three human kings (two from Bizantium, one from the Western Empire) in the last century have sent exploration parties into the Northern Mountains in search of Gold Mold, which is thought to produce pure gold dust as its spore.

Gryphons. These are highly intelligent *animals* that have the forequarters of a giant eagle and the hindquarters of a giant lion. They can be found on the cliffs of remote mountain ranges, particularly those along the western edge of the Northern Mountains facing the Hinterlands. They can be domesticated as a steed and attack animal. See page 99 of M&A.

Harpies. Creatures of the wind and fury, Harpies consider humans and all "landlocked" beings (creatures *stuck on the ground)* as their inferiors. Part hag, part vulture, all monster, these vile creatures love to cause trouble, torment, harass and hurt humans and other mortals. Apparently several huge tribes once served the Old Ones because the northwestern peninsula of the Land of the Damned is infested with them, and tens of thou-

sands are also found along the northern coast. Harpies also inhabit the Lowlands of the Northern Mountains, especially on the western side, and actively participate in the *Minion Wars* on the side of the ***Deevils***, often serving as scouts and shock troops under the command of Dyval's Dire Harpies. In the Hinterlands, the wicked creatures constantly raid farms, kill livestock, steal food, kidnap women and children, and harass and slay travelers on land and sailing the coastal waters.

Mischievous and vindictive, Harpies take great joy in tormenting trappers by springing their traps, taking or eating the animals caught in the traps (this happens all the time near the Shadow Coast), ripping up the trapped animal with their claws to destroy the value of the fur, and frightening away game. Harpies also like dive bombing campsites at night, making a ruckus, screeching and screaming, grabbing blankets, clawing at people, and dropping excrement on the campers before flying way. The entire ordeal usually last, less than a minute (4 melee rounds), just enough to wake up and terrorize everybody - but it is the Harpies' ideas of a fun night out. They will do the same to adventurers, buzzing travelers and making horrible noises (especially at night) to frighten people, horses and livestock and prevent them from getting a good night's sleep. Harpies frequently sneak into a camp, farm or homestead to steal booze, eat food, plunder supplies, kill pets and engage in vandalism.

Those in the *Land of the Damned* are more aggressive and murderous than anywhere else in the world. This is due in large part to their vast numbers and frequent association with the *Dire Harpies* of **Dyval**. Medium groups of 12 to 36 (roll **6D6)** and large flocks numbering into the hundreds will not hesitate to attack a group of adventurers, even powerful ones, and fight with genuine conviction, fleeing only when half of them have been slain. Those under the stewardship of one or more Dire Harpies or other Greater Deevil fight with uncharacteristic resolve and will battle to the death if so ordered by their supernatural leader. However, they revert to their cowardly form as soon as their Deevil **leader(s)** is slain. Furthermore, if they are winning, Harpies get drunk with power and will show no mercy, slaughtering most everyone. They may chose to leave one or two people alive to tell the tale of their victory, and may also take a few prisoners. Captives, however, will either be ransomed back to their family or community or tortured and eventually (days or weeks later) killed and eaten. Likewise, Harpies will cause as much property damage as possible. See page 100 of **M&A** for stats and more info on Harpies.

Ki-Lin: The **Ki-Lin** are dragon-like creatures that resemble a horse. They are extremely rare throughout the world. The Northern Mountains are filled them (compared to the rest of the world) with as many as two or three hundred throughout its entire length. A couple dozen also make their home in the Northern Hinterlands and a few can be found roaming the interior of the Land of the Damned. Predominantly magical creatures of a good alignment, they will often come to the aid of travelers in need, but only for a very brief interlude. Only those on a quest or battling some terrible evil will ally themselves with **humanoids** for any length of time, and then only if the group is mostly compatible with its alignment and goals. See page 106 of M&A for more on the Ki-Lin.

Kankoran. See Canine Races.

Kappa. These mischievous little crab-men teem in huge numbers in the *Southern Shallows* (the coastal waters of the Sea of Dread off the Northern Mountains' southern coast). In the past century, however, the Kappa have been invaded by the relentless incursion of the *Zaranceti,* a powerful and ultra-aggressive race of amphibious **humanoids.** Kappa are described on page 105 of M&A.

Melech. These hideous predators appear as equal parts centaur, demon and dinosaur, possessing a hideous quadruped body with the torso of a man and the head of a monster. They are perverse, black-hearted villains that delight in the destruction and mutilation of anything more beautiful than they (which is pretty

much everything), making them the special enemies of Elves, Faeries, Unicorns, **Ki-Lin,** and notable champions of light.

Melech love to capture people rather than kill them outright, keeping them alive for days as playthings to torture and eventually **kill.** Their exact origin is unknown, but it's clear that their roots lie somewhere in the steaming Yin-Sloth Jungles. How they came to be a major denizen of the Land of the Damned remains a burning question to most scholars, but within the **Summoner** community, the answer is clear: Somebody or something summoned a horde of the creatures there for some bloody conquest. Who these **Summoners** might be (or have been) is unknown, but conventional wisdom says it was a past evil overlord of *The Citadel,* that nefarious fortress of evil that is considered the *de facto* capital of the Land of the Damned. In the so-called "End of the World," Melech are found most commonly in and around the Great Rift and throughout the north lands of the Damned. Along the Great Rift, they are used by the hell-spawned warriors and minions on both sides of the conflict, who use these foul creatures as powerful steeds, a quasi-demonic alternative to the great war horse, scouts and front-line troops. It is even said that along the western coastline just south of the Great Rift, entire herds of Melech roam freely, preying upon anything (including demons and Deevils) they encounter. Frequent skirmishes between Melech and Harpy hordes erupt whenever one creature transgresses on the other's territory.

See page **119** of M&A for on these monsters.

Minotaurs. One of the Great Dying Races known to the outside world, Minotaurs were once one of the most numerous and powerful **humanoid** races in the world. Their fortunes fell with the Old Ones at the end of the Chaos War, and in the millennia that followed, great pogroms were carried out to exterminate the Minotaur entirely. To be fair, the Minotaurs brought this on themselves, as many of them never stopped worshiping the Old Ones or drawing upon their power. These minions of Chaos *had* to be destroyed, or so thought the alliance of creatures that defeated the Old Ones. As a result, Minotaurs today exist in strength in just a few places - mostly the Baalgor Wastelands and the *Broken Horn* section of the Land of the Damned. In Ophid's Grasslands and the Northern Mountains, small numbers of Minotaurs might be found, and countless rumors and legends place underground Minotaur cults and kingdoms throughout the mountain chain. Most, particularly cults, are said to continue to be evil servants of the Old Ones, while others are said to be truly repentant and have turned to the ways of goodness and light, but live in the mountains to avoid the persecution of humans and their allies. Whether these rumors and legends are fact or fiction in whole or part is yet to be determined.

Far more common, however, are ancient mass graves of these creatures within the Land of the Damned and the mountains. All throughout the Northern Mountains are incredible underground cities and labyrinths built by the ancient Minotaurs, but these now lie abandoned and crumbling. Many of these old habitats have been occupied by other creatures, but many others remain as dark and still as they were the day their inhabitants moved out or perished. The promise of treasures, magic and ancient secrets waiting to be discovered in such labyrinths lure many adventurers to explore them, but surprisingly, the lairs of the Minotaurs have yielded little treasure and few wonders, and few adventurers have ever returned to tell of their endeavors. Note: Evil Minotaur who continue to worship the Old Ones participate in the Minion War at the Great Rift on the side of the demons.

See page 120 of M&A or the Old Ones **sourcebook** for more on the Minotaur.

Pegasus. These exceptionally rare winged horses, rumored to be the creation of some ancient **Elven** magic, are occasionally sighted over the plains of **Ophid's** Grasslands and the Northern Mountains. The Elves once domesticated the Pegasus, with tens of thousands used as flying mounts and war horses. Sometime during the Elf-Dwarf War, the entire stock of Pegasus perished — some say deliberately exterminated by the Dwarves by means of a terrible plague conjured from dark magic. For many years it was suspected that they were extinct, but as explorers have tried to cover the Land of the Damned, these magnificent animals have been spotted again. At present, less than 600 are currently believed to exist, with nearly 75% of this stock in and around the Northern Mountains. If Pegasus were to migrate to the Old Kingdom Mountains, they would live comfortably there too, though none have ever been sighted in that region.

Sellers of captive Pegasus can just about name their price. **50,000** gold is reasonable for a wild captive regardless of age. Trained adults go for 90,000 to 120,000 **gold,** possibly double that in wealthy kingdoms such as the Western Empire or **Timiro.** Though it has never been done, were Pegasus bred in captivity, their foals would go for 60,000 to 90,000 gold, again possibly double that in rich lands. Capturing or training a Pegasus is very difficult, however. In their years of feral independence they have come to regard **humanoids** as dangerous, so they avoid them whenever possible. They also remember any cruelty or injustice, however minor, for life. Their high psionic abilities make them even more elusive. However, Pegasus are smart, loyal and loving when trained with kindness and can become even more like a dear friend to their master than merely a domesticated flying horse. See page 123 of M&A.

Peryton. These mystical animals appear to be winged deer, but they are really murderous hunters that prey on animals and humanoids alike. They are also known as the "Demon Deer," because of their aggressive, bloodthirsty nature and the fact that these bizarre creatures cast the shadow of a man rather than that of a deer! Much about the Peryton remains a mystery. One legend suggests they are monsters from another dimension, another that they are demons or witches who defied their demonic masters and were turned into a supernatural animal as a punishment (or reward). Others swear they are the creation of magic - some even say they are the living nightmares from the dreams of the slumbering Old Ones! Given their proliferation in the Northern Mountains and elsewhere in the Land of the Damned, this second theory seems like it might have more than a grain of truth to it. Whatever their origin, **Perytons** are infamous throughout the Northern Mountains for swooping down on hikers and mountain climbers, especially those who are scaling vertical rock faces and are unable to defend themselves. It is said that for every five people who die trying to scale one of the Northern Mountains, at least one of them perished from a Peryton attack, either slain and devoured on a lonely rock face, or simply plucked up and carried away, never to be seen again. Though Perytons prefer to dine on humanoids, they also will eat huge quantities of **live-**

stock. In fact, Perytons will so ravage a livestock herd that they are also a major reason for why so few settlements exist in the lowland valleys of this region. For a substantial settlement to exist, it must have food, and this often means raising livestock. The Perytons can sense this from far away and will relentlessly attack any such food source, eating until they are full, but continuing to kill for pleasure. Though many other monsters in the region commit the same kind of behavior, it is the Peryton that seems to enjoy and excel at it the most. See page 124 of M&A.

Snaggled Tooth Gobbler. There are a number of dragon-type creatures called "sea serpents" that vary widely in size, shape and appearance. They all plague sailors by capsizing, crushing or battering sea vessels or snatching sailors right off of ship decks. Sea serpents make occasional appearances throughout the world but are most common in the northern waters of the Sea of Despair (off the northern shore of the Land of the Damned) and along the western coast of the Yin-Sloth Jungles.

One of the most common sea serpents is the infamous *Snaggled Tooth Gobbler,* so named because it is infamous for suddenly appearing out of the water, breaking masts, tearing sails, and snatching up sailors in its large, beaked maw and gobbling them whole! These beasts are indigenous to the Sea of Despair and a prime reason why naval landings on the northern shores of the Land of the Damned are so difficult to pull off. Naval lore has it that in those rough northern waters, a sailor can not pitch a stone over the side of a ship without hitting the back of one of these beasts! Surely such claims are exaggerated, but not by much. Indeed, the Sea of Despair is genuinely infested with Gobblers, and they present a lethal obstacle to *any* vessels passing through. Bizantium sailors readily admit that one of the most difficult parts of sailing around the world is fending off the seemingly endless Gobbler assaults one is bound to face when crossing the Sea of Despair. That, combined with the notoriously foul weather up there, makes for a compelling argument as to why landing on the Land of the Damned's northern shores is a suicide mission at best.

These creatures simply plague the Island Kingdom of Bizantium. Even when those sailors are not attempting to cross the Sea of Despair, they must deal with all-too-frequent Gobbler attacks right off their home shores and even within their bays and harbors! It is said that any place within the kingdom that is in eyeshot of the ocean is also under constant threat of Gobbler attack. The Gobbler problem is such that the Kingdom has offered a bounty on all slain Gobblers. The amount of the bounty has fluctuated with the Kingdom's fortunes, but it currently rests at 2,500 gold per kill. This has created a substantial Gobbler-hunting industry manned by entire crews and ships specially dedicated to eradicating this creature. While Gobbler numbers have suffered badly in the waters immediately surrounding the Island Kingdom of Bizantium, it seems that no amount of hunting will dent the Gobbler population in the Sea of Despair. *See page 134 of Monsters & Animals.*

The most infamous Gobbler on record is the legendary specimen nicknamed *Goldengut,* a remarkable creature that, if it ever existed, poses the greatest bounty any hunter could score. Some 400 years ago, a party of Bizantium nobles took to a grand Gobbler hunt in which they wished to slay a serpent rumored to be twice the size of any normal Gobbler. They found it, all right. The Gobbler attacked the ship and ate all of its crew and passengers, including the dozen or so noblemen on board and the many jewels, ornate armor and magic items they carried. For years afterward, old Goldengut has been the target of the many hunters seeking to cash in on the still-valid 100,000 gold bounty as well as salvage rights on the incredible treasure in gold, gems and magic items resting in the great creature's stomach.

Threkk. The savage cousins of the *Loogaroo* (occasionally found in the Land of the Damned north of the Great Rift, but native to the Old Kingdom and Baalgor Wastelands; see page 113 of M&A), these intelligent vulture-like creatures roost in the Lowlands and Midlands of the Northern Mountains. They sometimes ally themselves to Priests of Darkness, evil Summoners, demons and demon worshipers, as well as Witches, Necromancers, Assassins and other black-hearted beings. Threkk like to waylay unsuspecting travelers, steal food, alcohol and valuables and lure people into danger. They are wicked and cruel in the extreme. A number fight alongside the demons and others, the Deevils of the Great Rift.

Waterbat The Waterbat is a giant manta ray-type creature found in the cooler waters of the world's northern oceans. To a lesser degree, they are found in southern waters, often living among the Kree-Lok, another race of aquatic beings. These mild-mannered creatures possess surprising intellect and psionic prowess. They are content with wandering the oceans, studying life and enjoying its splendors. Natural philosophers, they delight in engaging in philosophical postulations with any intelligent creature, whether it be the surface creatures or those from under the waves. They have no society and can be found traveling alone, with 2D4 fellow Waterbats, or in the company of other aquatic creatures (they are especially fond of whales and dolphins).

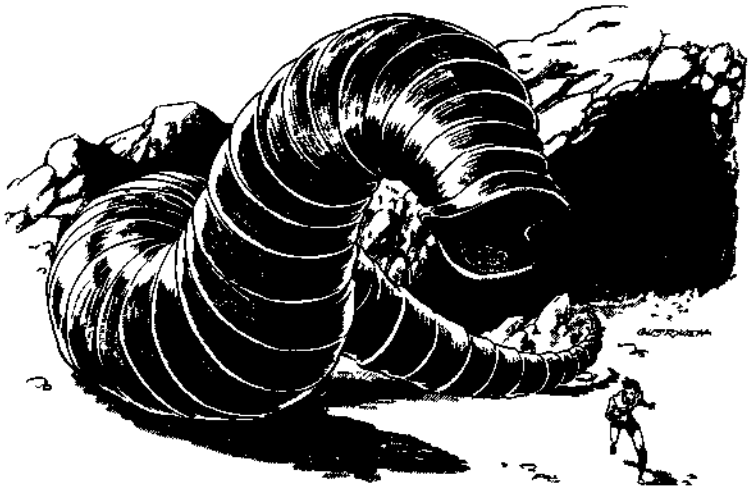
Waterbats are, oddly enough, a common means for an outsider's insertion into the Land of the Damned, though it is hardly a method to seek out. Often times, ships entering the Sea of Despair (either to go to shore on the Land of the Damned or to pass through) wreck, scattering their passengers and crew to the ocean's cold embrace. Most of the time, these people drown, but on rare occasions, when Waterbats are nearby, the creatures will swim up to humanoids in distress and give them a ride to the shore. Good Waterbats do this out of the kindness of their heart. Selfish ones do so because they expect to be rewarded (and they had better receive it before they drop off their rider, or else the rider might not make it to shore after all). For the most part, Waterbats collect no valuables and worship no gods. These are generally nonviolent beings who fight only to protect themselves, a friend or an ally. These are one of the very few genuinely friendly, helpful creatures to be found in the vicinity of the Land of the Damned. See page 152 of M&A.

Waternix. In the Northern Mountains' eastern foothills, the mischievous and sinister Waternix has begun a slow and steady encroachment. For reasons unknown, Waternix have begun to leave the *Northern Hinterlands* (the western half of the *Great Northern Wilderness).* Some believe the creatures have met their match at the hands of a hostile creature bent on the Waternix's destruction. Others believe the Waternix, for some reason, believe that greener pastures await them at the feet of the Northern Mountains (as improbable as that seems). A recent theory, and one that has gained much favor from the world's academic community, is that the Waternix collectively offended a god, ancient

dragon or some other creature of immense power, and now they must flee the Hinterlands because of it. Though many more Waternix are expected to show up in the Northern Mountains over the next 20 years, there is only a relative handful of them there now. See page 153 of M&A.

Werebeasts. The "children of the moon," as they are sometimes called, are found in greater strength in the Land of the Damned than anywhere else in the world. If one were to go by the sketchy accounts of the Northern Mountains, one might think that they are simply crawling with lycanthropes. That is untrue. There are quite a few Werebeasts prowling the Northern Mountains, but they pale in number to the hordes that rule the *Darkest Heart,* a malignant forest region in the Land of the Damned's interior. Compared to the concentrations of other races in the Northern Mountains, the Werebeasts there are truly a minor presence. See page 154 of M&A.

Winter Storm Ice Demons. The crystalline Ice demon that plagues the Northern Hinterlands is said to come from the Land of the Damned, but this is clearly *not* the case. Winter Storm Ice Demons are rarely found on the western side of the Northern Mountains, and when they are, they prey upon the Denizens of the Damned as readily as they do the humans and mortals on the Hinterlands side. They seem to hate all creatures not of their ilk, other "demons" included, and delight in stalking and killing anyone who crosses their path. They are found throughout the eastern side of the Northern Mountains; mainly in the Highlands in the Spring and Summer months, and in the Midlands, Lowlands and forest of the Hinterlands in the winter. See page 119 of the Northern Hinterlands sourcebook.



Worm of Taut: Blow Worm. The Worms of Taut are considered to be demons from the deepest pits of Hell, but in actuality, they are supernatural monsters from another dimension. The belief that they are demons is given credibility in that they can be summoned with a circle of Summon Lesser Beings (or Demons) by sacrificing a poisonous snake and writing the name of a specific type of Worm in the snake's blood. The Worms of Taut can also be summoned with a Circle of Summon Serpents but only if the circle is drawn in the blood of a dead Worm of Taut (any kind). On most worlds, the Worms of Taut must be within the surrounding geographic area to be summoned by the Circle of Summon Serpents, but in the Palladium World, such a summoning will draw a Worm of Taut directly from their home dimension! However, because these creatures are not magical nor are they real demons, they can not be sent back to their home world. Once they are in the Palladium World, they are there to stay. The best the Summoner who brought them in can do is to control the beasts for as long as possible.

Blow Worms are the largest and least common of the Worms of Taut. Their massive size (120 to 200 feet/36.6 m to 61 m long) and easygoing demeanor make them a much less subtle agent of death and destruction than other Worms of Taut. Summoners rarely call upon these creatures unless they desire to use them as tools of wholesale destruction and slaughter. In that regard, it is easy to see why warring demons and Deevils enjoy using these monsters against each other as a kind of "weapon of mass destruction."

Blow Worms tend to be lethargic, moving as little as possible and then only to hunt for food. They are not communal animals, territorial, or particularly aggressive unless agitated. A common ploy used to arouse the ire of these sluggish monstrosities is to refrain from feeding it for a period of time. Once unleashed, the hungry monster will attack any living creature it encounters and have been known to swallow hundreds of people whole during such a feeding frenzy. Another method is to hurt or agitate the monster with weapons or magic so that it will plow through buildings, smashing them in its path and gobbling people up by the dozens. (This is the preferred method of demons and Deevils who try to use these creatures as living weapons against their enemies.)

Blow Worms attack by spitting out a great glob of mucous-like slime that engulfs and smothers its prey. Once a victim suffocates, the Blow Worm devours it whole. This unusual weapon is shared by the *Horga,* a demonic Minion Race that may or may not come from the home world of the Blow Worm and/or be related to the great beasts.

Nippers, Tomb Worms and the occasional Serpent Beast and Tri-Fang can all be found in the Land of the Damned. See page 156 of M&A.

Yema. Horrifying undead reptilians from a past age, the Yema are one of the more distinctive creatures of the Land of the Damned. Their occasional incursions into the Ophid's Grasslands have made them known to outside adventurers and scholars, which is why they have a place in every major bestiary published to date. Yema are believed to be most numerous in the region of the Land of the Damned known as the *Eternal Torment,* a realm populated by the undead. Outside of that, Yema encounters are relatively infrequent throughout the rest of the Land of the Damned. They can occasionally be seen acting as steeds for the demons and Deevils of the Great Rift, for undead lords from the Eternal Torment, and as attack animals in the service of other powerful monsters and villains in the Northern Mountains. See page 162 of M&A.

Zavor. Though these creatures are found worldwide and in small quantities, scholars have long suspected that there might be potentially huge populations of these magic creatures hidden in the Northern Mountains. Indeed, explorers have begun to confirm these suspicions as they discover (in ever increasing numbers) sealed crypts built into the Northern Mountains. Exactly who built these crypts or what they contain remains a mystery, but hardcore adventurers believe they contain hordes of Zavor, the remnants of a Zavor breakout eons ago when hundreds of thousands of these creatures threatened to overrun this part of the world. Since Zavor are impossible to kill by magic

(actually, magic only causes them to *duplicate),* destroying a large horde of the monsters proved problematic. The best way to contain this menace was to do just that — herding the Zavor into dead-end caverns deep in the Northern Mountains and sealing them in forever. Nobody knows if this theory is correct, but few are willing to open up one of these mystery crypts and find out. See page 165 of M&A.

Note: All manner of diabolic beings, outcasts, fugitives and evil sorcerers find the Northern Hinterlands and Northern Mountains to be an alluring retreat. Thus, the exotic, disenfranchised and the worst of the worst may be found here and there. This includes the occasional dragon, Sphinx, Za, demons of all kinds, and the rare Mummy Immortalus, Lizard Mage, Syvan, Scarecrow, and the like.

Notable Animals

Though they hardly evoke the dread of the region's monsters, there is quite a range of animals living in the Northern Mountains that adventurers would do well to know about.

Birds. High above the mountaintops fly a number of great predatory birds, chief among them are *eagles* and *red kites,* both of which are cultivated as hunters by the people living in the region. *Buzzards* also exist in large numbers, and they make a great living feasting on the dead who tried and failed to make it through the Northern Mountains. They also live like kings eating off the piles of the dead that litter the Great Rift and the Blasted Lands. It is said that one can tell where the Minion War's latest fighting takes place just by observing where great flocks of buzzards congregate in the sky.

Aquatic Life. The waters off the Land of the Damned's southern coastline are infamous for their infestation of sea serpents, particularly *Snaggled Tooth Gobblers.* However, the water also teems with more conventional sea life. Many mariners find a friend whenever they encounter the pods *of porpoises* and *dolphins.* Great *sperm whales* and *blue whales* also populate the northern coastal waters in force (since there is no industry for whale oil in the Palladium World, Bizantium sailors do not hunt these magnificent beasts). It is said that those who can communicate with these creatures can find secret pathways through the Sea of Despair where, for some odd reason, Snaggled Tooth Gobblers refuse to go. Some believe that *this* is how Bizantium devised its closely held route.

Dangerous creatures exist in the Northern Shallows: *Giant Squid* cruise these waters, feasting on anything they can wrap their tentacles around - fish, sea serpent, mariner or sailing vessel. In the Southern Shallows, next to the *Sea of Dread* and the Straits of Thunder, the waters are filled not with whales or dolphins or squid, but with huge numbers of *mako* and *great white sharks,* both of which are cultivated by the Zaranceti as steeds and attack animals. As well as the Kappa noted earlier.

Hoofed Creatures. One of the few animals numerous anywhere in the Northern Mountains are *mountain sheep,* also known as *bighorn sheep.* These hardy creatures are perfectly adapted for scaling the nearly vertical rock faces as well as living in rough weather and at high altitudes. For those scaling the mountains, food often becomes a problem, and hunting bighorn might be the only solution. In the lower valleys, *musk ox* and *deer* roam in substantial numbers, providing another food source to the folks who manage to settle in the region. *Roan antelope* can be found on the eastern edges of the mountains, where the highlands of Ophid's Grasslands rise to meet the Northern Mountains. These creatures are not hunted for food, but they do provide a staple for the many predators in the area, helping make the Northern Mountains an even more hostile wilderness. Moose and Oboru may also be found in the foothills and neighboring forests, particularly in the Hinterlands.

Canines. *Red fox* are common in the valleys and plateaus, and are hunted for their pelts. To the few settlements in the region, these creatures are detested (as are most canines) for their propensity to kill and eat precious livestock. Fox do this on a small scale. Far more damage is wrought by *wild dogs* (feral cousins to once domesticated creatures) and to a lesser extent, *gray* and *northern timber wolves* found on both sides of the mountains (see M&A page 211). In the Great Rift, huge packs of black-furred wolves often roam the battlefields, killing the wounded and eating them. They even attack small groups of demon and Deevil soldiers if they are hungry enough. Of course, in the Land of the Damned, one never knows if he is facing an ordinary wolf or a Werewolf or Fenry Deevil, or whether the animal(s) is the familiar of a Witch, Wizard, Summoner or some other intelligent power. Likewise, the demon Alu resemble demonic Wolfen.

Bears. Both *black* and *brown* bears can be found throughout the Northern Mountains, especially at lower altitudes and in caves (which adventurers often find themselves using for shelter). However, unless a traveler is foolish enough to corner, frighten, surprise or attack one of these creatures, or mess with its cubs or food, most bears are unlikely to attack humanoids. They would rather run or ignore them. This is not the case for the infamous *northern grizzly,* a hardcore predator that routinely hunts, kills and devours any humanoids it can. For reasons scholars can not figure out, the grizzlies of the Northern Mountains are larger and more overtly hostile than grizzlies found in most other places. These creatures are inordinately aggressive and have been observed to kill animals for no other reason than spite or the sheer pleasure of it. Pack animals and careless travelers are easy prey for these monstrous bears (see M&A, page 215).

Felines. Dogs and bears do not corner the market on alpine predation. Several species of specially adapted great cats also prowl the Northern Mountains. These creatures are fewer in number than bears or canines, but they kill more animals per individual. *Bobcats* are the smallest of the mountain cats, and their size precludes them from attacking humanoids. Rather, they prey on smaller creatures, such as mice, rabbits, squirrels and badgers. *Mountain lions* (also known as *cougars* or *pumas)* are decidedly lethal to any humanoid, however. These powerful hunters need to kill a deer-sized creature (including any humanoids if the opportunity presents itself) once a week to keep their bellies full, and they absolutely *hate* to go hungry. The most dangerous killer, however, is a rare breed *of Northern Mountain Tiger* (see M&A, page 219) that actually *prefers* to hunt humanoids. Legend has it that long ago, a race of people living in the mountains bore a terrible curse that transformed them into great cats, and as a result, their offspring continue to take their revenge on any bipedal being in the region.

Critters. On their own, the various small creatures of the mountains - *badgers, ferrets, skunks, weasels, opossum, raccoons, chipmunks, rabbits, mice, rats, squirrels* and other common woodland and mountain animals - might not amount to much. However, as any desperate traveler stranded in the mountains without any food can testify, sometimes, catching and eating one of these animals is one's only chance for survival. Most adventurers try to hunt bighorn sheep, but under storm conditions, when trapped in a cave, or when venturing through the lowlands, hunting smaller critters is all that there is. The only real problem with hunting small animals is that many of them live in dens, clefts and under rocks, where poisonous *Timber Rattlesnakes* might also be found. Rattler bites are rarely fatal, but they can be debilitating, and getting bitten in the middle of nowhere can be as good as a death sentence if proper healing can not be found.

Remember, the Monsters & Animals sourcebook presents brief stats and descriptions for over 200 different animals, as well 120 monsters, making it an excellent reference source for any wilderness campaign.

The Dying Races

The Land of the Damned, and the Northern Mountains in particular, are the last refuge for a variety of ancient races, many created by the Old Ones or brought to this world from elsewhere in the Megaverse. Although many of these races once inhabited the world in great numbers, most of them were extinguished outright during the Chaos War. Other races were so terribly decimated that they never fully recovered and were doomed to a slow fade into extinction. Such is the fate of the so-called "Dying Races" of the Northern Mountains, the humanoid folk who represent the last remnants of the Age of Chaos, and who must content themselves not with building great empires or exploring the outside world, but with somehow staving off extinction for another generation.

Most of these races stay in the Northern Mountains because they fear the ultra-hostile interior of the Land of the Damned (and with good reason), and fear that the Great Races (namely Elves, Dwarves, humans and Wolfen) will try to destroy them. There is also a physical reason for these races' containment - the Northern Mountains themselves. These mountains are a barrier that most simply can not breach. Many of those who try perish in the attempt, so those who live safely tucked away in mountain valleys, ravines, and caves or high up on plateaus, ledges, and inaccessible mountain peaks have a safe haven and are loath to forsake it in some mad dream of returning to civilization. To such folk, their races are in danger enough of dying off entirely. For their members to risk their lives trying to cross the Northern Mountains or rejoining society is not only foolish for the individual, but it is a crime to the race as well. Besides, most have lived in the region for countless generations (thousands, even tens of thousands of years) and have adapted to the harsh, remote environment. Some have even grown to like it, and most think of the region as "home." As a result, most Dying Race communities strongly believe that their place is in the mountains, Hinterlands and/or the Land of the Damned and nowhere else. Should their numbers increase dramatically over the generations, then *maybe* their people will consider migrating to the outside world. Maybe. Until then, the Dying Races, in general, remain small in number at fixed locations or as nomadic tribes, content to call the wilderness their home.

Like always, though, there are exceptions — those relentless few who dream of seeing the world or who are struck by wanderlust, and who believe that they have what it takes to break free of the Northern Mountains' stony grasp. For these rare individuals (who are often seen by their own kind as impetuous adventurers, idealists, fools, rebels, outcasts and even criminals or traitors to the race), the outside world is every bit as rare and mysterious as the Land of the Damned is to outsiders. Most of these Dying Races know little or *nothing* of the outside world aside from what they might learn from outsiders they meet or from legends and rumors. The occasional homestead, farm, town or village found in the mountain lowlands, valleys and forest and coast lands beyond the mountains are the best source for such information, but many of the Dying Races have no access to them. Encounters with adventurers and explorers can also be helpful, but limited to the knowledge, temperament and prejudice of that particular party. So when members of the Dying Races venture outside their remote homeland, they will have a great deal of *learning* to do if they expect to survive. That is why, if a member of a Dying Race hopes to survive, it usually will seek out the company of outside adventurers, sharing its knowledge of the Land of the Damned or mountains with these strangers in return for an education about the outside world and if possible, joining them when the party leaves to adventure in some other part of the world. Of course, outside adventurers might need some convincing before admitting a strange, even monstrous humanoid into their ranks. To most explorers, the Dying Races are frightening and an unknown quantity, unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Any partnerships struck might be fairly shaky and mistrustful until both parties prove their good intentions to the other.

Not including Minotaurs, Bearmen, Angel-Demons, Giants and Gnomes, there are eleven "Dying" or rare, archaic races "known" to inhabit the Northern Mountains (they *may* also be found in much smaller numbers in the interior of the Land of the Damned, the Northern Hinterlands, Ophid's Grasslands and possibly even the Great Northern Wilderness). Most of the races described in the pages that follow have no more than a few thousand members, scattered throughout the entire region, and probably live in small, isolated villages, tribes and clans. Every Dying Race is dangerously close to extinction, and a single generation could spell the difference between life and death for these people. The Dying Races of the Northern Mountains include:

Ashada	Kildred
Barauder	Maledon
Croval	Skage
Goloth	Vorloc
Jeridu	Zaranceti
Kaejor	

Ashada

The Ashada are a race of daring swashbucklers to whom danger, risk and adventure are as critical to life as bread and water. They are an ancient people who were a slave race to the Old Ones but rebelled against their dark masters during the Chaos War. For many years after the war, the Ashada roamed and ruled their corner of the world, but eventually their lack of discipline allowed them to be driven into the shadows by larger, more aggressive races such as Elves and Dwarves. Over the millennia, the Ashada have gradually receded from the world and now all that remains of them are the few who can be found in the Northern Mountains. They believe that tens of thousands of their kind are prisoners in The Citadel, and to that end, many Ashada live their lives adventuring in the Northern Mountains so they can build up their fighting skills and perhaps score a few precious items of magic. When they feel they are ready, Ashada adventurers inevitably venture into the Bleakness to see if they can find the lost legions of their kin. None ever return, however, leading many Ashada to believe this to be nothing more than a fool's crusade that is only speeding their race toward extinction.

Increasingly, Ashada are exiting the Northern Mountains (or at least trying to exit; not many of them make it out) so they can adventure in the outside world. Some believe this is the best way to prepare for their own personal assault on The Citadel. Others are freebooters and thrill seekers who believe (and rightly so) that better prospects exist for them beyond the Northern Mountains. Most often, these rogue Ashada do quite well for themselves as mercenaries, buccaneers, and professional duelists. Some even become thieves, assassins, and other men of arms.

Personality-wise, Ashada are compulsive gamblers, charming flirts, and the ultimate social animal. They work hard, play even harder and are intensely likable despite their propensity to get into trouble and to live excessively. Even those who are enemies of these people must grudgingly admit that sometimes they can be difficult to hate. They are relentless party animals, forever carousing and making merry. They love to play pranks on each other (something which does not always endear them to other races, especially those with little tolerance for shenanigans, like Dwarves), and they have terrific (if quirky) senses of humor. But make no mistake, the **Ashada's** love for having a good time should not be taken as a sign of weakness or a lack of resolve. As much as Ashada like to play, they get even more fulfillment by putting their lives on the line. Ashada revel in cheating death and will put themselves at extreme risk without provocation just for the experience of it. Typical Ashada pastimes include hiring themselves out as mercenaries, spies and bounty hunters engaging in combat, man-hunting and dangerous games, or inventing and playing extreme sports of every variety, and participating in duels of arms with each other and anybody else they can goad into a fight (not to the death). Some scholars believe that this contributes a great deal to the Ashada's decline. After all, how long can a race prosper when its best and brightest are forever tempting death?

Ashada themselves are lithe and graceful **humanoids** with vaguely otter-like heads and a very short coat of fur over their entire bodies. They lack an otter's long, sinuous body frame, having a shape more like a monkey. Ashada have semi-hollow bones, which gives them a low body weight and increases their agility. This, coupled with the membranes attaching the underside of their arms to the sides of their torsos, gives the Ashada limited gliding ability, something these natural acrobats use to full advantage in the vertical environment of the Northern Mountains. Here, Ashada can soar for hours on the powerful mountain **thermals,** though they lack the sheer climbing power or distance endurance that creatures with **bona fide** flight have.

As outside adventurers infiltrate the Northern Mountains in search of a way to the Land of the **Damned's** interior, the Ashada are one of the few **genuinely** *friendly* races to encounter.

They are also one of the few Dying Races who still form and maintain communities exclusively of their own kind (although Ashada mercenaries and adventurers often join forces with racially mixed groups and do not exhibit prejudice or intolerance toward other people). Most of these communities are villages cut into cliff sides or perched atop an unassailable pinnacle, accessible only by the air. From these relatively safe havens, the Ashada live, work, fight and most importantly, play!

Alignment: Any, but most are selfish or good.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 3D6+12, P.S.: 3D6, P.P.: 4D6+3, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 4D6 (x2 for gliding).

Hit Points: P.E.+1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 15 plus those gamed by O.C.C. and skills.

Natural A.R.: None.

Horror Factor: None.

Average P.P.E.: 3D6 or by O.C.C.

O.C.C.s Available: Theoretically any, but most (98%) stick to Men of Arms, including demon slaying type O.C.C.s.

Natural Abilities:

Gliding: Thanks to the wing-like membranes underneath the Ashada's arms, these creatures can soar on the air like a bird. When aloft, the standard gliding speed is double the individual's Speed attribute. When catching a high wind (as is easy to do when gliding at higher altitudes), the Ashada's gliding speed may accelerate to triple their Speed attribute. When not in use, the Ashada can fold its gliding membranes against the underside of its arms and along the side of its torso, making it seem like the membrane is not even there. Ashada can extend their gliding membranes in an instant, however, and can do so without having to expend a melee attack/action.

Attacks Per Melee: By O.C.C. and hand to hand training.

Damage: By weapon or standard punch/kick.

Bonuses (in addition to likely Attribute, Skill and O.C.C. bonuses): +1 attack per melee round, +2 on initiative, +2 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +1 to strike when gliding, +3 to dodge when gliding, +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact, and +3 to save vs Horror Factor and mental possession. Resistant to cold, takes half damage from it.

R.C.C. Skills: In addition to whatever O.C.C. skills they are allowed to pick, all Ashada learn the following at an early age: Acrobatics, Climb/Scale Walls and Land Navigation; each gets a +10% skill bonus.

Magic: As per O.C.C., if any. Ashada rarely pursue the mystic arts.

Psionics: Standard.

Average Life Span: 70 years, though most never make it this long because their love for adventure and risk-taking leads them to early graves.

Habitat: Primarily the Northern Mountains and the Land of the Damned (lots of adventure there), but can also be found in the Northern Hinterlands, Ophid's Grassland and the Great Northern Wilderness (rarely farther south than the Disputed Lands). They could thrive anywhere in the Palladium World were they to leave the Land of the Damned, though.

Languages: Ashada speak their own language (which other races may study and learn for the cost of a single skill selection, but they will always have a -10% modifier to speak it due to the unusual sounds it entails that stress muscle groups found only in Ashadan throats). Ashada also speak Elven fluently (96%). They have no written language and most can not read Elven.

Enemies: Generally, any evildoers, bullies, slavers, and monsters. These fun-loving, easy-going and lovable creatures have a way of getting on everybody's good side. As a result, no other races have long-standing grudges against them, which is just how the Ashada like it.

Allies: Everybody except overtly evil or destructive races. They avoid pretty much everybody and everything living around the Great Rift and/or participating in the Minion War.

Physical Appearance: Ashada are slender, sinuous simian people with thin membranes attached to the underside of their arms and rib cage. They are handsome creatures, often seen soaring among the mountains of the Land of the Damned. In all things, these folk are graceful and agile, even when playing and joking with each other.

Size: Six feet (1.8 m) tall.

Weight: 100 lbs (45 kg). For their height, this is very light.

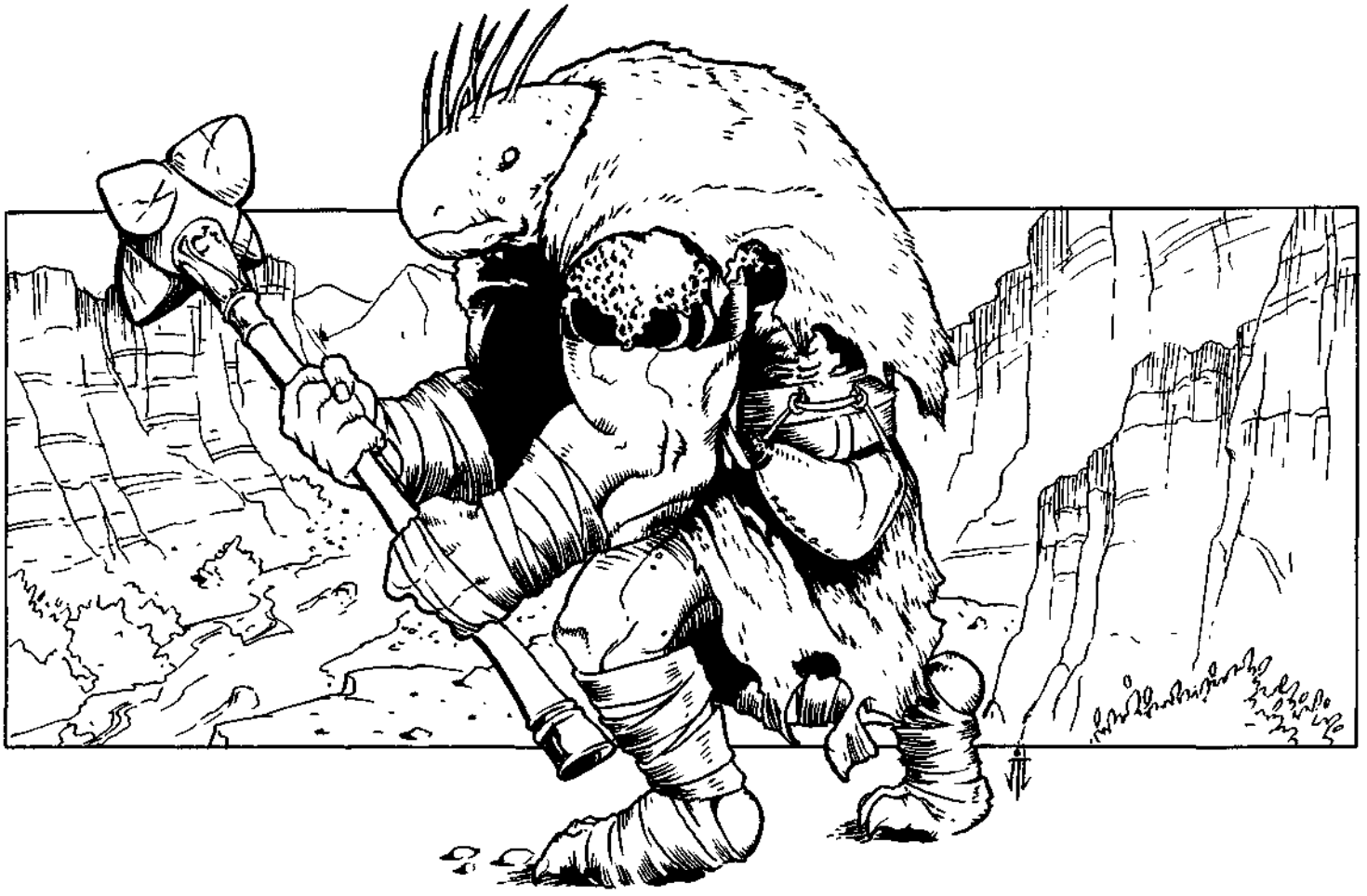
Notes: Ashada are born adventurers and will gladly leave their mountain homes behind to join adventuring parties made of other races. Despite this, the Ashada as a race have shown little interest in exploring the world beyond the Great Northern Wilderness, even though they could do so easily, and most do not leave the *Land of the Damned* or the *Northern Mountains*. Some believe that the Ashada have a deep-seated fear of what might be beyond the home that they know so well. The Ashada, it might be argued, would rather stay in one corner of the world and know it intimately, than to travel the world and feel at home nowhere.

Barauder

Barauders are hulking, brutish humanoids who are thought to be one of the many races created from scratch by the Old Ones. This being the case, the only thing that spared them from total destruction in the Chaos War was their extreme dim-wittedness, something which led some members of the victorious Alliance of Light to think that maybe if these creatures ever had a choice whether or not to follow the Old Ones, they might choose not to. As a result, tens of thousands of surviving Barauders were left to their own devices while the rest of the world put itself back together again from the Chaos War.

Since then, the Barauders have done little to validate the mercy shown to them. They are violent lunks who delight in smashing things and people, bullying whoever they come into contact with and generally spreading misery and mayhem wherever they go. For all of that, though, Barauders are not necessarily evil. It might be more accurate to say that they have the attitude of overgrown children who never really learned the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. If a Barauder wants something, it takes it. If it doesn't like something, it smashes it. They don't particularly revel in the trouble they cause. They just revel in delighting themselves, and that almost always comes at somebody else's expense.

Because of their ungainly build, Barauders are ill-suited for mountain climbing. They prefer to stick to the lower areas of the Northern Mountains, such as the lowland plateaus and valleys. However, wherever Barauders make their home, it is up to the other peoples living there to find a place for the Barauders to fit



in. With somebody stronger than they to lay down some kind of structure for them, Barauders can learn to get along with others and to restrain their selfish impulses. However, if left to their own devices, Barauders will inevitably start major league trouble, especially if they get together in strength.

As mentioned before, Barauders have limited mental faculties. *They* see everything with childlike simplicity and often can not understand subtle shades of meaning. Complex contracts, sarcasm and anything else in which the meaning is not overtly clear goes right over the heads of most Barauders. This, coupled with their speck-sized attention span, makes dealing with them especially trying. Some find these traits are endearing, even oddly humorous, as the big lummoxes consistently get themselves into trouble a more clever creature (like Goblins) could easily sidestep.

As undisciplined and simple-minded as Barauders can be, roughly one out of every 50 is the exact opposite - a highly driven and motivated individual who can see the big picture beyond his own personal urges and desires *(+5* to I.Q. and M.E.). These special individuals inevitably become the leaders in Barauder society, having the know-how and the vision to organize their fellows and drive them toward a common goal. During the Chaos War, these Barauder lieutenants were the key to marshaling armies of their brethren into lethal fighting forces. Once their enemies learned this, they merely targeted the lieutenants (and other leaders such as Giants, Trolls, Greater Demons, etc.). Once they were killed or captured, the rest of the Barauder armies fell into a quarreling mob easily confused, divided and defeated. They would just fall into a disorganized and easily routed rabble without objectives or strategy. Today, Barauder lieutenants still lead their people, but more and more of them are leaving their kindred behind and choosing instead to follow a life of adventure. These special individuals inevitably have long and profitable careers, and they have little difficulty getting along with other humanoids. This has led rank and file Barauders to also take to the adventuring life, but their extreme selfishness and tiny attention spans tend to get them in serious trouble. Still, for those adventuring parties that can handle an aggressive and child-like Barauder companion, the strength and unintentional comic relief these giants provide can be quite worthwhile. Note: A large number of Barauders fight on behalf of the demons at the Great Rift and also serve in the military of The Citadel, but as noted, they are often the pawns of many powerful beings.

Alignment: Any, but the vast majority are as follows: 2% good (any), 15% Unprincipled, 42% Anarchist, 28% Miscreant, 10% Diabolic, and 3% Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D4+2, M.E.: 2D6, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 4D6+6, P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 4D6+6, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 4D6.

Hit Points: P.E. attribute number, +1D6+1 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: *50* plus those gained by O.C.C. and skills.

Natural A.R.: *5*

Horror Factor: 8

Average P.P.E.: 1D6

O.C.C.S Available: Any Men of Arms, Gladiator, or Vagabond. Barauders are just not fit for any other line of work. They lack the mental discipline to be magic users, the attention span to become clergy, and the brain function to become psychics. It is fighting or nothing for these simple giants, but for them, that is more than enough.

Natural Abilities:

Slamming: **Barauders** have an innate love for and proficiency with blunt weapons of every kind. When using any Staff, Blunt or Chain weapon, Barauders gain an additional +1 attack per melee *plus* an additional +1D6 damage (in addition to the +1D6 to damage they also receive for the weapon being giant-sized).

Attacks Per Melee: As per their Men of Arms O.C.C. and corresponding combat skills (typically 5-7 attacks per round).

Damage: Punch: 2D6, kick: 3D6, elbow or knee: 2D6, head butt or body flip: 2D4, plus, in all cases, any P.S. attribute and Hand to Hand combat skill bonuses.

Bonuses (in addition to attribute and other bonuses): +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to pull punch, and +1 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 50 years, in the rare event that a Barauder gets the opportunity to die of old age. Most are slain in battle before their 30th birthday.

Habitat: Currently the Northern Mountains and the interior of the Land of the Damned, particularly in and around the Great Rift and The Citadel. They have grown accustomed to the vertical aspects of the Northern Mountains and have no real desire to leave. Were Barauders to exit the region into the Northern Hinterlands, the wide, flat expanses of that region might very well blow a **Barauder's** mind.

Languages: Barauders once spoke their own language, but they seem to have forgotten it since their arrival to this world. They now speak either **Elven, Demongogian** or Gobblely. Barauders as a whole have been divided by their self-imposed language barriers, and today a growing cultural rift between these groups threatens to plunge the different tribes into war.

Enemies: Anybody they don't respect. This means people smaller and weaker than they. They respect brute strength, warrior cunning and raw power of any kind. Once somebody wins their respect, Barauders will make a complete turnaround and treat that person like a bosom buddy, as if they were close all along, and look to the truly powerful for leadership. Oddly enough, the best way to get into a **Barauder's** good graces is to thrash him in combat, or at least give him a good, solid whack on the head. The Barauder way of thinking is that if some shrimp can ring a **Barauder's** bell, they can't be all that bad. Not exactly the most civilized way of thinking, but in the Land of the Damned, it is good enough.

Allies: Barauders prefer to stick with other Barauders, but they respect any individual who can prove themselves in feats of strength and daring. They naturally show preference towards other giant-sized creatures (and demonkind thanks to the Great Rift). Although they respect and even like **Bearmen,** Barauders tend to regard them as rivals.

Physical Appearance: Barauders are big, burly creatures with oversized chests, broad shoulders, thickly muscled arms, smallish legs, and vaguely frog- or salamander-like heads. A Barauder's eyes are really wide set, almost on the side of the head, and their mouths cut a thin line all the way across their faces. Barauders have short necks that are pitched slightly forward, so when viewed from the front, these creatures appear to have no neck at all, just a mass of shoulder muscle with a head sticking out from the middle of it. Barauders also have a set of six whisker-like appendages on the tops of their heads which are a rough indicator of the creature's emotional state. When sad or angry, the whiskers lie flat on the head. When excited or happy, the whiskers stand straight up.

Size: **8-11 feet (2.4 to 3.3 m).**

Weight: 400 to 600 **lbs (180** to 270 kg).

Notes: Barauder are giant-sized creatures, so any melee weapons they use get an additional 1D6 to damage. Of all the Dying Races, they are probably the greatest in number, with several thousand found in the Land of the Damned and across the Northern Mountains. This is due in large part to their high birthrate, which somewhat compensates for their attrition in combat.

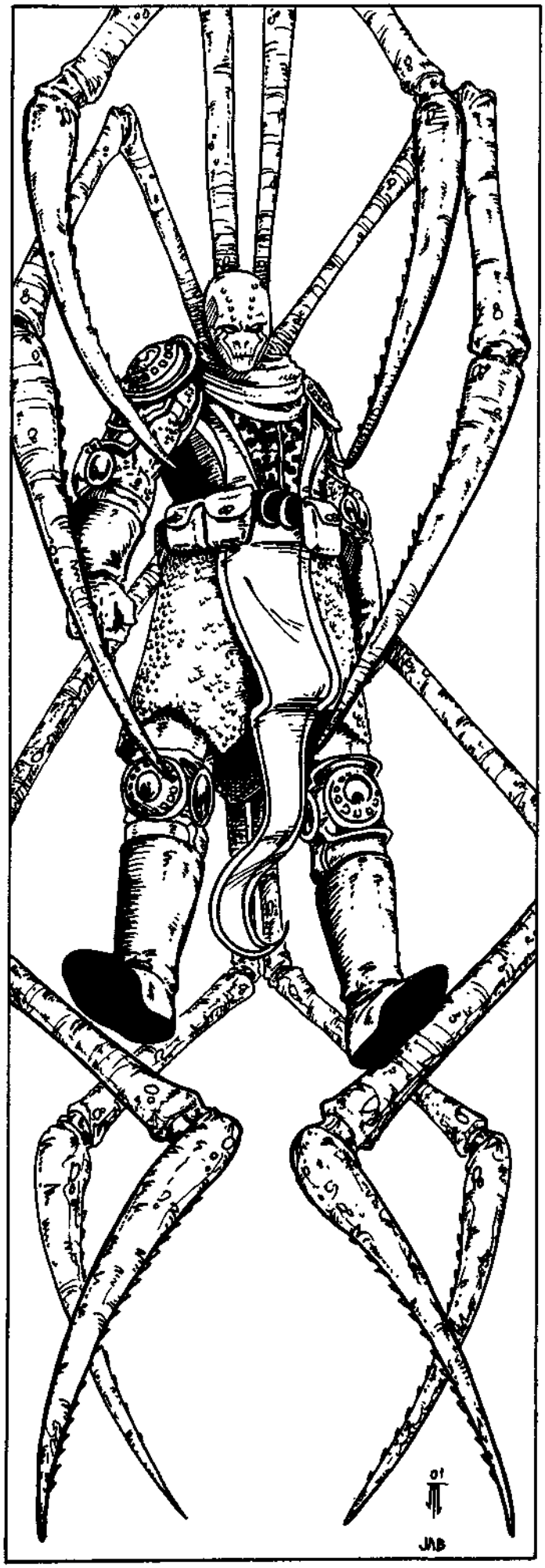
Croval

The Croval are a sinister race of vicious opportunists who travel the **Megaverse** as mercenary soldiers and mystics. They most often ally themselves with major forces of evil, serving only as long as their payments remain current or until they can usurp their employer's position.

The Croval came to this world during the Chaos War in the hopes of scoring some juicy mercenary work from the Old Ones. Little did the Croval realize that the Old Ones do not negotiate; they simply take what they want. Before long, the Croval found themselves virtually enslaved by the Old Ones, a turn of events that enraged them. When the Chaos War began, the Croval were among the first of the enslaved races to throw off their chains and join the fight for freedom. However, their motives were born from hate and a lust for revenge rather than justice or goodness. In the Chaos War, the Croval did their best to stay out of the direct lines of fire, preferring to act as spies, assassins and saboteurs. Many of them got sucked into the fighting anyway and were killed by the tens of millions. After the smoke cleared from the fighting, the greedy and selfish Croval who survived left the Alliance of Light and attempted to claim a chunk of the world for themselves, and in so doing, earned the disdain and wrath of the forces of good. As a result, they were swept up with the Minions of the Old Ones and condemned to life in the Land of the Damned. Not surprisingly, this has made the Croval of the Palladium World the mortal enemies of the Gods of Light and all forces of order and goodness.

To this day, the Croval are the slimy underbelly of evil, always looking for an opportunity to make a big score or snatch some morsel of power as assassins, spies, intelligence officers, and the evil force behind the scenes. They are cunning and savvy to the ways of corruption and vice, but their greed and avarice are always their undoing. When push comes to shove, it is the other guy going over the cliff (sometimes quite literally). Loyalty, honor and friendship have no meaning to these monsters, who see deception and betrayal as both an art and a way of life. In the many millennia that have followed the end of the Chaos War, Croval have served many masters, instigated many wars and tragedies, and reveled in the chaos of the land. Although they bemoan their imprisonment and claim to hate the Land of the Damned, they love it here and thrive on the anarchy.

For most Croval, the best opportunity lies in the Great Rift, site of the savage Minion War. Both sides have need for spies,



interrogators and assassins such as the Croval and welcome the vile beings into their camps. The demons, Deevils and other wicked creatures issuing forth from the Great Rift provide the Croval with endless opportunities and clients to ally themselves with, temporarily joining whatever faction or even new player in the conflict who appears to be on the rise. Typically, they move in, establish themselves as freelance "advisors" with some faction and conduct themselves as able and valuable lieutenants (never take a position as a grunt). For as long as things look good for their side, the Croval conduct numerous daring missions of subterfuge, murder and mayhem, sowing all kinds of trouble amongst the enemy. The moment their employer shows a serious sign of weakness, the Croval are the first to go, willing to wander the blasted plains of the Land of the Damned rather than spend one more day working for a *loser*. To them, the only thing that matters is finding another employer or opportunity worthy of their skills and cunning, only to desert or betray him just before he also falls under the relentless meat grinder that is the Minion War.

Were the Croval to band together, they could probably forge a powerful force of king makers and secret powers behind the throne even in the Land of the Damned. However, their competitive drive is so strong, and they are so greedy, and their minds so treacherous, conniving, and suspicious, that they can never sustain any power base they help to build. In fact, it is their vile, suspicious and greedy natures that often play a key role in tearing it down. For the Croval are never satisfied, always overreaching, relentlessly cruel and overwhelmingly self-serving. Besides, they are happy to abandon an ally, kingdom or cause, because to their chaotic way of thinking, nothing is permanent and there is *always* something better.

Note: Considered by many to be a lesser demon of some kind.

Alignment: Miscreant or Diabolic evil only! All engage in vicious opportunism punctuated by gratuitous cruelty.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6+8, M.E.: 3D6+8, M.A.: 3D6+6, P.S.: 3D6+6, P.P.: 3D6+6, P.E.: 3D6+3, P.B.: 2D4, Spd.: 3D6+6.

Hit Points: P.E. plus 2D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 30 plus those gained by O.C.C. and skills.

Natural A.R.: 6

Horror Factor: 12

Average P.P.E.: 4D6x2 - those who practice magic start with this amount plus the P.P.E. for that O.C.C. Thankfully, most Croval do not have the temperament and discipline to become a mage.

O.C.C.s Available: Typically *Men of Arms*, especially Mercenaries, Bounty Hunters, Spies, Thieves, Assassins and other criminal types. About 10% are Men of Magic, favoring Wizardry, Necromancy and Summoning - never Warlocks or any O.C.C. where one draws his power from, or is beholden to, another being; not even a god.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), keen color vision, see the invisible, dimensional **teleport** (45%; negated in the Land of the Damned), bio-regeneration 4D6 Hit **Points./S.D.C.** per melee round (severed limbs regenerate completely within 48 hours), impervious to normal fire and cold, half damage from magical fire and cold, impervious to disease, magically knows all languages and automatically gets the skills Streetwise and Prowl (both +12%) regardless of their chosen O.C.C.

In addition to these abilities, the Croval possess an unusual set of crab-like appendages that function like crab or insect legs that can also strike like pincers (can not hold a weapon but do 2D6 damage, have 30 S.D.C. each and regenerate if destroyed). These appendages grow in as the Croval rises in level of experience. The number of these "pincers" denotes rank and power within Croval society (be that what it is). First level Croval have no pincers. At *third* level, they grow two pincers from the middle of their back, which can be used to hurt or pin opponents or to parry (+1) incoming attacks. At *sixth* level, an additional two pincers grow in, bringing the total to four (an additional +1 to parry). Now the Croval gets one extra attack per melee round and can walk along the side of walls and ceilings (at full speed) like an insect. At *ninth* level, another two pincers grow in (another +1 to parry), bringing the total to six and giving the creature venomous stinger capabilities with all of its pincers! At twelfth level, another two pincers grow in, bringing the total to *eight.* At this point the Croval is +2 on initiative, +1 to parry and entangle, +2 to disarm, can pin/incapacitate opponents on a roll of 17-20 (basically the same move as provided by the Wrestling skill) and can run along walls and ceilings at double their normal speed. Never grows more than eight pincers.

Attacks Per Melee: As per O.C.C. and corresponding combat skills and pincer bonuses (typically 5-7 attacks per round; minimum of three even if no Hand to Hand skill is taken).

Damage: Croval inflict ordinary punching, kicking and biting damage as any human. Their pincers, however, are considerably more lethal. A strike from a single pincer inflicts 2D6 damage, but Croval can strike the same target simultaneously with two (4D6 damage) or four pincers (6D6 damage); counts as one melee attack!

In addition, experienced Croval can inject their opponents with a powerful toxin that unless the target saves vs poison, disorients him (-1 on all combat bonuses, -1 attack per melee, -15% on skill performance and reduce speed by 10% all for the next 1D6 melee rounds). Multiple poison strikes do *not* result in cumulative toxic effects or penalties; the Croval must wait until its victim shakes off the poison's effects before that individual is again susceptible to another toxic strike. In addition, the bony Croval pincers can be used to parry incoming attacks from multiple assailants without penalty.

Bonuses (in addition to likely Attribute, Skill and O.C.C. bonuses): +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to parry, +1 to entangle, +3 to pull punch, and +1 to roll with punch, fall or impact. Impervious to psionic and supernatural possession, impervious to the bite and gaze of vampires, impervious to symbiotic union and control, as well as disease, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 to save vs magic, and +2 to save vs poison.

Magic: Although the Croval have no special innate magic abilities, they do love the arcane arts and love to own magic items. 10% will become a practitioner of magic, with Wizard, Necromancer and Summoner being the most likely choices.

Psionics: None. Croval are psionically inert.

Average Life Span: 60 years, though few ever live that long. Most die by 30 thanks to the violent and treacherous lives they lead.

Habitat: The Croval could easily survive anywhere in the Palladium World, but most are trapped in the Land of the Damned (truth be told, most do not even try to escape) and may be encountered on the western side of the Northern Mountains. However, they love to be where the action is, so they usually avoid remote and desolate places unless there is some reason (searching for treasure or magic, hunting a fugitive, spying, etc.). Croval are occasionally found elsewhere in the world, and have been spotted in the Old Kingdom, Western Empire, and Land of the South Winds, but no more than a dozen are *believed to* exist outside the Land of the Damned.

Languages: Magically know and speak all languages. Half are literate in Elven.

Enemies: In general, any champion of good, priests of light, the Gods of Light, and anybody who gets in their way. The Croval's limited involvement on this world is such that no races have cultivated a special hatred for them.

Allies: Anybody who can afford to pay them. However, Croval loyalty is infamous for extending only as far as their client's purse strings.

Physical Appearance: Croval are red-skinned humanoids with a flat nose (slit nostrils), yellow eyes and a pair of yellow stripes on each cheek. Their skin is covered in soft, fine scales like a snake. Depending on their level of personal development, they might sport up to eight pincers from out of their back. Their hands are human looking, but are longer, have more slender fingers, and have yellow nails. They also have bony plates that cover their shoulders, through these are never large or hard enough to provide the Croval with additional protection. Though they look demonic and indeed consort with infernal creatures of every kind, it is unknown if they are demons or sub-demons themselves.

Size: Six to seven feet (1.8 to 2.1 m) tall.

Weight: 200 to 300 lbs (90 to 135 kg).

Armor Note: Croval warriors are fond of wearing full suits of armor, but when they sprout their first two pincers, they must either find a competent metal smith to modify their armor to admit the pincers, or they must forego wearing armor altogether. Some who have pincers find armor to be the sign of a stripling and voluntarily go without it. Others like to wear modified armor because it shows they can afford it. Every time a Croval grows another set of pincers, his armor must be modified to accommodate them. Each modification process costs *twice* the base cost of the armor itself. G.M. Note: The Croval are seldom encountered in great numbers even in the Land of the Damned. Thus, they are usually found without the company of other Croval or with 1-3 less experienced members of their kind. Croval often compete against one another. This character makes a great NPC villain. As always, their inclusion as a player character (not recommended) is subject to G.M. approval.

Goloth

The Goloth are a race of feral **humanoids** whose bloodlust and sheer ferocity made them the scourge of the Chaos War. They were brought to this world by the Alliance of Light, which was in the habit of **recruiting** races from across the Megaverse to join the in their crusades. The Goloth, however, were not specifically recruited. They merely shared a home world with another race called the ***Urumar***, whom the Alliance wanted desperately to join their cause. The Urumar agreed and came to the Palladium World in huge numbers. The Goloth merely tagged along, but in the early days of the war, the Urumar were all but wiped out while the Goloth survived and inflicted tremendous casualties upon the Soldiers of Chaos. However, with the Urumar gone, it soon became clear that the Goloth held no loyalty towards anyone or anything else. When they first came to this **world**, they were just on the cusp of evolving into a highly intelligent **humanoid** race. As such, concepts like loyalty, honor and duty were alien to them. In one of the Alliance's more regrettable lapses of judgment, they decided the Goloth were only good for use as a glorified attack dog, and so millions were sent to their deaths in suicide charges and mass attacks. The Old Ones captured huge numbers of the Goloth and hatched a devious plot to turn the Alliance's weapon against them.

Granting them full intelligence, the Old Ones hoped that the Goloth, having a new realization of how they had been used as fodder by the Alliance, would seek revenge. The gambit paid off, and the Goloth were let loose by the Old Ones to wreak havoc on their old masters. Wave after wave of furious Goloth slew thousands upon thousands of Soldiers of **Light**, their dim-witted cousins joining them in an act of betrayal that set the forces of Light reeling in retreat. When retribution came later, it was fierce and terrible, but in the end, the Goloth were among the Minions condemned to the Land of the Damned. It was hoped that of all the Minions so sentenced, that the Goloth would learn the folly of their ways and forsake the Old Ones and violence. Quite the contrary, they have devolved back into barbarism. They are still a wild, savage folk fond of waging war with their teeth and claws alone. They have little use for the confining laws and customs of other cultures (though they will abide by them when they have to), and according to legend, have no qualms about killing and devouring virtually any humanoid that crosses their path.

This last part is a bit unfair, though. It is true that the Goloth routinely eat the flesh of other humanoids. However, that comes more out of dietary need than a choice. Goloth have an extraordinarily high metabolism that makes them living dynamos of energy. It is the chief reason why they make such fierce, lethal warriors. It also requires them to devour their body weight in protein (meat!) every day. This means most Goloth gather in small clans that live a nomadic existence, hunting, killing and eating whatever large animals (and people) they can find. In the Land of the Damned, run-ins with hostile humanoids are frequent, marking them as an enemy to vanquish and prey to be devoured. For the Goloth, conflict and war becomes an opportunity to feed, and so they do. Only when other humanoids

witness this, they assume the worst and see these people as mindless predators living off the dead of fellow humanoids. What's worse, even though the Goloth have a 01-05% chance of cannibalism (they can not easily digest their own meat), the race has somehow earned a reputation for eating the flesh of their own dead. Many Goloth are infuriated by such notions and will go to great lengths to disprove them, including starving themselves for days, or undertaking challenges and quests they feel will prove their honest intent towards their own kind.

In recent years, small numbers of Goloth have hooked up with parties of adventurers and have lived great lives as wandering explorers and warriors. Some have also managed to escape the Northern Mountains and have served as gladiators (one of the few races who actively seek this life), mercenaries and assassins in places like the Wolfen Empire, the Isle of the Cyclops and the Western Empire. Some become reasonably civilized and may even champion the cause of justice and goodness, although they are likely to be remain suspicious and wary of the Gods of Light and all clergy in general. Such individuals remain the exception rather than the rule. Nearly 97% of all Goloth live in the Land of the Damned and the western side of the Northern Mountains their whole lives, content with the harsh environment and grateful for the constant opportunities for combat that the realm provides.

Alignment: Any, but typically 50% are Anarchist, 30% Miscreant, 10% Diabolic and the rest others.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D4+4, M.E.: 2D6+1, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 3D6+8, P.P.: 3D6+6, P.E.: 3D6+4, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 4D6. One in a hundred has a higher I.Q. (+1D6) and tend to be leaders and Shamans.

Hit Points: P.E.+1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 20, plus those from O.C.C. and skills.

Natural A.R.: None.

Horror Factor: 8 when facing an individual; 12 when outnumbered by two to one or more Goloth.

Average P.P.E.: 2D4 or by O.C.C.

O.C.C.s Available: Over half of all Goloth are Vagabonds. Another 40% are assorted Men of Arms. The last 10% are an oddball mix of Optional O.C.C.s, Entertainers, and even the odd Druid, Shaman, Witch, Warlock or Psychic.

Natural Abilities: Aside from their unusually high energy level and the bonuses that confers, Goloth have excellent nightvision (300 feet/91.4 m), can track by scent (55%) are instinctive swimmers (75%) and have an unusual knack for avoiding ambushes (66% to Detect Ambush).

Attacks Per Melee: By O.C.C., but Goloths who choose any fighter O.C.C. get an additional *two* hand to hand attacks, regardless of what Hand to Hand style they select, thanks to their high metabolism and hand speed. Notes: Goloth are savage fighters who absolutely love combat and physical activity (sports, contests, hard labor, etc.). Almost all Goloth adventurers relish *unarmed* fighting and will take the skills of Boxing and Wrestling if they can.

Damage: Goloths may claw for 2D6 damage +P.S. and combat bonuses, or bite for 1D6+6, or they may use a weapon. They particularly enjoy using bladed or hooked weapons, anything that will leave a terrible wound on its victim.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +10% to save vs coma/death, and +2 to *all* other saving throws. Also see *Attacks Per Melee.*

Magic: By O.C.C. only, but limited to Druid, Shaman, Warlock or Witch; uncommon.

Psionics: Standard.

Average Life Span: 100 to 150 years.

Habitat: Currently in the Land of the Damned and Northern Mountains, but they could get along anywhere in the Palladium World. The most savage and evil fight on the side of the Deevils at the Great Rift, while others serve the masters of The Citadel and other despots. Most are unallied to any but their own kind. Although Goloth tribes and clans may clash, these skirmishes with their own kind are seldom to the death or very lengthy.

Languages: Goloths speak a guttural version of both Dwarven and Gobblely which makes a modern practitioner of either language -20% to understand what a Goloth is saying. The doggerel dialect these creatures use is so low that sometimes not even Dwarves or Goblins can figure out what these hairy beasts are saying. Goloth absolutely refuse to learn any other languages.

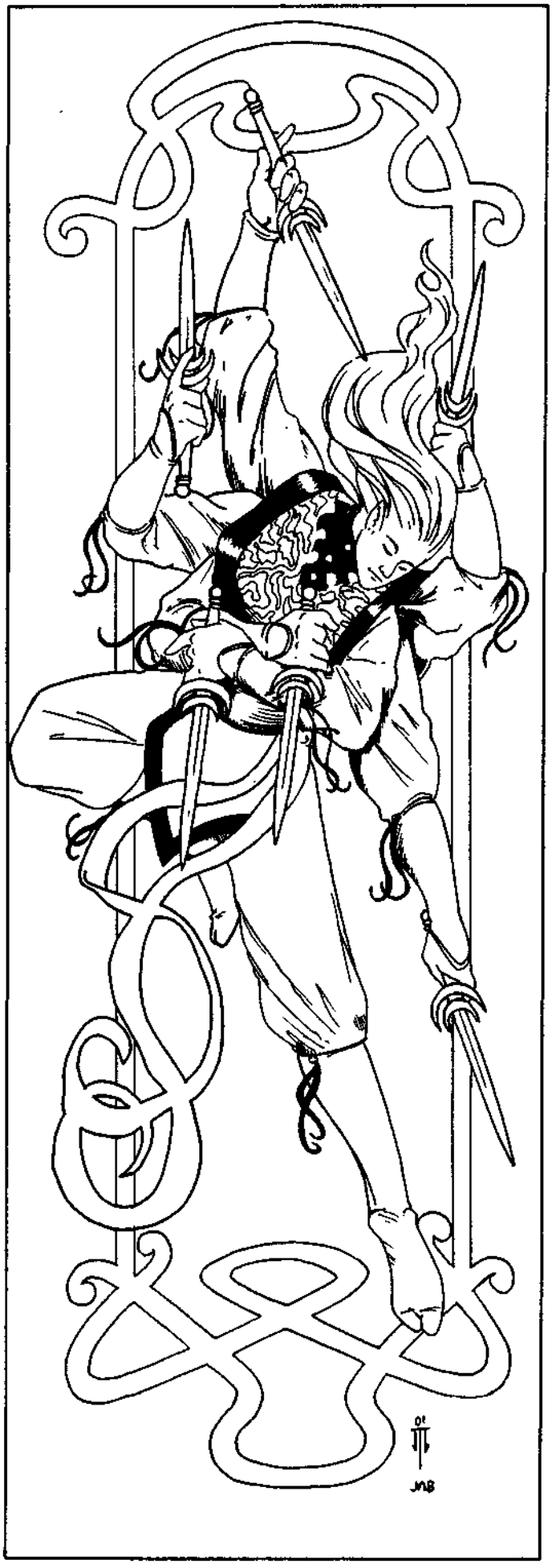
Enemies: Goloths; like Waghalters, are perpetually hungry, and as such, are constantly sizing up other creatures as potential meals. Even humanoids they travel with might be possible foodstuffs if conditions get too trying. This tends to make other humanoids a little skittish when around Goloths. After all, how does one trust a creature that is most likely sizing that person up as a meal? ("Hmm. Nice fellow, this Elf is. Might go well with a salt crust and some lemon juice roasted slow on a spit. Wash him down with some Gnome giblets, I think.") Goloths also get into trouble because the carnage they leave from hunting closely resembles that of the Waghalter, a similarly voracious monster living in the Northern Mountains. Goloths are frequently blamed for the actions of Waghalters, and vice versa. The Goloth, who are considerably more intelligent and reasonable than Waghalters, take this perpetual case of mistaken identities personally. As such, they have taken it upon themselves to kill Waghalters whenever they encounter them.

Allies: Goloths who *can* control their appetite and their tempers can fit in with groups of other humanoids surprisingly well. Increasing numbers of these savage humanoids are becoming worldly adventurers, and seeing other parts of the Northern Mountains and beyond as they travel about, getting into adventures, plundering booty, fighting monsters or righting wrongs.

Physical Appearance: The Goloth are roughly the size of Dwarves. They possess a rippling musculature and their bodies are covered with short, thick fur. They appear, in many regards, like a bipedal wolverine or Tasmanian Devil, only with wild manes of hair and thick dark beards as well. Sharp, thick teeth protrude from their mouths, and their claws are long, stout and black. Goloth eyes are a featureless yellow. They are four feet or so of muscle, sinew, claws, teeth and bad attitude.

Size: Four to five feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) tall.

Weight: 200 to 250 lbs (90 to 112.5 kg).



Jeridu

A race of lithe, graceful acrobats at least as beautiful in appearance as the Elves, making it hard to believe that the Jeridu were created entirely by the Old Ones as a slave race of warriors.

Early on, Jeridu shock troops inflicted horrifying damage on soldiers of the Alliance of Light in the Chaos War. After a few years, however, the Chaos Lords' brainwashing wore off and the Jeridu came to their senses. Horrified by their deeds so far, they defected to the Alliance and spent the remainder of the war as *Soldiers of Light* determined to defeat the Old Ones and live as free beings in a world where light reigned, not darkness. But another motivation was that by fighting the Old Ones, the Jeridu believed they could somehow make up for all the carnage and evil deeds they had wrought as Soldiers of Chaos earlier on.

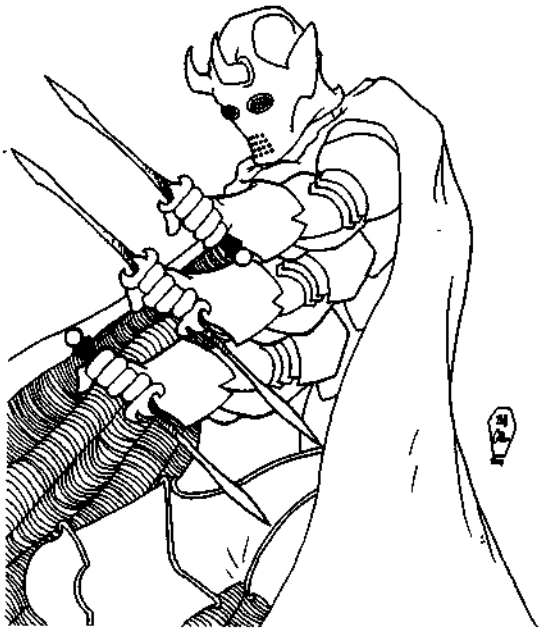
The Jeridu Defection was one of the first major blows for the Old Ones, for never before had they lost an entire slave race for any reason. Though the momentum of the war would go back and forth many times before a final victory emerged, many more slave races would follow the Jeridu's lead and abandon the Old Ones. Most were wiped out entirely, but a few survived beyond the war. All owe their freedom to the Jeridu, whose brave defection planted the seed of rebellion and freedom within the ranks of darkness.

The Jeridu are tall, slender humanoids most visibly distinguished by their six arms. These alone would make the Jeridu fearsome melee combatants, but they also possess natural acrobatic and gymnastic abilities. All together, one can see why the Jeridu were a scourge in the Chaos War. Wielding one-handed weapons, the Jeridu become whirlwinds of killing power on the battlefield, able to keep multiple opponents at bay all by themselves.

Interestingly, as the years have gone by, more and more Jeridu have forsaken their martial ways and instead devote themselves to studying magic or cultivating psychic powers. Many Jeridu encountered today are quiet, reserved mystics, monks (fighting monks and otherwise) or psychics of some kind, more interested in deciphering the magical secrets of the world than in honing themselves into hand to hand killing machines.

Jeridu are not especially tolerant to harsh climates (they adapt about as well as most humans) so they tend to stick to the Northern Mountain Lowlands and the forests of the interior. Consequently, they are most numerous in mountain valleys throughout the chain. Jeridu are a highly civilized people, and they might easily have created a large empire for themselves were their numbers not so terribly decimated during the Chaos War. After the fighting, the few remaining Jeridu were content to stay in the Northern Mountains, and there they have stayed to this day, usually living in small villages and monasteries, often among other people. The Jeridu are known for being especially tolerant of other races, and have no difficulty living with anybody from humans to the so-called "Monster Races."

The Jeridu's presence in the Land of the Damned and Northern Mountains is self-imposed. As heroes of Light in the Chaos War, they were free to go forth in the world anywhere they wanted, however, the Jeridu still felt shame for their past and were not sure that they were yet ready for the world. Conse-



quently, they elected to stay in the Northern Mountains as *volunteers* to battle any evil that might escape the Land of the Damned and to help innocent people and well-intentioned travelers lost in the mountains find their out (away from the Land of the Damned) and to discourage adventurers from pressing forward into the interior of the Land of the Damned.

In the last fifty years, some **Jeridu** have begun to leave the shelter of the mountains to go out into the world. Adventuresome Jeridu (especially warriors, mystics and scholars) love to join up with adventurers from the outside world and accompany them to other lands. It is said that scholars in the Western Empire and the Land of the **South-Winds** receive Jeridu travelers like royalty since the race holds such an important place in history. Ironically, modern Jeridu have no greater recollection of their ancestors' role in the Chaos War than most scholars, so they have little new revelations or details to share. **Note:** Jeridu often wear cloaks and capes to conceal their extra arms when traveling in the outside world, unveiling them when among **friends** or to engage in battle.

Some have theorized that the Jeridu are related to ***Rahu-Men,*** but that is false, something laughed off by both Jeridu and Rahu-Men. Just because both races have multiple arms does not mean they are related in any way. Confusing the issue, however, is the fact that Jeridu and Rahu-Men get along famously, making fast **friends,** suggesting the races fought alongside each other in the Chaos War. Titans and **Kankoran** also are on good terms with Jeridu, further suggesting the race's inner nobility.

Not all view the Jeridu so fondly, however. In human nations like **Timiro, Bizantium** and the Eastern Territory, Jeridu are often considered "monsters" and are hounded relentlessly for it. Likewise, the **Orcs,** Ogres, Trolls, Coyles and other dark-hearted folk associate the fair-looking Jeridu with Elves and attack them on sight. The Wolfen find them fascinating and welcome Jeridu to Wolfen society, although those Jeridu who talk about making lasting peace with humans are found to be annoying. In places like the Old Kingdom, where Jeridu would be under constant fire, the six-armed humanoids gather together in traveling bands called ***hexans***. No matter how large a **hexan** grows, its numbers always total some multiple of six. In **fact,** the number six features prominently in Jeridu society and culture. Most prominently, the Jeridu hold that there are six prophecies that shall herald the final destruction of their race. Exactly what these prophecies are remains a closely held Jeridu secret.

Alignment: Any, but tend towards good and selfish alignments.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 3D6+4, P.S.: 3D6, P.P.: 4D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 4D6, Spd.: 3D6.

Hit Points: P.E. **+1D6** per level of experience.

S.D.C.: By O.C.C. and skills only.

Natural A.R.: Not applicable.

Horror/Awe Factor: 10, but only the first few times they are encountered.

Average P.P.E.: 1D6 or by O.C.C.

O.C.C.S Available: Any, but nearly 50% trend towards Men at Arms, 30% toward Men of Magic, and 10% toward Clergy and Psychics. The rest can be anything.

Natural Abilities:

Incredible Coordination: The Jeridu have six arms and can use them all equally well and simultaneously. Their incredible sense of coordination gives then a **+10%** to any skills requiring the use of manual dexterity, such as Juggling, Palming, Pick Locks, Pick Pockets, etc.

Paired Weapons: All Jeridu automatically have the skill of Paired Weapons, and can use it for all six of their arms. When using weapons in every arm, the Jeridu basically acts like he can control three sets of paired weapons at once. This makes these people utterly lethal in close combat.

Acrobatics & Gymnastics: Both skills are automatically known to every Jeridu regardless of the individual's background and O.C.C.

Automatic Dodge: Can perform a dodge without using up a melee action. The character must still roll a D20 as usual to see if the dodge was successful or not.

Attacks Per Melee: Two at level one, four at level four in *addition* to those normally acquired through hand to hand combat **training/O.C.C.,** regardless of what kind of Hand to Hand style they select, because of their many arms and great coordination.

Damage: By punch, kick, or weapons.

Bonuses (in addition to likely attribute, skill or O.C.C. bonuses): +2 on initiative, **+1** to strike and dodge, +2 to parry, +4 to disarm, +4 to pull punch, and +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

Magic: By O.C.C.

Psionics: Standard.

Average Life Span: 100+ years.

Habitat: Currently, primarily in the Northern Mountains, but they could do alright anywhere on the Palladium World. They would prefer warmer climes to colder ones, though.

Languages: Jeridu speak a formal dialect of **Elven** that many Elves find especially pleasant to listen to.

Enemies: Monstrous and evil races of all sorts. Plus, the Jeridu have taken it upon themselves to oppose any race that considers the Gods of Light its enemy. Coyles, Goblins, **Orcs,** Ogres and Trolls and other ugly and aggressive members of the monster races are all adversaries, because they are envious of the attractive six-armed beings.

Allies: Titans, **Bearmen,** Kankoran, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes and Wolfen are typically accepting of them. The one big exception to this are Dwarves, with whom Jeridu are uncomfortable. They do not share the Elven enmity towards these

stout warriors, but there is something about Dwarves that just rubs them the wrong way.

Physical Appearance: Jeridu are tall, svelte humanoids that look vaguely Elf-like (most notably in their almond-shaped eyes, delicate nose and mouth and attractive features). Their most distinguishing feature, though, are their six arms. Jeridu often dress in ornate, courtly attire, as if every one of their kind descends from some kind of noble family. Though they do not often wear heavy armor, when they do it is a brilliant and heavily decorated item one might otherwise find in the possession of an aristocratic lord. Jeridu weapons are also baroque in design, having lavishly designed hilts, pommels, cross guards and scabbards. Jeridu blade weaponry, oddly enough, almost always has a simple blade, as if the race feels that decorating the business end of their weapons is going a step too far in their love for decoration. They are also fond of capes, cloaks and magic weapons, armor and items. Favorite types of weapons include blades of all kinds, axes, chain weapons and staves.

Size: Six to seven feet (1.8 to 2.1 m) tall. Though tall, Jeridu are not giant-sized creatures.

Weight: 200 to 250 lbs (90 to 112.5 kg). The Jeridu's slight build accounts for their low weight relative to their height.

Notes: Jeridu warriors are athletic and acrobatic in the extreme. In addition, *all* Jeridu will take the W.P. Knife skill, as knife fighting is an integral part of their culture and excellent for parrying. In fact, many Jeridu warriors will not even take any Weapon Proficiencies other than W.P. Knife, relying entirely on their skill with the short blades.

Kaejor

These are an ancient people who walked the world when it was still young. They had ruled their corner of the world for millennia when the Old Ones swept over everything, and the once proud Kaejor found themselves with two distasteful options: either leave their home world behind or stay and become the minions of the Old Ones. The Kaejor chose to leave, and with much sadness in their hearts, they fled to one of the so-called Heroic Realms (history does not tell us which, and the Kaejor keep it a secret), where they lived and thrived for many eons.

When the Chaos War broke out, a force of dragons came to the self-exiled Kaejor and bid them to return home and fight to evict the Chaos Lords who had shrouded all of the Palladium World under a shadow of pure evil. For the Kaejor, the request proved a divisive one. Kaejor are by nature a warrior people. They live and die by the sword, and they place a premium on honor, loyalty and most of all, courage. And, they have very long memories when grudges are concerned. These are some of the things that make the Kaejor great warriors. It also can provide an opportunity for Kaejor society to self-destruct from time to time. Such was the case when the Kaejor were requested to return to the Palladium World.

Nearly half the Kaejor opted to go home and cross swords with the Old Ones. The other half were happy with their new home and saw no reason to abandon it for a possibly suicidal charge into battle. In short order, civil war broke out. Within a decade, the Kaejor civilization was a smoking ruin, and the faction that wanted to come home and fight the Old Ones had virtually exterminated the other half of their society.

The Kaejor contingent that came to the Palladium World fought with distinction during the course of the Chaos War. When final victory came, though, the Kaejor were hardly in a condition to resume building a new empire for themselves. Their numbers had been knocked down so far that their first priority was to repopulate themselves. But more importantly, the Kaejor had seen their finest hour, and they knew it. They are an utterly merit-based people, and Kaejor individuals are constantly being judged and re-judged by their peers based on the record of that individual's achievements. For most Kaejor, the Chaos War was a great time because it gave them all ample opportunity to build a heroic legacy. But there would be no greater war than that against the Old Ones, thus, all future generations of Kaejor would be doomed to know that no matter how valorous or exalted their military achievements, none of it would ever compare to the legacy of their ancestors. This realization seems to have taken the race's wind from its sails, and with each successive generation, a few more Kaejor retreat to lives of sullen contemplation, not glorious warfare. Some believe that this is the doom awaiting the entire race, as they all slip into a terminal despair.

Physically, the Kaejor are some of the hardiest folk in the world. Their strength, endurance, and ability to soak up punishment are legendary. They have no ability to feel pain whatsoever, which contributes greatly to their legendary courage, but they also have no ability to heal completely from the wounds they receive. The longer a Kaejor lives, the more smashed up his body becomes. One can generally tell the age of a Kaejor by the number of scars, splints and prostheses used to keep his body together. Most Kaejor simply bolt metal plates to themselves to hold their battered bodies together. As they do this, they slowly armor themselves, further enhancing their combat abilities. Ancient Kaejor often look like they are wearing full suits of plate, when in reality, their bodies are decrepit and would fall apart if not for the metal plates holding them together. This is the irony of the Kaejor condition: the more one fights, the more one's body breaks down. In addition to adding armor to one's body, some Kaejor intentionally cover themselves with *Green Mold* so they can hold themselves together after receiving grievous wounds. This is common among younger warriors who have been terribly hurt and realize they do not have much time left to live. For such individuals, Green Mold is a great method to get a little more time to fight the good fight and build a legacy for one's self.

Kaejor are found in the Northern Mountains, the Great Rift and other parts of the Land of the Damned, but they can survive anywhere. They can be found at any altitude, living alone or in strength, among their own kind or in mixed racial company. Though Kaejor love combat, they are not inherently vicious or evil people. They merely see everything in terms of military achievement, so they are guilty of having a one-track mind more than anything else. Those who "fight" in the Land of the Damned often do so for personal glory rather than for a cause or to thwart evil. In fact, some have joined the ranks of the demons and Deevils at the Great Rift in some effort to prove themselves, while others battle the infernals and all who stand with them. These warring Kaejor have given up on causes and seek only to

find some way to raise themselves to the heights of their ancestors. Knowing this is probably impossible, they fight in the hopes of becoming legends to the locals and dying in a blaze of glory (although not recklessly or foolishly, for a fool's death has no merit, nor does a martyr's unless his sacrifice accomplishes something grand).

Kaejor work well in groups (again, part of their inherent militarism), and as a result, they tend to fit in with groups of other adventurers rather well. Many groups consider having a Kaejor among them to be a tremendous honor and asset as the Kaejor's strength and durability are matched with an unswerving dedication to finishing their mission and stand by their comrades under any condition. Moreover, it is said, the Kaejor only join groups destined for greatness (or at least great challenge or calamity).

Alignment: Any, but most often Anarchist (40%) or Aberrant (40%).

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 4D6+10, P.P.: 3D6+2, P.E.: 3D6+4, P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 3D6.

Hit Points: P.E.+2D6 per level of experience. Only *half of say* Hit Points lost are recovered, at a rate of 1D4 per every 48 hours! The rest are permanently lost.

S.D.C.: P.E.xlO, plus those gained by O.C.C. and skills. This may seem like a lot, and indeed it is, but keep in mind that the Kaejor can not completely heal from their wounds, so for the average character who does not take care of himself, this great reserve of S.D.C. will whittle down quickly during the course of their adventures and life of conflict. Such is the way of the Kaejor Warriors. When young and unhurt, they are more reckless to danger, often soaking up whatever damage comes their way. By the time they are older and on the verge of death, they have learned their lesson to be more cautious too late, and the damage has already been done.

S.D.C. lost are recovered at a rate of 1D6 per every 48 hours, but only half are recovered, the rest are permanently gone!

Natural A.R.: 12; any strike to hit that is 12 or below is absorbed without injury or loss of S.D.C. or Hit Points.

Horror Factor: 10

Average P.P.E.: 3D4 or by O.C.C.

O.C.C.S Available: Most any, but most become Men of Arms. Some become Warrior Monks, Vagabonds or Philosophers (Scholar O.C.C.) and try to give up fighting. However, such individuals have also given up on themselves and the world, avoiding people and speaking only of man's ills, injustice and the inevitable doom of everything.

Natural Abilities:

Meld with Armor: As mentioned before, Kaejor start with *huge* amounts of S.D.C. and considerable Hit Points. For player characters, this ends up "coming out in the wash," since they are unable to heal well and magic and psionic healing do NOT work on the Kaejor. Thus, Kaejor characters need to pick their fights carefully or they will quickly grind themselves into oblivion. This compels the Kaejor to wear full suits of heavy armor, with plate, scale mail and chain and plate among their favorites.

The more a Kaejor gets damaged, the more their bodies show the permanent physical dents, scars and disfigurement. Thus, Kaejor are often seen perpetually wearing splints and bandages due to their slow healing abilities.

One of the Kaejor's bizarre abilities is that they can actually attach artificial armor directly to their own physical bodies (without loss of S.D.C. or H.P.)! By the time a Kaejor permanently loses 25% of his original S.D.C. (or Hit Points), he will begin to "plate over" or "plate up" the damaged parts of his body. This is a rite of passage in Kaejor society, and only when a warrior begins "plating over" is he accepted as a true warrior. Though these plates will provide the Kaejor with additional protection, the Kaejor will always suffer the standard mobility penalties for wearing heavy armor, and as this armor is destroyed, the warrior will need to make continual repairs and upgrades.

The first time a Kaejor plates up, enough of his body will be covered by metal plates that he will have a new and separate A.R. and S.D.C. His natural A.R. and natural S.D.C. will remain the same. Only now, when in combat, the Kaejor has an additional outer *layer* of protection that must be penetrated and chopped down before damage can get to him. The Kaejor's new set of plates and exterior armor will have the equivalent A.R. for that type of conventional body armor, but can have 20% more S.D.C. than usual.

Any incoming attack must first be compared to the A.R. of the Kaejor's outer plates/armor. If the attack is lower than the plate's A.R., then any damage is done to the outer armor, not the Kaejor. A roll above the A.R. means the armor is penetrated and damage is done to his S.D.C. (unless the attack goes direct to Hit Points or the Kaejor had no more natural S.D.C.).

Unlike a Kaejor's body, a Kaejor's built-in armor *can* be repaired or replaced, but this has its own set of problems. As the Kaejor's armor plating gets damaged or destroyed in combat, the Kaejor can have his built-in armor repaired or replaced. First, the metal plates must be removed, an arduous process that requires 1D4 hours. Once a Kaejor's plates are taken off, a metal smith will take as much time to repair the attachable armor as is necessary for any conventional suit of armor. Cost, however, is typically two or three times greater (even more if a rush job), and some armorers and smiths refuse to perform the ugly and disgusting work of bolting the armor to the inhuman character's body. (Note: Jotan, Cyclops, and Minotaur smiths NEVER refuse, although they may charge plenty; most Kobolds will also tackle the job with few qualms).

Pain Resistance: Kaejor are completely immune to pain. They also have no sense of touch, so while they feel no pain, they can not feel any pleasurable physical sensations, either. For this stark warrior folk, however, feeling pleasure at all is a foreign concept so that is not something they miss. Since Kaejor have no sense of touch, skills requiring fine manual dexterity (e.g., Juggling, Palming, Pick Locks, Pick Pockets) are at -20%.

Attacks Per Melee: As per O.C.C., hand to hand or other combat skills.

Damage: By punch, kick, or weapon.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +4 to save vs poison, impervious to disease and +2 to save vs circle magic.

Magic: Kaejor do NOT practice the mystic arts.

Psionics: Standard.

Average Life Span: As long as 170 years, though few make it half that long.

Habitat: The Kaejor of the Palladium World are exclusive to the Land of the Damned and Northern Mountains, though one or two are occasionally found elsewhere. The Land of the Damned is one of the few places on the planet where remaining warriors feel challenged and where those who want to be left alone to sulk and brood can find lasting solitude.

Languages: Kaejor have their own language but they also instinctively speak both Elven *and* Dwarven (96%).

Enemies: At least a third of the Kaejor still consider themselves at war with any race affiliated with the Old Ones. Others take up causes on the side of good or evil only as an excuse to fight. Most have no love for any other people, nation or gods and see life in general as a sad, lonely state of affairs without challenge, promise or cheer. Generally dislike the Old Ones, Deevils and demons.

Allies: Most Kaejor are pretty indifferent and tolerant of other people, including belligerent ones. Of course, any who pester or challenge them are cut down and kicked aside or crushed beneath their steel boot. Those who try to enslave, trick or use them are utterly destroyed.

Physical Appearance: Kaejor are roughly Ogre-sized humanoids marked by their reddish skin and rust-colored hair. They have broad, flat noses, bright white teeth, and beady, featureless white eyes. Kaejor tend to wear their hair short so that opponents can not get a hold of it during combat. When not covered in heavy armor of one kind or another, these people tend to wear baggy clothing, not unlike a karate *gi* and blousing pants tied off at the ankles.

Size: Fully grown Kaejor are remarkably consistent in height. They are all eight feet (2.4 m) tall, give or take one or two inches (2-5 cm).

Weight: Kaejor are also consistent in weight. They are all roughly 400 lbs (180 kg) give or take a few ounces.

Notes: Kaejor enjoy using large, heavy weapons of all kinds, but they are especially fond of massive battle axes, two-handed swords, and pole arms. To keep from taking excessive S.D.C. damage, many Kaejor warriors use shields a lot, incorporating them into a set of paired weapons such as sword and shield. Kaejor are giant-sized creatures, and as such, their weapons all receive an additional 1D6 damage.

The Kildred

Sinister arch-mages, master manipulators and conquerors, the Kildred are an evil race of overlords who broker power in their favor and subjugate anyone without the will or ability to resist them. That said, they are not entirely diabolical, and in many ways, they are actually fair and kind to those they have enslaved. And, they have no taste for depravity and torture, which makes them saints compared to the Old Ones. For a long time the Alliance of Light could not decide whether to offer them membership in their ranks or to destroy them along with the Old Ones. Ultimately, the Kildred were made part of the Alliance of the Light, but they were never fully trusted, and mostly left to contribute to the war on their own terms.

During the Chaos War, the Kildred suffered relatively few losses, which is fortunate for them because their race had already been in decline and there were few of them to spare if they were to continue after the war. In fact, the Kildred on the Palladium World constitute 99% of all Kildred throughout the Megaverse. And even then, the Kildred of this world number fewer than 5,OOO.Here in the north, the Kildred lead secret lives, hidden away from the prying eyes of the Great Races, who would undoubtedly see them as something monstrous to be shunned and destroyed.

Strangely, for all of their innate powers and abilities, the Kildred have shown no interest in visiting other worlds. It would seem that they feel they have everything they need right here in this world where they enjoy lives of power and political intrigue, moving people and kingdoms around like chess pieces, inflicting their insidious plots on entire populations of people for no other reason than to see if they will work.

For reasons as yet unexplained, Kildred have an intense aversion to *Rune magic* of any kind. This means they will avoid at all costs runes, wards and rune weapons, and see Dwarves, even without the knowledge of rune magic, to be natural enemies not to be trusted. The Kildred will not discuss the basis of their aversion, just that they believe all rune magic to be a kind of mystic perversion that they refuse to have any part of. Some believe this stems from the Kildred's clashes with the Old Ones, who are rumored to be the creators of and possibly even the real source of energy behind rune magic.

Kildred are natural born leaders and as such, they condescend to any other being outside of gods, Spirits of Light, Greater Demons and Deevils, and dragons of all kinds. This makes it difficult to endure Kildred company unless one is willing to subordinate oneself to them. Even then, the Kildred will criticize and belittle most everything anyone else does. In most cases, Kildred would rather build a horde of underlings or manipulate factions as their unwitting pawns than seek out the company of equally powerful individuals to adventure with. Of course, there are always the exceptional few who realize that they are not the "super-powerful lords of everything" that Kildred so often see themselves as. For such humble (and uncommon) individuals, adventuring in the presence of others is a considerably easier way of life than for other Kildred. Conversely, other Kildred view these rare team players as weaklings or simpering fools who are disgracing themselves by acting below their station. "Consort with non-Kildred as if they were equals? Bah! A pox on it!"

Outside of the Land of the Damned, Kildred can be found in the Old Kingdom, the Baalgor Wastelands, and the Yin-Sloth Jungles, building small armies for themselves and harboring dreams of carving out a piece of the world for themselves where they might crown themselves king. Kildred of the Northern Mountains are less intent on empire building because the terrain is so challenging, and because there are so few people to lord over. Though these Kildred still have grand schemes and dreams of world domination, they are content to shelve them for the time being. Those in the Land of the Damned (including those in the mountains) are as trapped as anyone else, and do not know how to escape into the wider world. However, to call them prisoners would be a disservice to them, for Kildred throughout the Realm of Monsters sit in positions of power. Some control

the many factions and war camps involved in the Minion War, crafty enough to even manipulate demons and Deevils. Others sit behind kings, warlords and the leaders of tribes, clans and war camps, pulling their strings and instigating conflict, invasions and skullduggery. The most cunning are found in or around The Citadel. All care little about whom they are manipulating, be they men or monsters. Thus, the Kildred find the Land of the Damned quite to their liking and full of intrigue and opportunity. Still, wouldn't it be fun to "play" with humans or Wolfen for a while?

Alignment: 90% are some sort of evil - Miscreant, Aberrant or Diabolic. The remaining 10% are Anarchist. Unprincipled and good Kildred are virtually unheard of.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6+15, M.E.: 2D6+16, M.A.: 2D6+18, P.S.: 3D6, P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 3D6.

Hit Points: P.E.x2 +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 50 plus those gained from O.C.C. and skills.

Natural A.R.: 7

Horror Factor: 13

P.P.E.: 3D6xlO plus those gained by O.C.C. (if applicable).

I.S.P.: 3D4x10 plus those gained by O.C.C. (when applicable).

O.C.C.S Available: Any Men of Magic plus psionics, or Mind Mage. The overwhelming majority of Kildred are the equivalent of Wizards *and* low level Mind Mages!

Natural Skills: All Kildred have the following skills regardless of O.C.C.: Basic Math, Surveillance, Streetwise, Anthropology, and Public Speaking, each with a +10% bonus.

Natural Abilities:

Bio-Regeneration: Kildred recover 3D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per melee round.

Mental Stun: Kildred use this power to attack the balance and motor mechanism of their opponent's brain. Victims of this assault feel light-headed, dizzy and out of sync. The range for this is 60 feet (18.3 m) plus 10 feet (3 m) per each additional level of experience.

Victims of this attack lose one attack or action per melee round, have no initiative, and are -3 to strike, parry and dodge. They are also -6 to roll with punch, fall or impact. Skill performance and speed are reduced by 30%. Victims suffer these effects for 1D4 melee rounds per "mental stun."

Victims may avoid these effects if they make a saving throw of 15 or higher (M.E. bonuses to save vs psionics may be applied) or by having a Mind Block in place.

Using this ability counts as two of the Kildred's melee attacks, and the attack may only be directed at a single character or animal at a time, not an entire crowd.

Followers: As a side effect of their darkly magnetic personalities and skill at manipulating others, Kildred get one dedicated follower or devotee per each level of experience. These are almost always characters with low self-esteem and intelligence (I.Q., M.E., and M.A.) so they tend to be low-level minions, thugs and fanatics. Ogres, Trolls, Orcs, Goblins, Harpies, Melech, Barauders, Goloths, Coyles, Kobolds, and other such creatures that respect strength and power are likely candidates for Kildred followers. These lackeys are so awestruck by their Kildred Lord, that they will follow his every order to the letter, no matter what the consequences. If the Kildred orders his followers into certain death, the followers will do it without a second's hesitation. Consequently, as one follower dies, another one fills his

place within 2D4 weeks. These followers tend to be the Kildred's chief henchmen and lieutenants, and should the Kildred build a larger army or empire, his personal followers will hold positions of power, enforce the direct will of their great leader and command lesser troops or followers.

Power of Command: As often as once every three melee rounds (45 seconds), a Kildred can issue a simple, attention-getting command. This command must be something simple like "stop," "look," "listen," "no," "duck/look out," "unhand her," "give it to me," "slay them," and so on. Everybody hearing this command is likely to pause and/or obey, at least for an instant. Those who hear the command must save vs psionic attack/mind control or be forced to obey and lose one melee attack/action in the process.

Followers devoted to the Kildred will get a bonus of +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry and dodge, and +1 attack per melee round when carrying out such a special order. For those not accustomed to following the Kildred's orders, the Power of Command will not work if it instructs its victims to do something utterly contrary to their nature (such as telling a noble knight to slay an innocent maiden or handing over an artifact that will help the cause of evil). Each command counts as a single attack/action.

Voice Amplification: The Kildred's voice is ordinarily deep and compelling, but when the Kildred likes, it can amplify its voice into a booming roar, as if coming through a powerful loudspeaker. When using this power, the Kildred's voice can be heard clearly for up to 1,600 feet (488 m) and the desired volume and range can be controlled and done at will with no cost of melee attacks/actions. Voice amplification can be used in concert with other abilities for dramatic effect or to broadcast its Power of Command to encompass as many people as possible.

Vulnerabilities: Kildred are especially vulnerable to rune magic (reasons unknown). Rune weapons inflict *double damage* to them, and they are -5 to save vs rune magic or magic that is cast by rune weapons. Kildred are also -2 to save vs wards and magic circles.

Attacks Per Melee: As per O.C.C. and corresponding skills.

Damage: By punch, kick, weapon, magic, psionics, or other natural abilities.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with punch, fall and impact. +2 to pull punch. +2 to save vs psionics and magic that does not involve drawn symbols, +5 to save vs illusions and magical charms/mind control, and +8 to save vs psionic mind control and possession of any kind. Also see Vulnerabilities above.

Magic: By O.C.C.; most Kildred find Wizardry, Diabolism, Summoning and Necromancy as well as some of the ancient arts practiced in the Northern Mountains to be the most appealing. However, reduce the number of O.C.C. Related and Secondary skills by *half*. See *Natural Skills, Natural Abilities* and *Psionics* for the rest of the creature's powers.

Psionics: All Kildred have vast psionic potential. Those who prefer to become a Mind Mage rather than a practitioner of magic may do so, but most study magic and "make do" with the following psionic powers.

Hypnotic Suggestion, Insert Memory, and Mental Illusion, plus one Super Psionic power of choice, three Sensitive of choice and three Physical *(or* Healing) powers of choice.

Those who become full-fledged Mind Mages get the above powers starting at level one *plus* those normally available to the Mind Mage O.C.C. (but obviously don't have magic abilities).

Average Life Span: 300 years, sometimes a bit longer.

Habitat: Of the roughly 5000 believed to exist throughout the known world, approximately one third of them live in the *Northern Mountains,* another third live in the interior of the *Land of the Damned,* and the final third live spread throughout the rest of the world. Places like the Western Empire, Land of the South Winds and Old Kingdom offer these villains the greatest opportunities, but they can be anywhere, usually behind the scenes.

Languages: Kildred magically speak and understand all languages.

Enemies: Virtually anyone. Kildred are opportunistic manipulators, instigators and conquerors, so virtually anyone is a rival, obstacle or pawn in their schemes. They have no qualms about going to war against *anybody* if that is what their plans call for. They have particular enmity for Lizard Mages, however, whom they consider rivals. Conversely, Lizard Mages consider Kildred to be upstarts and no real threat to them. Perhaps this is just arrogance on their part, or perhaps the two races have warred at one point in history and the Kildred fared poorly. The truth behind this ongoing hostility has yet to be discerned by outsiders.

When ancient Dwarves held the secrets of rune magic, the Kildred considered them their mortal enemies. Today, without the secret of rune magic, Dwarves are viewed with suspicion and a bit of fear. Indeed, most Dwarven people know about the Kildred, their manipulative ways and their fear and vulnerability to wards and rune weapons, making the diminutive warriors a lasting threat and rival to Kildred supremacy and shenanigans. No Dwarf will ever trust a Kildred unless he is under their psionic or magical influence.

Allies: By the same token, Kildred will try to forge alliances with anybody who might serve their purposes or offer them amusement. Duplicitous and manipulative in the extreme, Kildred are infamous for allying with *both* sides of a conflict and then playing both off each other. Numerous Kildred are active participants in the Minion War on both sides as they try to outfox each other to get a temporary upper hand (great sport).

Physical Appearance: Kildred appear as humanoids with light blue skin, dark blue lips, and medium blue body markings. Some Kildred have a patchwork of spots, while others have tiger stripes, while still others bear what look like tattoos or tribal markings (except they appear naturally). Kildred are often seen wearing black armor and capes or cloaks and robes, and riding black horses.

Size: Roughly six feet (1.8 m) tall.

Weight: Roughly 200 lbs (90 kg).

Notes: Though Kildred avoid all runic magic, they do adore ordinary magic items, and love to get their hands on whatever they can, especially magic armor and at least two magic weapons. In addition, they usually carry another 1D4+1 magic items (scrolls, potions, rings, etc.) on them. Clearly, Kildred have a love for magic treasure and will gather it whenever they can. In fact, going on treasure hunts is the one sure thing that can get a Kildred to abandon its larger plans for the moment and indulge

in some personal treasure-seeking. Another reason the Land of the Damned and Northern Mountains are appealing.

Maledon

Also known as *Dragonels*, the reptilian Maledons are a warrior race who delight in battle and whose highest expression of culture is through intricate bouts of hand to hand combat. Maledons were a race recruited by the dragons when they broke free of the Old Ones and scoured the Megaverse for other creatures to bring into their Alliance of Light. The dragons never revealed exactly what world the Maledons came from, leading some to believe that they were either a) plucked from a savage world where the Maledons ran wild, or b) the dragons created the Maledons themselves using magicks they have long since forgotten or forsaken.

Regardless of their origins, Maledons are all formidable warriors and survivors best known for being more beast than intelligent humanoid. In the years since the end of the Chaos War, the Maledons have evolved somewhat, and they have become considerably more intelligent than they once were. The Maledons are finally coming into their own and are developing their own civilization and culture. But they are still killers at heart, easily enticed to do battle and prone to entering frenzied spells of madness when in the heat of combat.

As the Maledons have gradually civilized themselves, one of their most notable cultural achievements is transforming their warrior tradition from an instinctive combativeness to a cultural institution with its own rules, customs and traditions. To the Maledon mind, if their people are to advance from the shadows of barbarism, they must regulate their constant urge to do battle and channel those energies into something more constructive than building large piles of slain foes. In this spirit, the Maledon have embraced the concept of entertainment as a way to put their savage ways behind them. Maledon storytellers, for instance, hold great power in their society, since they are, in essence, the historians and wise men who hold the official record of who has done what.

Another new Maledon warrior tradition is for problems between entire Maledon clans or tribes to be solved through single combat. In this vein, a single gladiator or warrior will represent his tribe or clan, and he will settle the dispute in an open duel with a similar opponent from the rival tribe or clan. Such "grudge matches" are witnessed by the rest of society, and are a public means of settling disputes as well as providing some blood and guts entertainment.

Maledons have also embraced music in a big way and have designed a number of kata-like dances to go along with them. This is a tradition known as *wardancing*, and it is fast becoming a hallmark of Maledon society. Wardancing is more than just dancing, however. When multiple Maledons get together for a

wardance, the event becomes a form of musical storytelling. Sometimes these wardances are mere artistic self-expression. Other times, they are meant to make a public statement of some kind, from celebrating a victory to a political statement, a gesture of defiance or approval, or a means of showing public support or acknowledgment of a warrior or leader.

Despite all this, there are those Maledons who resist this cultural development. They see it as a softening of the Maledon warrior way, and they will have nothing to do with it. Such Maledons always are men of arms equal to a Knight, and they tend to live outside of the rest of Maledon society or as a dissident group within it. Ether way, Maledons are slowly gravitating into two different cultures - one that remembers how glorious it was to revel in the savagery of the battlefield, and one that wishes to forge a different and more cultivated future out of the bloodshed of the past. Neither path is right or wrong. They are just separate destinies shared by a single people. Whether this will cause the Maledons to war with each other or to develop into separate parallel societies has yet to be seen.

Though Maledons tend to live amongst themselves in the Northern Mountain Lowlands and Midlands, they also might be found living in racially mixed communities. This is especially true of "civilized" Maledons. "Barbaric" Maledons might also associate with outsiders, only they tend to be more aggressive, quick to settle disputes through combat and a little tougher to deal with thanks to their willingness to pick a fight with anybody for no particular reason.

Alignment: Any. Maledons are evenly distributed between good, selfish and evil alignments. All Maledons are violent, aggressive creatures. How aggressive and violent depends on whether or not they strive to be part of a new "civilized" culture or not, regardless of alignment.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 4D6, P.P.: 4D6, P.E.: 4D6, P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 5D6.

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 20 plus those gained by O.C.C. and skills.

Natural A.R.: 13; Maledons have a tough, scaly hide that serves as exceptional armor. Curiously, Maledon hides have never been successfully stripped off a carcass, tanned and turned into armor. It seems there is just no way to turn these hides into lasting clothing, something Maledons themselves are grateful for. They would have welcomed the fight resulting from other humanoids looking to harvest the Maledon people, but at the same time, facing such a genocidal threat is enough to make even the most bloodthirsty warrior balk.

Horror Factor: 10

Average P.P.E.: 1D6 or by O.C.C.

O.C.C.S Available: "Civilized" Maledons may pick from Mercenary, Ranger, Gladiator, Vagabond, and Scholar (the latter being the "storyteller" and always has the skills Public Speaking, Mime, Dance, Play Musical Instrument: Drums and Sticks among those selected). A Vagabond is also likely to know dance and at least one musical instrument, along with a number of physical, wilderness and W.P. skills. A tiny percentage are Shamans, Priests, Warrior Monks or a Psychic O.C.C. (see Psionics for the latter).

Maledon barbarians who cling to the "old warrior ways" may pick from the O.C.C.s of Knight, Long Bowman, Ranger, Assassin and Gladiator. A tiny percentage are Druids or Psychic O.C.C.s.

Magic and psychic O.C.C.s are generally avoided by both, and Thieves are looked down upon as treacherous scavengers usually cast out and banned from Maledon society.

Natural Abilities: Maledons have acute nightvision (500 feet/152 m), and take no damage from normal fire and cold (half damage from magical fire and cold). They also heal twice as fast as humans.

Natural Fighting Ability: In addition to whatever formal, Hand to Hand combat training Maledons undertake, their natural fighting skills provide the following bonuses. These bonuses and abilities apply regardless of the path they take in life.

+1 attack per melee at levels 3, 8 and 13.

+1 on initiative at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14.

+1 to disarm or entangle at levels 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15.

+1 to pull punch at levels 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15.

+1 to roll with punch, fall and impact at levels 2, 4, 8, 12 and 14.

Automatic dodge ability at level six; can dodge without using up a melee attack/action. Roll D20 as usual to see if the dodge is successful or not as usual.

Exceptional balance: 60% +2% per level of experience.

Jump 20 feet (6.1 m) high or lengthwise from a standing position; increase by 50% with a running start.

Knockout/stun on a roll of Natural 19 or 20.

Judo-style throw/flip: Victim takes 2D4 damage, loses initiative and one melee attack.

Attacks Per Melee: As per O.C.C., corresponding combat skills and natural fighting ability as noted above.

Damage: Maledon claws (hands and feet) inflict 2D6 damage. Their elbow and knee spurs (see Physical Appearance, below) inflict 2D6+3. A tail lash inflicts 2D6+3. A bite inflicts 2D4 damage. Head butts do 1D6. Apply any damage bonuses from high P.S. attribute and applicable combat skills to all of the above except for the bite attack.

Maledons absolutely love the thrill of bare-handed combat, and they often forego using other weapons. When they do "resort to steel," as they like to call it, they almost always use beautifully crafted long swords of exceptional make (they employ Dwarven, Kobold or Jotan smiths if available), even though they can usually handle numerous melee weapon skillfully.

Bonuses: See Natural Fighting ability.

Magic: As a rule, none.

Psionics: Standard, except if a Maledon has psionic potential, he is either a Master Psionic or he has no psionic powers at all. When rolling for random psionic ability, *any* psionic potential determined means the Maledon is a Master Psychic. This means if any *non-Psychic O.C.C.* is chosen the character suffers the usual skill penalties from being a "Master Psionic," unless the character selects one of the Psychic O.C.C.s (any are acceptable).

Average Life Span: 60 years, though most "traditional" Warrior Maledons live for only 25 or 30.

Habitat: Currently, primarily the Northern Mountains and the interior of the Land of the Damned. They were swept up and put in the region with the other misanthropes until they could learn to control their violent natures and become social and civilized. Legend has it that when that day comes, the civilized Maledons will be visited by one or more Gods of Light

(most think it will be **Thoth** and members of his pantheon) to lead them to the outside world. The current **Maledons** believe they are close to achieving that objective and expect the gods to come within the next two generations. Maybe sooner! If the Maledons break free of the region, they are likely to feel most at home in the Great Northern Wilderness (likely allies to the Wolfen who share similar dreams concerning civilization), the Land of the **South-Winds,** the Baalgor Wastelands, and the southern reaches of the Old Kingdom. Getting that far south would require a long and trying migration, however, but given the toughness of these creatures, they could probably make it. Their greatest challenge, however, would come as they moved past the invasion and monster-paranoid Eastern Territory and Western Empire, where frightened fanners or scouts would undoubtedly report the presence of a large "monster army" marching south. Unless migrating Maledons were very careful, they could easily accidentally provoke a major armed conflict with a human nation.

Languages: Maledons speak an odd dialect of **Dragonese/Elven** (92%), and those who hear it find it strange but understandable. Their language seems more like the ancient tongue of dragons than of Elves.

Enemies: Maledons, being hyper-aggressive folk, get into fights over nothing and hold grudges about it for interminable lengths of time. While the race has no instinctive enemies, nearly half of all Maledons have numerous personal enemies among their various neighbors, and constantly skirmish with demons, Deevils, Harpies, Melech and other wicked and murderous creatures. It is just something these folk can not avoid - wherever they go, they inevitably make enemies.

Allies: The traditional warrior Maledons get along with the cantankerous **Bearmen** of the North as if they are were long lost brothers. The two may argue, wrestle and fight, but seldom to the death and without any of the usual lasting animosity. Most also (grudgingly) respect any warrior or character who proves himself in battle or as a steadfast ally.

The other half of Maledons striving to attain some measure of "civilization" try hard at harnessing their aggressive and violent natures into positive endeavors, and work at getting along with other races. Those who do so can be very trustworthy, dependable and friendly, and as a result, they can be found living or adventuring with virtually any other race in the region, particularly many of the other so-called Dying Races; Gnomes, **Minotaurs,** Bearmen, Skages, **Jeridu,** Ashada and Titans chief among them. They also have a high regard for dragons.

The Maledons simply refuse to get involved with the Minion War at the Great Rift or The Citadel in the north; not even the old traditionalists.

Physical Appearance: Maledons look like small dragons evolved into a more sleek **humanoid** appearance. They have large, dragon-like heads on short, humanoid necks. Their entire body frame is lean and muscular, usually crouching over ever so slightly, as if their entire body is coiled for an attack. Their legs are bent backwards, like a Wolfen, and their feet have three clawed toes. Maledon hands are like human hands with four fingers and an opposable thumb, each tipped with hooked, razor-sharp claws. Claw-like growths extend from the Maledon's elbows and knees, too. These are their "spurs," and they like to use them in unarmed combat. Maledons have a long, reptilian tail, and a low fin rising off their back, running down the length of their spine. Small fins also run down the outside of the Maledon forearm and calves. "Barbaric" Maledons often wear minimal clothing while **"civilized'** Maledons wear loose, simple outfits to heavy armor to supplement their impressive natural protection.

Size: Six to seven feet (1.8 to **2.1** m) tall.

Weight: 250 to 350 **lbs (112.5** to 158 kg).

Notes: **Humanoids** unfamiliar with the Maledons often believe them to be somehow related to dragons or sometimes mistake them for real dragons who have used their power of metamorphosis to look less threatening and more human. Even though this is not the case (that is, nobody has *proven* they are related to dragons), wily Maledons often will capitalize on these sentiments anyway, using the misunderstanding to manipulate enemies to their advantage for as long as the ruse will last.

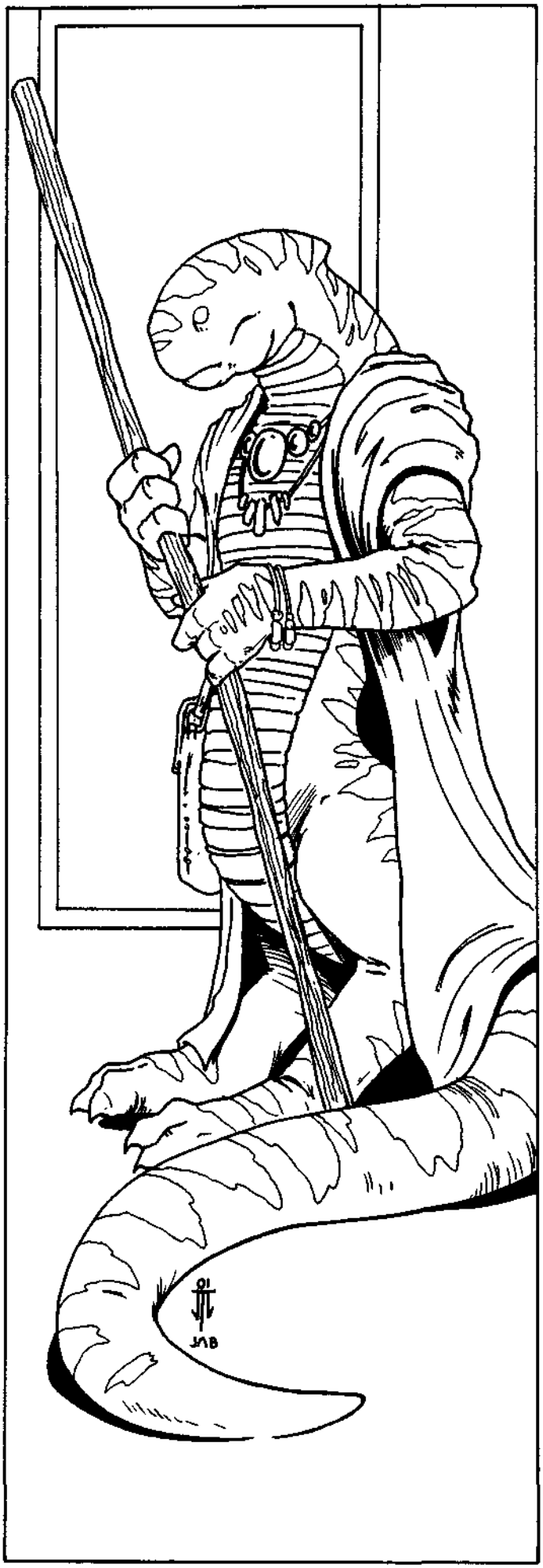
The wild, eclectic fighting style of Maledons makes them perfect for gladiatorial combat. Should any Maledons get out of the Northern Mountains and make it to the Western Empire, they will find that fighting as a freelance gladiator will probably make them a fast fan favorite. Popular Western gladiators, as it is well known, can make incredible fortunes over a relatively short career, just like any other professional athlete.

Skage

Skages are simple yet powerful creatures brought to this world by the Old Ones to serve as slave stock. A docile people, the Skages were hardly suited for war, so the Old Ones worked overtime to brainwash and modify these people into vicious killers. It didn't really work, however, and shortly after the Chaos War went into high gear, the Skages fell away from their dark masters and joined the Alliance of Light.

During the war, well over half the Skage population perished, and in the millennia that followed, these creatures did not fare much better. Though they possess great power, they lack the killer instinct needed to survive in a place like the Land of the Damned. Slowly and surely, the Skages have been pushed out of the interior region and into the Northern Mountains, where they reside to this day. Currently, fewer than 10,000 Skages are thought to inhabit the mountains, and their numbers decline even further every generation. A big reason for this is simple numbers. The Skages, which are asexual, lay a clutch of 4-6 eggs every 25 years. The eggs take exactly one year to hatch, and the Skage young require close tending by their parent for another two years before they reach physical maturity. They don't reach mental, emotional or psionic maturity for another six or seven years. It is during this time that most Skages are weeded out, since they lack the trademark psychic powers that they rely on for defense.

Skages are easy-going and friendly, quick to trust others and eternally optimistic, even when they are experiencing extreme hardship. Lore has it that Skages go to their deaths with a smile, regardless of their circumstances. This is what really separates them from most other creatures of the Land of the Damned. To them, there is a ray of light in everything, even the worst place in the world. For those who can appreciate this most rare mentality, the Skage way of looking at things is in itself a refreshing



blast of hope, for if the Skages, who face certain extermination, can keep seeing the bright side of things, then maybe goodness and hope has not entirely abandoned the Land of the Damned. Maybe, just maybe, there is reason to believe that one can survive and triumph over the forces of evil and hostility. And maybe, if other races like the Maledons and **Minotaurs** band together and learn to live in unity, they can stop or reverse all of their extinction and serve as the model for others. It is an optimist's dream, to be sure, but as far as the Skages are concerned, there is no other way to think. Life is just too precious, even under the worst circumstances, even at the end of the world, even in the Land of the Damned. Presumably, this is why the Gods of Light let these gentle beings choose to live here.

Skages are fairly weak and ungainly creatures, unable to move quickly or gracefully, and unlikely to stand up well to repeated physical punishment. But what they lack in physical power, they more than make up for in *psychic* ability. Every adult has psychic abilities at least on par with most Psi-Mystics and even some Mind Mages. A gift they use expertly to keep attackers at bay. Were Skages an aggressive race, they could certainly forge an incredible empire. However, they lack the urge to conquer or enslave others, and so those surviving today live a holdout life, settling into whatever safe havens they can find and living a quiet, primitive existence punctuated by the occasional attempt by some monster or other hostile creature to slaughter them.

Skages have cultivated a vast and deep knowledge of other races and cultures, with particular expertise in the Dying Races and the Minion Races. They also command a deep knowledge of what goes on in the rest of the region, so for anybody looking for a crash course in the Land of the **Damned,** one need look no further than recruiting some Skage help. These kind folks are usually all too happy to give it for little or nothing in return. They are one of the few folks who genuinely enjoy helping others in this part of the world. That is the Skage way. Hopefully, it will not pass from this world.

Alignment: Any, but usually Principled (35%), Scrupulous (30%), Unprincipled (15%), or Anarchist (10%). Evil Skages are rare, but not unheard of.

Attributes: I.Q.: **3D6,** M.E.: 3D6+3, M.A.: 3D6+3, P.S.: 2D6, P.P.: 2D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 2D6.

Hit Points: P.E.+1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: Only those provided by O.C.C. and skills.

Natural A.R.: Not applicable.

Horror Factor: None.

Average P.P.E.: 2D6 or by O.C.C.

I.S.P.: M.E.x3, **+10** per each additional level of experience.

O.C.C.S Available: Druid, Shaman, Monk (any, but most lean toward the Scholastic Monk; see the *Old Ones* ***sourcebook*****),** Entertainer O.C.C.s (Bard, Juggler, etc.), **Wizard,** Warlock, Merchant, Scholar, or Vagabond. Psychic O.C.C.s are not available but all Skages have a set of instinctive psionic powers.

Natural Abilities: See psionic powers.

Attacks Per Melee: By O.C.C. and corresponding skills.

Damage: By punch, kick, weapon, spell, or psionic power.

Bonuses: +3 to save vs psionic attacks, +5 to save vs possession, **+1** to save vs magic, and +2 to save vs poison and disease.

Magic: By O.C.C. only.

Psionics: All Skages have the psionic powers of Empathy, Sense Evil, Total Recall, Electrokinesis, Hydrokinesis, Pyrokinesis, Telekinesis (Super), Telekinetic Force Field and three Healing powers of choice.

Average Life Span: 120 years.

Habitat: Though they currently reside only in the Northern Mountains, Skages could prosper in any temperate region of the Palladium World. They seek to leave the cool northern climes of the Northern Mountains in favor of a milder one.

Languages: Skages instinctively speak and understand Elven, Dwarven, Gobblely and all human tongues.

Enemies: The Old Ones and their minions for defying their will and most evil beings. Many people mistakenly believe that the gentle Skages are weak, cowardly, and unable to defend themselves. However, while they don't go looking for trouble and are kind and peace-loving, Skages will fight to defend themselves, to help/protect others, and to stop evil.

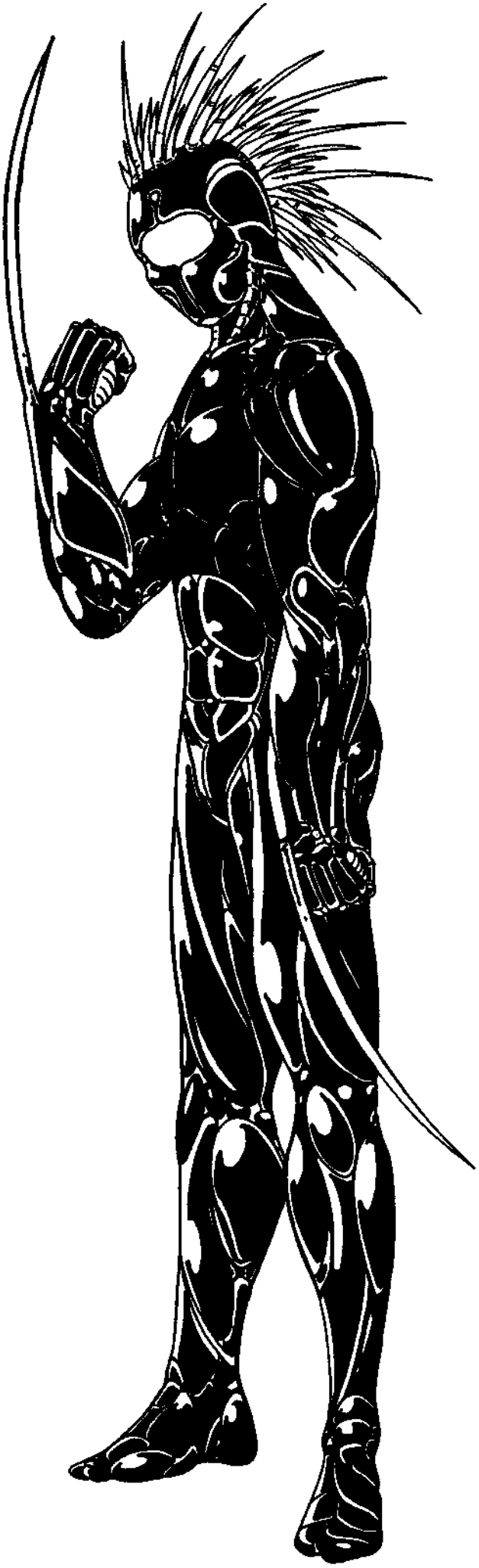
Allies: Accept most people, even monstrous ones if they are of good alignment. Heck, they even accept (although never completely trust) selfish and evil ones provided said individual behaves himself while in their company. Ever the eternal optimist, Skages hope they can show others the way to peace and goodness by their own actions, and therefore will associate with miscreants in the hope they will change their evil ways.

Physical Appearance: Skages resemble tall, thin amphibians with smooth, dark green skin, a ribbed, pale underbelly, long arms and short, reverse-bending legs and wide feet. They have long, thick tails that they stand on for balance, and slightly telescoping necks with smallish heads.

Size: Six to seven feet (1.8 to 2.1 m) tall.

Weight: 180 to 240 lbs (81 to 108 kg).

Notes: Mind Mages have noted that even though Skages possess remarkable psionic abilities, they are unable to receive telepathic communications of any kind. Likewise, any attempt to Mind Bond with a Skage will fail. It is as if the brains of these humanoids have some kind of defense mechanism to prevent outsiders from prying.



Vorloc

Among the Dying Races, Vorlocs are one of the strangest and most alien. They were, like so many of the peoples who live in this region, enslaved by the Old Ones from somewhere else in the Megaverse and brought here to serve as their foot soldiers in the Chaos War. Once enslaved, the Old Ones decided the Vorlocs were hardly fit enough for harsh combat, so they modified the entire race to better fit the image of an expendable front-line soldier. What the Vorlocs once were has been lost and forgotten, even to the Vorlocs themselves. All they know is what they have become: tough, resilient beings capable of killing with ease.

Vorlocs are covered in a thick layer of tough yet flexible plates. This armored exoskeleton protects these people as well as any suit of heavy armor, perhaps even more so. Vorlocs can also lock up their exoskeleton, becoming entirely immobile and almost impossible to harm. In this configuration, they spend much of their time perched atop the summits of the Northern

Mountains where they are immune to the cold and howling wind. Having no need to eat or sleep, some Vorlocs are thought to have been keeping the same silent vigil over their little corner of the region for years, maybe even decades. They sit unmoving like statues, letting snow drift around them, and even letting moss and lichens grow on their bodies. Nearly half of all Vorlocs live this kind of life, standing still for years on end, as if waiting for something that will never arrive. What exactly that thing might be remains a mystery, like so much else about this odd and enigmatic people.

Not all Vorlocs live like that, however. Around one quarter of the total population prefers to interact with fellow humanoids as best they can. Unfortunately for them, however, Vorlocs have no mouth so they must communicate using sign language only. Not even telepathy works on these creatures, who, like the Skages, are telepathically inert.

To those who read a Vorloc empathically, however, there is a huge story to be told. Vorlocs emanate an intense aura of sadness, regret and longing. Nobody ever asked them if they actually *wanted* to be transformed into monstrous fighting machines. The Old Ones just took them and molded them as they saw fit, and somewhere in the process, the Vorlocs not only lost their old identity, but they were made to forget what that identity might once have been. If a psychic were to read a Vorloc's emotions closely enough, he might detect that the Vorlocs themselves are horrified at what they have been turned into. This might explain why so many of them live stock still, perched on mountaintops. Maybe that way they can distance themselves from the world and everything in it — something which to them is nothing more than a huge collection of things that remind them of what they once might have been.

Of the Vorlocs who mingle with other races, most do not seem interested in unraveling the mystery of what they were before their transformation at the hands of the Old Ones. Most would rather travel the world and explore its mysteries instead of their own. Sadly, most folks in the "civilized" world see the Vorlocs as monsters, thanks to their freaky alien appearance. To those willing to put aside first impressions, they might learn that Vorlocs are just like anybody else. They are good, bad and selfish. They are noble and craven, heroic and villainous.

Vorlocs have no society unto themselves, preferring to live solitary lives or to dwell amongst other humanoids. If they do mingle with others, they try to stay away from other Vorlocs. They show no animosity towards each other, but being around one another seems to sadden them terribly, so they prefer to go their separate ways whenever possible.

Alignment: Any, but usually selfish.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 3D6, P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 1D6, Spd.: 3D6.

Hit Points: P.E.+1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 100 plus those gained from O.C.C. and skills.

Natural A.R.: 15. Vorlocs can lock up their armor plates, gaining a natural A.R. of 18, but they are completely immobile, unable to attack or defend during this time.

Horror Factor: 10

Average P.P.E.: 2D6 or by **O.C.C.**

O.C.C.s Available: Any.

Natural Abilities:

Self-Sufficiency: Vorlocs do not need to eat or drink.

Environmental Resiliency: Vorlocs are immune to ordinary heat and cold, and receive only half damage from magical fire and cold.

Climbing: These people naturally have the Climb/Scale Walls skill at 88%. Their scaling skills come from tiny micro-claws in their fingertips and feet that let them hook into substances really well. This ability also gives Vorlocs +3 to save against dropping an object they might be holding on to.

Attacks Per Melee: Two or by O.C.C.

Damage: Retractable fingertip claws: 1D6, retractable forearm claws: 3D6, retractable foot claws: 2D6 (or +2D6 to a kicking attack).

Bonuses: When using their fingertip claws, Vorlocs gain +15% to Pick Locks and Pick Pockets.

Magic: By O.C.C.

Psionics: Standard.

Average Life Span: Unknown. Vorlocs are thought to be extremely long lived, with life spans of at least 300 or 400 years. They might live to be as old as 1,000 or more.

Habitat: Virtually anywhere on this world. Their ability to endure any environment makes them super-survivors. They currently inhabit only the Northern Mountains and show little interest in breaking out to the larger world.

Languages: Vorlocs speak amongst each other with a weird system of clicking sounds. They can learn any humanoid language but they will always speak it at -20% because their vocal cords are so alien.

Enemies: None, per se. Most other races do not even know about them.

Allies: None, per se. Vorlocs are loners and do not often team up with others. Occasionally, one might join an adventuring party, though.

Physical Appearance: Vorlocs are sleek humanoids seemingly clad in a skin-tight suit of tightly interlocking armor plates. The Vorloc's carapace is not bulky and awkward like a turtle's, but is smooth and graceful, allowing for maximum agility, like an insect's carapace. The Vorloc carapace has a metallic sheen to it, and ranges from light blue to dark green. These creatures have a single, large eye in the middle of their head and a ridge of hair-like bristles atop their heads like a Mohawk haircut. They never wear clothes of any kind, not even magic rings, amulets, etc.

Size: Six feet (1.8 m) tall.

Weight: 180 to 240 lbs (81 to 108 kg).

Notes: Vorlocs typically take a long time to warm up to other humanoids. It is not that they are arrogant or anti-social, but they are so used to living alone that they seem to have forgotten as a race how to fit in with larger groups of people. Vorlocs who spend their lives in the company of others often become warm, engaging personalities with great senses of humor and a strong love for promoting good over evil.

Vorloc carapace plates are unable to be harvested for armor making. That hasn't kept more than a few humanoids from trying, though. Vorlocs naturally resent this and will slay *anybody* who tries to do it. A few Vorlocs supposedly have declared a one-person war on any race whose members have ever tried to strip Vorlocs of their natural armor.

Zaranceti

This race of highly aggressive amphibious humanoids was recruited from another world to fight in the Chaos War. Exactly which side brought the Zaranceti to the Palladium World has been lost to history. All anyone knows is that shortly after their introduction to the Chaos War, they suffered devastating losses, making the surviving Zaranceti decide they wanted nothing more to do with it and desert to the deep oceans of the world. There, far from the meddling interference of any surface dwellers, the Zaranceti could build whatever undersea empires they desired. There, in the dark embrace of the bottom of the deep, the Zaranceti would rule a world accessible to few and vulnerable to none. The oceans would have a new master, one that wanted nothing to do with the surface and would not be heard from again until the modern day. Indeed, until very recently, the Zaranceti were all but forgotten to the world's historians and scholars. Even ancient beings such as dragons and Elves had only dim and hazy memories of these people, but soon enough, they would become known once again.

As the Western Empire has returned to prominence, so too have its vast naval fleets. Mercantile and military vessels of every kind range all over the world's oceans in search of new ways in which to further enrich and glorify the dreaded Empire of Sin. And for the most part, the Westerners have been successful. However, the waters to the north of the Empire - the *Sea of Dread* and the *Straits of Thunder* (also called the *Gedorma Strait*, the narrow channel connecting the Inland Sea to the outer oceans) - are hostile maritime wilderness domains where any ship that enters may never return. Over the years, Western sailors have learned that any of these waters 20 or 30 miles (32 to 48 km) beyond the Western Empire's northern coast is an absolute no-go zone. Whatever ship dares enter those waters is immediately attacked and most are sunk by an undersea menace - the Zaranceti.

Commanding sea serpents as if they were war horses, the Zaranceti make mincemeat of even the mightiest war vessels. While sailors are still guessing as to the Zaranceti's motives, the truth is this: there are numerous Zaranceti empires emerging beneath the waves, and all of them, save for one, are deep enough to ignore the passing of surface vessels overhead. The Sea of Dread, however, is a relatively shallow body of water, and the Zaranceti kingdom that lays claim to this territory feels that any naval traffic in these waters is an affront to their territorial sovereignty and must be destroyed. As hostile as they are, the Zaranceti of these waters have no desire to wage war directly upon the Western Empire, so they grant the Empire of Sin a narrow lane of passage hugging their northern shoreline in which ships may pass unmolested. This is why the West has been able to dominate the Straits of Thunder and virtually seal off the Inner Sea from all Eastern commercial and military traffic. (If and when the West decides to wage war upon the East, this stranglehold will come in handy for laying siege to Phi, Lopan and the western coastline of the Eastern Territory.)

In recent years, however, the Zaranceti of the Sea of Dread have decided to expand their underwater domain to the southern shores of the Land of the Damned. The Zaranceti have already established beachheads along the southern valleys of the Northern Mountains and amid the southern islands of the Broken

Horn region. So far, there have been no reports of Zaranceti contact on the islands of Phi and Lopan, or on the Eastern Territory's western coast. But many feel it is only a matter of time.

The Zaranceti themselves are a feudal and militaristic people. They are relentless raiders and warriors for whom all things are an adjunct to life on the battlefield. They are wily and vicious foes, formidable alone and devastating in great numbers. There have been numerous incursions and skirmishes between them and the Kappa kingdoms in the waters of the Sea of Dread, but nothing too serious. For now, at any rate, both undersea people are willing to tolerate each other's existence.

Alignment: Fully 50% of all Zaranceti are of selfish alignment. 33% are of evil alignment (usually Aberrant), and the remaining 17% are of good alignment. Even good Zaranceti tend to have disdain toward surface dwellers, though.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 3D6, P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 3D6 (x5 when swimming).

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6 per level of experience

S.D.C.: 10 + those acquired by O.C.C. and skills.

Natural A.R.: 6

Horror Factor: 8

Average P.P.E.: 2D6 or by O.C.C.

O.C.C.S Available: Any. Zaranceti society is widely diversified, with almost equal representation among every O.C.C. humans pursue.

Natural Abilities:

Underwater Abilities: Though Zaranceti are amphibious and do well on land and water, but they are considerably stronger in their native element, water. When in water (that is, when in a body of water at least 10 feet/3 m deep), Zaranceti enjoy the following bonuses: Their P.S. becomes *Supernatural*, their swimming speed is impressive, and they are +2 to strike, parry and dodge. In addition, all Zaranceti can breathe underwater indefinitely and are instinctive swimmers (98%).

Sea Serpent Rapport: All Zaranceti have a strange knack for communicating with and training any kind of sea serpent. These mammoth creatures are like a combination of a dog and a horse to the Zaranceti, and often will submit to Zaranceti command after just a few weeks of training. Once trained, Zaranceti sea serpents act as a combination guard/attack animal and a steed. Zaranceti frequently use sea serpents to attack the surface vessels of other humanoid races, which is how they enforce their dominion over certain bodies of water. Both the Sea of Dread and the Sea of Despair are known to be major sea serpent hunting grounds which is what may have attracted the Zaranceti to them.

Hydrokinesis: One out of every 50 Zaranceti are gifted individuals who have the psionic power *of Hydrokinesis.* Most impressive, these individuals can use these water-shaping powers at will! Those with the ability to shape water by mental command often rise to high station within Zaranceti society.

Cold Resistance: Used to dwelling in the cold, dark depths of the ocean, Zaranceti are immune to the effects of normal cold, and they take only half damage from magical cold. Despite this, Zaranceti still dislike the cold, and as a result, stick to warmer, shallow waters. Can survive depths of up to one mile (1.6 km).

Attacks Per Melee: As per O.C.C. and Hand to Hand combat skill.

Damage: Claws: 2D4, power claw strike (counts as two attacks): 3D6, bite: 1D6 or by weapon.

Bonuses (in addition to likely attribute and skill bonuses): +1 on initiative, +1 to strike and parry, and +2 to damage.

Magic: By O.C.C. only. Many Zaranceti are Water or Air Warlocks.

Psionics: Standard.

Average Life Span: 75 years.

Habitat: Zaranceti prefer underwater environments, but being amphibians, they can survive indefinitely on land, too. That said, they will steadfastly avoid overly dry areas such as the Baalgor Wastelands or really cold areas, like the Great Northern Wilderness or Bizantium, especially in the wintertime. In the Land of the Damned, Zaranceti are found along the southern coastal lands and Lowlands of the Northern Mountains.

Languages: Zaranceti speak and write an ancient dialect of Elven. They used to use an alien form of hieroglyphics but that has gone by the wayside over the years. Now, those Zaranceti who still use this ancient and dwindling writing employ it more as a form of art than a means of ordinary communication.

Enemies: Everybody! Zaranceti are ultra-aggressive warriors at heart. Even good-aligned Zaranceti are instinctive conquerors and enslavers who earnestly believe that all of the world's oceans are theirs to dominate, and that all surface humanoids secretly wish to destroy them. So far, the most substantial surface contact with these creatures has been along the southern Land of the Damned and Sea of Dread, but if this renegade Zaranceti kingdom enjoys great success there, it might be encouraged to try grabbing territory in other waters and coastlines. Should that happen, all-out war between the Zaranceti and the surface dwellers will surely result.

Allies: None, per se. They might cut deals with land-based humanoids willing to pay them homage or bring them items they want. Otherwise, they are content to raid and terrorize humanoid settlements within 10 miles (16 km) of any coastline in areas under Zaranceti control. The only exception to this so far are the northern shores of the Western Empire. There, the tall cliffs of those shores (and the Empire's military strength) have discouraged the Zaranceti from mixing it up with the West.

Physical Appearance: Physically, the Zaranceti are smooth-skinned humanoids that look like a highly evolved and distant cousin to some form of fish, shark or amphibian life form. They possess webbed hands and feet, and their heads sport minimal facial features. They are most easily noted for their pale orange skin and wavy, dark orange stripes running down the back half of their body. Their eyes are milky white and almond shaped. Their wide mouths are filled with double rows of short, sharp teeth. They have no visible ears, but possess incredible hearing.

Size: Five to six feet (1.5 to 1.8 m)

Weight: 150 to 220 lbs (68 to 99 kg)

Notes: Zaranceti on land are very fond of wearing light studded leather or chain mail armor and wielding large swords, daggers and spears. In the water though, they tend to wear heavy

armor (which is lighter for them underwater). Rumor has it they have developed a kind of blow gun weapon that can fire underwater without penally. Rumor also has it that the chain mail they wear on land and underwater is exceptionally fine, weighing virtually nothing while providing superior protection to what normal chain mail provides (A.R. 14 and 55 S.D.C.). If this is true, how the **Zaranceti** forge such armor remains a mystery that any Dwarf, Kobold or human **metalsmith** would kill to acquire.

Minions of Darkness

In the darkest depths of the Great Rift, the fabric of space and time is so terribly stressed and strained that it periodically tears, opening doorways between the Palladium World and other worlds and dimensions. Over the **millennia,** a vast multitude of bizarre creatures have traveled through these doorways, making the Land of the Damned an even greater haven for **freaks** and monstrosities of every kind. For the most part, these doorways are temporary, never staying open for more than a few hours or days, and with the exception of portals to Hades and **Dyval,** seldom to the same world twice. But there are those recurring doorways that do establish contact with the same alien world. Through these special doorways, certain races of hideous creatures have come through the Great Rift year after year, gradually building up a presence of their own in the Land of the Damned. Because these creatures come to this world through the Great Rift, and because they have all somehow involved themselves in the Minion War between Hades and Dyval (usually shanghaied to fight for either side), most *supernatural* inter-dimensional visitors are generally and **generically** referred to as "demons." They are not from Hades, however, nor are they Demons proper, but all have a certain "infernal" nature of pure evil about them that only Demons and Deevils seem to share. In this regard, these supernatural beings are very much kindred spirits to the forces of Hades and Dyval. They are inhuman monsters who delight in tormenting mortals and are often the willing servants and soldiers of Demons and Deevils, alien intelligences, dark gods, sinister **Summoners** and other diabolic creatures. They like their more famous demonic cousins, contribute nothing to the Land of the Damned except for more bloodshed, terror and chaos. They are one more scourge in a land already overflowing with the forces of evil. They **are ...** the Minions of Darkness.

G.M. Note: The Minions of Darkness are also counted among the *Minion Races* of the Old Ones and intended for use only as evil Non-Player Character **(NPC)** monsters and villains, not as player characters.

There are a total of 14 new demonic races found in and around the Great Rift. Most are considered alien to the Palladium World and inferior or subservient to the Demons and Deevils already known. In general, these creatures are either content to fight in the Minion War or lack the initiative or organization to break out of the Great Rift area and set up territories of their own, although there are a few elsewhere in the Land of the Damned.

At present, there are a dozen major factions that dominate the course of the Minion War. Six are *Demon Factions* and six are ***Deevil** Factions.* There is no third category, lest one include outsiders who accidentally get drawn into the conflict. One either supports the Demons or the Deevils or stays the hell away from them and the Great Rift. That has not always been the case. Over the last few thousand years, there have been many times in which large and powerful "Minion Factions," third party groups, have risen and virtually taken control of the Great Rift. Most of the time, this starts when a large group of demonic Minions manage to arrive in the Palladium World and are not immediately enlisted or enslaved by the Demon or Deevil armies. Such groups of "free Minions" rarely last for long in the Great Rift, since they are almost always destroyed or absorbed by the two dominant Faction armies within days of arrival. However, once in a great while, a Minion of special leadership and ability arrives and rallies a large number of his fellows into a formidable independent army. When this happens, it sends the Demon and Deevil Factions into a tailspin. To them, the very thought of a third Minion Faction is an affront to their own power and evil authority. Like sharks on a thrashing fish, Demon and Deevil alike fall upon the upstart Minion army, intent on destroying it at all costs.

The thing is, if a third Minion Faction is able to make it far enough to form a whole army, then chances are it has enough tricks up its collective sleeve to resist the outright destruction surrounding Demon and Deevil Factions have planned. More often than not, newly formed Minion armies fare very well against their Demon and Deevil enemies, turning the Minion War into a three or even four camp affair. These new military factions tend to be better organized, better motivated, and have the advantage of enemies who are grossly overconfident and easily duped. Combined, this usually means that Minion armies deal the Demon and Deevil armies several stinging defeats and may even inspire mortal and lesser minions to defect from their Demon or Deevil masters and join them. However, no third party has ever been able to maintain a sustained force. Attrition becomes a huge factor, because these alien supernatural beings have great difficulty getting reinforcements, while the Demon and Deevil legions seem truly endless. Thus, it is only a matter of time before upstart third parties and usurpers are squashed and the status quo is restored. In the end, Minion armies either see the writing on the wall and disperse before their final destruction, or they make a heroic (but futile) stand and face their enemies head-on one last time before they are annihilated. In the alternative, the rebels may choose Demon or Deevil, surrender to them and swear their undying service to one side or the other. Most of the time, the Factions will accept such a resolve with the hope that this new turn of events will give them the advantage over their eternal rival.

This is the way Minion armies have risen and fallen for thousands of years. However, there are rumors afoot in the Great Rift that a Minion army like no other has recently formed. This army consists of huge numbers of Minion soldiers all driven to a single goal: conquering the Great Rift and expelling the Demons and Deevils from it forever to claim it, and the Land of the Damned for themselves. This supposed army has not yet made its presence known, however, and many Faction Lords refuse to believe it even exists. Still, most infernal foot soldiers have

heard one of a hundred different rumors circulating about this phantom army, and as far as they are concerned, it is only a matter of time before it explodes onto the battlefields of the Minion War.

Demonic Minions of Darkness

Advocate	Kokossan
Buragh	Lasher
Contemplator	Rabbler
The Faceless	Skreed
Gordian	Soulhunter
Horga	Ur-Tosk
Kaadj	Wrathmonger

Advocate

Advocates are the ultimate tempters, enticers and enablers of evil, easily the equal or better of the infamous *Devilkin Deevils*. These are the fiends who get fools to sell their souls and carry out the dirty work of others, even if they know not why. Advocates are the kind of evildoers who do not look the part, which is what makes them so dangerous. To the casual observer, these infernal and shape-shifting creatures merely seem like beautiful humans, Dwarves, Elves or whatever other form they choose to take. However, once one falls prey to the wiles of these insidious corrupters, then do the Advocates reveal their true natures as merciless taskmasters, vindictive tricksters and cruel overlords.

Advocates are themselves cunning servants of greater evil, specializing in getting mortals to sign over their souls to a Demon or Deevil Lord, alien intelligence or dark god in return for some favor. In this regard, Advocates act as *middlemen*, a palatable spokesperson for an infernal lord to whom an unsuspecting individual might be enticed to sell their soul for fleeting power. The Advocates often act in this role as freelancers, getting paid well by their patron lord for their services. These devious creatures are active all over the Palladium World. Those involved in the Minion War are unfortunate fellows who happened to get "popped in" via a dimensional portal, get enlisted by one side or the other, and have to make the best of things. Nearly one in every ten Advocates who come to the Palladium World make a mistake somewhere along the way and end up in the Great Rift. Once there, they get pressed into service for one of the Demon or Deevil lords waging the Minion War, and end up spending their time on this world as the recruiters of the conflict, specializing in enticing non-infernals into joining the Minion War on either side. Less frequently, they also act as spies who specialize in getting enemy troops from other Factions to defect or give up their Faction's secrets. It is not the work Advocates prefer, but by the time they are cornered and pressured by one Faction or the other, they really have no alternative (lest they be tortured and destroyed). There is no refusing the Faction Lords of the Great Rift. Advocates *could* leave their predicament, but their whole reason for being is to deal with the Lords of Hades and Dyval. If an Advocate disrespects a Lord of the Great Rift, they can be sure they will *never* get the chance to broker souls again. And in some cases, the Lord they offended might come after them looking for blood.

Advocates are generally noncombatants in any conflict, preferring to be the movers and shakers behind the scenes, eliciting

coups, betrayal, double-dealing, revenge, genocide and a host of atrocities. The grit and cruelty of front-line battle is beneath the Advocates, or so they think, and thus, they are scarcely found in the worst killing zones of the conflict. However, they can take care of themselves and possess a terrifying array of magic and psionic powers as well as weapon skills to defend themselves.

The shady nature of their work means infernal Advocates often find themselves serving forces (demon kingdoms, armies, secret societies, cults, etc.) that directly oppose each other. Strangely, Advocates seem to have no sense of jealousy or betrayal ("what we do is always business, never personal"), so when they meet with other Advocates who might have worked for an enemy side, they hold nothing against one another. In fact, most Advocates are sickeningly polite, cordial and friendly towards each other, regardless of their circumstances, and regardless of the fact that these creatures almost never work or adventure with each other for any substantial length of time.

Actually, for those who can avoid getting caught in the middle of the Minion War, the Land of the Damned offers a lot of opportunity for the scheming Advocates. There are countless disquieted souls and desperate people looking for power, revenge or escape who will at least listen to what an infernal Advocate has to say, and for these treacherous beings, getting a person to listen is half the battle. Being who and what they are, Advocates know scores of Witches, Priests of Darkness and many of those who worship demons and dark gods. In fact, Witches are the only beings who can recognize an Advocate regardless of what form the shape-changer has taken. Then again, an Advocate can instantly recognize a Witch, even if he was not the one who brokered that individual's "pact."

Note: Considered to be a lesser demon who will work for Demons, Deevils and any power of darkness.

Alignment: Miscreant, Diabolic and Aberrant. The most successful Advocates are Aberrant, because their odd code of honor gives them the veneer of trustworthiness.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6+10, M.E.: 3D6+6, M.A.: 3D6+10, P.S.: 3D6 (Supernatural), P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 3D6 (but can assume a beauty up to 24 when shape-changed), Spd.: 3D6.

Hit Points: P.E.x3.

S.D.C.: 1D6x10 +18.

Natural A.R.: 10

Horror/Awe Factor: 15. When they first cozy up to their victims, Advocates receive Awe Factor. When their true nature is revealed, that Awe Factor turns into Horror Factor.

P.P.E.: 4D4x10. I.S.P.: 3D4xlO.

Equivalent O.C.C.: Wizard.

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+3.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), see the invisible, metamorphosis at will (human, humanoid and animal; but not giants larger than 10 feet/3 m tall), dimensional teleport (64%), resistant to fire and cold (half damage), impervious to disease, bio-regenerates 2D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per minute (every four melee rounds), and magically knows all spoken languages.

Attacks Per Melee: Three by psionics or physical attack or two by spell magic.

Damage: By weapon, spell or psionics. Advocates *never* attack things with their bare hands.

Bonuses (in addition to attribute bonuses): Advocates have +15% to their trust/intimidate ratio, in addition to the percentage afforded them by their M.A. score, and are +5 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: All Wizard spells level 1-4 plus they get to select another 1D6+4 spells total from levels 5-8.

Psionics: Advocates automatically have the following psionics: Commune with Animals (6), Dispel Spirits (10), Empathy (4), Telepathy (4), Total Recall (2), See Aura (6), and Alter Aura (2), as well as the Super Psionic abilities of Empathic Transmission (6), Mind Block Auto-Defense (special), Group Mind Block (22), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Induce Nightmare (15), Invisible Haze (30) and Mind Bond (10).

Average Life Span: 300 years. Considered a lesser demon.

Physical Appearance: When traveling in the nations and cities of the world, infernal Advocates use their shape-shifting abilities to appear like Elves, handsome humans or whatever race seems most appropriate. When in the company of monsters, or once alone with their "clients," they reveal their true appearance, often to terrifying effect.

They have sharp, angular features but a tall, thin build. Their body appears to consist of nothing but straight lines and angles, though, as if they are some kind of artistic rendering of a humanoid rather than a real humanoid. The nose is long and pointed, the ears are even longer; teeth are small and pointed like those of a piranha. They wear long, flowing robes, sometimes with suits of plate armor built on top of them. They always are seen wearing some kind of headdress, though they absolutely refuse to cover up their face; one can not tempt victims if one can not look them in the eye. Advocates have chalk-white skin and pale blue eyes. Many of them are bald; the remainder have sparse hair, often tied into a topknot or worn as a floppy Mohawk.

Size: Six feet (1.8 m), but can shape change up to 10 feet (3 m) tall.

Weight: 150 to 180 lbs (68 to 81 kg).

Buragh

These stout, ugly humanoids commonly enter the Minion War as expendable front-line soldiers and all around suicide troopers. They possess great strength and endurance as well as a love for inflicting terrible pain upon their opponents. In battle, they can often be found wielding a wide assortment of terrifying weapons, such as oversized meat cleavers, rusty anchors, large clunky chains with spiked balls on the end, and swords with jagged, irregular blades.

But the Buragh's best weapon is the fact they are walking poison factories. The Buragh's skin is covered in a thick, sticky slime that is a powerful contact poison infecting anybody the creature touches. Should the slime be *injected* into a victim (such as entering the victim's bloodstream directly on the surface of a claw strike), the poison becomes considerably more effective. Buragh often run their weapons along their own flesh to envenom them, and were the Buragh not such incredibly grouchy creatures, other humanoids might be able to do the same. However, the monsters refuse to supply poison to any other creature, including fellow demons, so the only way for others to capitalize on the skin slime is to scrape the stuff off a

freshly slain Buragh. For 6D6 minutes after a Buragh dies, its skin poison remains viable; after that, the slime dries up and loses all potency.

Just as dangerous is the toxic fume the Buragh emit through their pores. This poison cloud enshrouds the Buragh in a hazy toxic malaise that infects anybody who draws within striking range of these creatures. This makes the Buragh a hot commodity for front-line combat, and massed Buragh charges are a terrifying and deadly ploy used by both sides of the Minion War. Since the Buragh themselves are immune to their poisons, these creatures are best used against other creatures whose only option when confronted with these horrors is to engage them with magic, missile fire, or at the end of a long spear, pole arm or pike, or to withdraw from the field.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the Buragh is their unreasoning fear of sea water. It is believed that salt water has a corrosive effect on these creatures not unlike acid, but the Buragh are in no mood to let anybody prove it. These creatures absolutely refuse to approach within 10 miles (16 km) of any body of salt water larger than a birdbath. In terms of the Minion War, this keeps any Buragh deployments away from the western edge of the Great Rift, where it feeds into the Sea of Despair. For both sides of the Minion War, which have become so dependent on Buragh charges, new strategies must be formed and additional Minion Races employed to prevent each other from breaking through the western end of the front and storming their enemies' lines elsewhere. (Note: Actually sea water neutralizes their poisonous slime, effectively washing it away and prevents the Buragh from emitting their toxic cloud, both for 2D6x10 minutes upon having half or more of their body dowsed with salt water. Ordinary rain, snow and fresh water have no adverse effect on the monster.)

Note: Considered a brutish lesser demon who usually side with Deevils.

Alignment: Miscreant or Diabolic
Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6+8, M.E.: 1D6+8, M.A.: 1D6+8, P.S.: 1D6+30 (supernatural), P.P.: 1D6+12, P.E.: 2D6+12, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 2D6xlO.
Hit Points: P.E.x3.
S.D.C.: 2D4x10.
Natural A.R.: 11
Horror Factor: 14
P.P.E.: 1D4x10.
Equivalent O.C.C.: Mercenary Warrior or Thief (pick one; can be either).
Average Level of Experience: 1D4+2.
Natural Abilities:

Poison Slime: The Buragh's body is covered with a toxic slime that causes 4D6 damage to anybody who touches it.

If the goo is injected into a victim (as on a claw strike or an envenomed blade) then the poison does the same damage, but it keeps doing it for an additional 1D4 melee rounds after the initial envenomation. Those who save vs lethal poison (14 or higher) take only half damage!

Poison Fumes: Anybody getting within 10 feet (3 m) of a Buragh must save vs lethal poison (14 or higher) or take 2D6 damage, the eyes water profusely, and they suffer such incredible nausea that for the next 2D4 melee rounds (or as

long as one is in the fume radius), they will be -4 on initiative,-4 to strike, parry and dodge, and lose one melee attack/action per round. Skill performance is -15% and any smell/scent powers are scrambled and useless for 2D4 melee rounds.

Poison Immunity: Poisons of any kind do no damage to the Buragh. Likewise, they are incapable of getting sick at all and can eat rotten food. They routinely display this by dining on the bloated and festering corpses that litter the battlefield. Eating parasites and Tomb Worms off dead bodies is a Buragh delicacy.

Attacks Per Melee: Five; disregard the attacks provided from any Hand to Hand skill.

Damage: Buraghs have Supernatural strength, but rather than fighting with their bare hands/claws, they prefer to use some kind of terrifying weapon, typically with gruesome, jagged edges. Any of these weapons (which themselves have a Horror Factor of 10 thanks to their rusty, jagged, blood-encrusted appearance) will inflict 1D4x10 damage. Should these implements be looted and used by a non-Buragh, two problems will come up. First, the weapons will be impregnated with Buragh slime, so the user will take contact poison damage (4D6) every round they hold it with bare hands. Even if they use gloves, the chances of them getting some slime on themselves at some point per round is still pretty good. Second, these weapons will be very heavy, unbalanced and awkward to use by anybody without Supernatural strength (-3 to strike, -4 to parry for those with ordinary P.S.).

Bonuses (in addition to probable attribute and combat skills): +2 to strike, +1 to parry. Buraghs *never* dodge or try to pull their punch.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Physical Appearance: Buraghs are stout, ugly humanoids who shine from the thick layer of toxic slime covering their bodies. They have thin, stringy black hair, scowling faces, large flat teeth, pug noses, and ominous solid black eyes with small orange or yellow pupils, and are always enshrouded in noxious fumes and covered in green slime. It is said that the breath of these creatures can wilt flowers.

Size: Six feet (1.8 m) tall.

Weight: 280-350 lbs (126 to 157.5 kg).

Contemplator

Contemplators are sullen giants who are busy lashing out at others when they are not considering self-destruction and pondering the wickedness of their ways. They are unique among the demonic races in that their viciousness is matched only by their repentance and self-loathing for their inability to change their base behavior.

Indeed, Contemplators are an extremely bipolar race, constantly swinging between furious spells of aggression and cruelty and long periods of melancholy in which the monsters lament the destruction, pain and death they have just caused. As warriors, Contemplators are an unreliable force, absolutely lethal sometimes and lethargic and ineffective other times. As a result, this race is recruited into the Minion War with far less fervor than other infernals. Oftentimes, Faction Lords will actually release their Contemplators from service if they perform

poorly for a long period of time. As a result, numerous free **Contemplators** can be found roaming the Land of the Damned and western side of the Northern Mountains.

Whether free or beholden, Contemplators usually travel in groups of four to six and are alert and deadly when they are in their aggressive mode (which lasts for about a month at a time; back and forward swings the pendulum of their moods). When they swing to their melancholy phase (which also lasts about a month), they separate and go off to mope alone. After they return to their aggressive state of mind, they roam about solo until they find fellow Contemplators or other lesser demons, at which point, they join forces and raise hell, torturing, pillaging, and slaughtering any who get in their way or just annoy them, and engage in wanton destruction. This continues until their melancholy returns and the **bipolarity** cycle continues.

While Contemplators are in their melancholy **mood,** they become very docile and emotional, even crying over the slightest act of meanness, injustice and wrongdoing, let alone acts of depravity or murder. Fully 50% of all melancholy Contemplators fall so deep into depression that they can not eat or drink, have no desire to do anything (even move about or speak to others) and can barely lift a finger to defend themselves. They are just too deeply absorbed in self-loathing and regret to interact with others. By the end of their melancholy period, these depressed individuals stand a **01-06%** chance of committing suicide - something that forever keeps thinning out the Contemplator ranks and controls their numbers.

While racked with melancholy and depression, Contemplators are often willing to help out mortals and other beings to try to make amends for their past (and soon to come, future) sins. Most often, this means the Contemplator will warn passers-by of danger ahead, traps and war zones, sometimes even offering sensitive intelligence regarding the Minion War. For this reason, Demon and Deevil Lords never divulge major secrets to Contemplators, since they know they will eventually spill whatever secrets they know. A repentant Contemplator may also offer assistance in the way of physical labor, carrying supplies like a pack mule, helping to fix a fence or barn, dig a ditch, and so forth, but will *not* fight except to defend *itself(sad* no one else).

Especially persuasive or trustworthy characters might even be able to get melancholy Contemplators to join them on a quest or crusade of some sort. For the Contemplator, this is a rare opportunity to make up for its past misdeeds. However, the creature will only go on such journeys until its melancholy phase ends. Once they return to their aggressive mode, they will betray or lash out at their traveling companions without mercy or remorse. Moreover, while still melancholy, the gloomy, maudlin beast will be a total downer, constantly pointing out the worst case scenarios and lamenting and sobbing over every misfortune, obstacle and setback. When it is time to fight, the demon will find a safe corner to hide in and cry for the sorry fate of its companions.

Some psychics are convinced that Contemplators could be made to stay within their melancholy phase forever, making these cursed demons a sanguine and **nonlethal** (albeit incredibly annoying and counter-productive) creature. Granted, their suicide rate would certainly increase, and no gloomy Contemplator is very helpful or fun to be around, since they spend most of their time immersed in self-pity, but that would be preferable to the mad-dog killers they become when they are aggressive.

Note: Considered a lesser demon, even a sub-demon, and usually sides with Deevils.

Alignment: Miscreant or Diabolic.
Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6+4, M.E.: 1D6+2, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 6D6 (Supernatural), P.P.: 3D6+3, P.E.: 3D6+6, P.B.: **2D6,** Spd.: 6D6 (running; triple that when flying).
Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +60.
S.D.C.: 3D4xlO.
Natural A.R.: 12
Horror Factor: 12
P.P.E.: **2D4x10** +P.E. attribute number.
I.S.P.: 5D6 x2.
R.C.C. Skills: Basic Math (82%), Intelligence (80%), Interrogation Techniques (60%), Track **Humanoids** (70%), Land Navigation (85%), Swim (80%), Climb **(70%/60%),** Dance (80%), Demon and Monster Lore (90%), Faerie Lore (60%) and two W.P. of choice.
Natural Abilities: Nightvision 200 feet (61 m), see the invisible, winged flight, immense strength and resiliency, turn invisible at will, dimensional **teleport** (26%), fire resistant (magic fire does half damage), magically knows all languages, and bio-regenerates 2D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per melee round.
Attacks Per Melee: Five physical attacks or two magical attacks (2 and 1 when depressed).
Damage: Supernatural strength or spell effect.
Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +2 on initiative, +6 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, +2 to disarm or entangle, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to save vs psionics and any form of mind control, +4 to save vs Horror Factor and impervious to disease.
Melancholy Note: Reduce all bonuses and skill performance levels by half (round down) when depressed, and becomes a timid hypochondriac.
Magic: Select a total of 3D6 Wizard spells from levels **1-5.**
Psionics: Possess Empathy, Telepathy, **Empathic** Transmission and 1D6 Sensitive psionic powers of choice.
Physical Appearance: Contemplators appear as huge, lanky **humanoids** with great leather wings coming off their backs. They are entirely naked and often spend most of their time sitting all crouched up with their head down. Their heads have exaggerated features - big ears, eyes, nose and mouth. They are hairless creatures, and their flesh ranges from a sickly pale green to a slate gray. They are sometimes confused with Gargoyles (who hate Contemplators, by the way).
Size: 14 to 16 feet (4.3 to 4.9 m).
Weight: 1,000 to 1,500 **lbs** (450 to 675 kg).

The Faceless

These stark and mysterious lords excel at commanding sub-demons, lesser demons and Deevils, and monster races to follow their grand designs. In terms of the Minion war, the Faceless are master planners who often can be found at the front-lines, making split-second tactical and strategic decisions to optimize their force's battlefield potential. While the Faceless are themselves worthwhile warriors, they rarely lead the charge into battle. Rather, they can be found in the rear, sending entire units either to glory or destruction, or lurking in the shadows involved in espionage, sabotage, intelligence and murder.

Where the **Faceless'** drive to plan and plot works against them is when they deal with each other. As relentless opportunists and back **stabbers,** the Faceless are in perpetual competition with each other and other powerful beings, and will gladly betray their fellows to get ahead. This phenomenon is clearly at work in the Minion War, where comparatively large numbers of the Faceless are shanghaied by the various Factions fighting the war, pitting them against other Faceless and tin-plated generals on the opposite side of the battlefield. This gives them an opportunity to test themselves against other Faceless ones, settle grudges and extract bloody retribution for past slights, transgressions and losses between them. As a result, scarcely any Faceless in this world or anywhere can be trusted to work with each other and in all likelihood, will seize upon any opportunity to undermine, embarrass, trick or do each other in.

As far as the Lords of the Minion War are concerned, Faceless are worth their weight in gold for their leadership and organization abilities. But their incessant infighting, inability to trust *anyone* and their cutthroat sense of ambition makes them dangerous. Lest a Faceless hatch some plot to overthrow the people he works for, the Lords of the Minion War routinely pit their Faceless lackeys against each other so they are too busy locked in personal rivalry to think about trying to seize power for themselves. That the Faceless can be manipulated like this shows that they are destined never to be true overlords themselves. They will always be the lieutenants and pawns of other powerful beings despite their aspirations to the contrary.

Note: Considered a greater demon. Will work with one or both sides of a conflict. In the Minion War they answer to both Demon and Deevil masters.

Alignment: Miscreant or Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6+6, M.E.: 2D6+8, M.A.: 3D6+8, P.S.: 3D6 (supernatural), P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 3D6 (despite their not having a face), Spd.: 4D6.

Hit Points: **2D4x10** +P.E. attribute number.

S.D.C.: **1D6x10+32.**

Natural A.R.: 12

Horror Factor: 13

P.P.E.: **3D6x10** +P.E. attribute number.

I.S.P.: **1D6x10+72.**

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills: All Wizard O.C.C. abilities, Basic Math (98%), Lore: Magic (80%), Lore: Demons and Monsters (90%), Literate in **Dragonese/Elven** (90%), Streetwise (80%), Surveillance (70%), Interrogation (65%), Prowl (60%), Climb (90/80%) and five Espionage Skills and three W.P. of choice.

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+4.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 300 feet (91.5 m), see the invisible, turn invisible at will, dimensional teleport (48%), fire and cold resistant (magic fire and cold do half damage), magically knows and speaks all languages and bio-regenerates at a rate of 2D6 points per melee round.

Attacks Per Melee: Five by physical attack or psionics or two by magic.

Damage: By spell or psionics or weapon. Faceless do not like brawling.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +4 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +4 to save vs magic, +3 to save vs psionics and +6 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: Faceless know all Wizard spells, levels 1-4, plus Calling, Domination, Escape, Mend Cloth, Detect Poison, Magic Pigeon, Memory Bank, Teleport: Lesser, Second Sight, and X-Ray Vision.

Psionics: All Sensitive psionic powers.

Physical Appearance: Faceless are very similar to humans in shape and appearance, except that where they should have a face, their head is merely smoothed over, as if they were somehow sculpted into existence and the sculptor forgot to carve out a face for them. Despite this freakish attribute, the Faceless still somehow exude an air of attractiveness (as reflected by their P.B. and M.A. attributes). They can also see, smell, hear and speak just fine.

Size: Six feet (1.8 m) tall.

Weight: 200 lbs (90 kg).

Gordian

Gordians are grossly potbellied giants whose ugliness and savage exterior is only surpassed by the ugliness and vileness on the inside. Gluttony, extreme cruelty and wanton destruction are their hallmarks among the Minions of Darkness. Scholars have long believed these fierce creatures to be some distant cousin to the Jotan or Gigantes, but in fact, they are a wholly separate species of demonic supernatural creature native to a realm far across the universe from the Palladium World.

Despite their obese, flabby appearance, Gordians are natural born warriors whose lives are spent looking for a conflict to participate in and spoils to devour. Their society is fragmented and tribal, bordering on virtual anarchy. The end result is that Gordians very rarely have leaders amongst themselves and tend toward mob rule in all things. However, they respond strongly to being bossed around by more powerful creatures, which makes them perfect fodder for Greater Demons and Deevils, demonic lords, ancient dragons and other powerful beings, not mention ideal for the Minion War. At the Great Rift there are plenty of Demon and Deevil Lords who rule their legions through threats of force and intimidation, techniques that always get Gordians to snap to attention and follow orders (for the short term, at least).

Unfortunately, Gordians have terrible morale, and are easily frustrated, confused and discouraged. Without constant supervision, any fighting force that incorporates Gordians will be in constant danger of falling apart into a disorganized mob and suffering poor morale and even desertion. The leaders of the Minion War know this and believe Gordians should be kept away from most other troops. This way, the corrosive effect they have on morale is contained to just them. So far, this approach seems to work, and Gordian-only units are seen throughout the Great Rift region. Most often, they are sent into combat alone with other units of mixed races coming in after them. Gordians do not seem to mind being sent in as a front-line unit - charging in against the thickest of opposition is the sort of thing they live for. Gordians are neither skilled or discreet. They tend to win the day through brute strength and pure savage tenacity. Besides, with their incredible endurance, ability to soak up damage, supernatural strength, and hunger for violence, even a small group of Gordians can plow through enemy ranks. Although often used like suicide troops, the hulking brutes never think of themselves as losers or disposable, and thus, win more often than they lose. Gordians are especially effective when allowed to swarm and go wild without an objective other than to rout or destroy the enemy.

Gordians will fight for no particular reason, other than to kill and destroy, and a proclivity to prove themselves in feats of strength and daring. Their egos are eggshell thin and the slightest insult will throw these giants into a fury in which they will either destroy who insulted them or (if the insulter is perceived to be stronger than they) they will go to insane lengths to prove themselves worthy. ("You call Throka coward? Watch, Throka kill Dragon!"). Often such displays are like that of a child throwing a violent tantrum.

Gordians are also creatures of *appetite,* and when not fighting, they are constantly pursuing their other carnal desires. Eating, drinking and carousing are major pastimes for these gross, brutal creatures, who have absolutely no sense of cleanliness whatsoever. As a result, they can be smelled a mile away (literally!) by anything with an acute sense of smell (anything that can track by smell, like dogs or Wolfen). Though this makes Gordians unpleasant to be around, anybody who can offer the fat demons a major gift of food or liquor will gain their good graces for at least as long as it takes the creature to consume the stuff. As a result, these creatures make poor guards, since they are so easily bribed and distracted.

Note: Considered a lesser demon; typically sides with demons.

Alignment: Miscreant or Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6+4, M.E.: 1D6+3, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 4D6+20 (Supernatural), P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6+12, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 5D6 (surprisingly fast, considering their girth).

Hit Points: 2D4xlO + P.E. attribute number.

S.D.C.: 3D4xlO.

Natural A.R.: 11

Horror Factor: 12

P.P.E.: 1D6x10.

Equivalent O.C.C.s: Mercenary.

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+1.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 200 feet (61 m), speaks a guttural form of Dragonese/Elven (66%), resistant to fire and cold (magic fire and cold do half damage), impervious to disease and poison, impervious to fear, bio-regenerates 4D6 points per melee round, can eat up to twice its body mass at a single sitting (eww!), and has a tendency to randomly cut loose large clouds of bodily gases that have the same effect as the Water Warlock spell, Purple Mist (see **The Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition,** page 239).

Attacks Per Melee: Six.

Damage: As per Supernatural strength (P.S. 24 to 44 depending on the individual; average is P.S. 34). Gordians generally don't use weapons, preferring to attack with their fists and feet. And their teeth and jaws are so powerful that Gordians can inflict equal damage to a punch with a single chomp. When attacking like this, Gordians will likely tear a chunk out of their victim and spend an attack/action eating it on the spot. They will also grab large objects and throw them at enemies and use massive objects as clubs, but only if those objects will do more damage than their punches or kicks.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +3 to strike and parry, impervious to Horror Factor, poison and disease.

Penalties & Vulnerabilities: -3 to save versus any kind of mind control and illusions. These guys are dupes of the first order. In fact, anybody with an I.Q. of 14 or higher has a 3% chance per point of I.Q. of fast-talking their way around these guys.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Physical Appearance: Gordians look like the result of a creature who was the unholy offspring of Dwarf and Ogre and subsequently raised on a steady diet of lard. These disgusting, unclean, slobbering monsters have a large-boned and muscular frame marred by a positively enormous, spherical belly as well as a general pudginess all over. They tend to have long, wiry red hair and mutton chops. Their eyes are small, round, and a featureless white. They have large mouths with oversized teeth in them. They are constantly fighting or eating, or complaining about not being able to do either. They love to devour those they defeat in combat, and some demons claim the reason the Gordains love combat so much is because the enemy represents their next meal.

Size: Seven to eight feet (2.1 to 2.4 m) tall.

Weight: 1,000 to 1,200 lbs (450 to 540 kg). At least half of their mass is in their stomach region.

Horga

These sinister humanoids have the body frame of an Ogre, the head of a giant slug or leech, and a variety of breath weapons, the most notable of which is a giant sticky glob of mucous, not unlike that from a *Blow Worm* (an enormous Worm of Taut sometimes found in the Land of the Damned). This mode of attack has even led certain scholars to believe that the Horga and the Blow Worm are originally from the same alien world, if not actually related somehow.

Horga are relentless collectors of trinkets, baubles and loose knicknacks that most other humanoid races disregard or consider junk. Shattered weapons and bits of armor, for some rea-

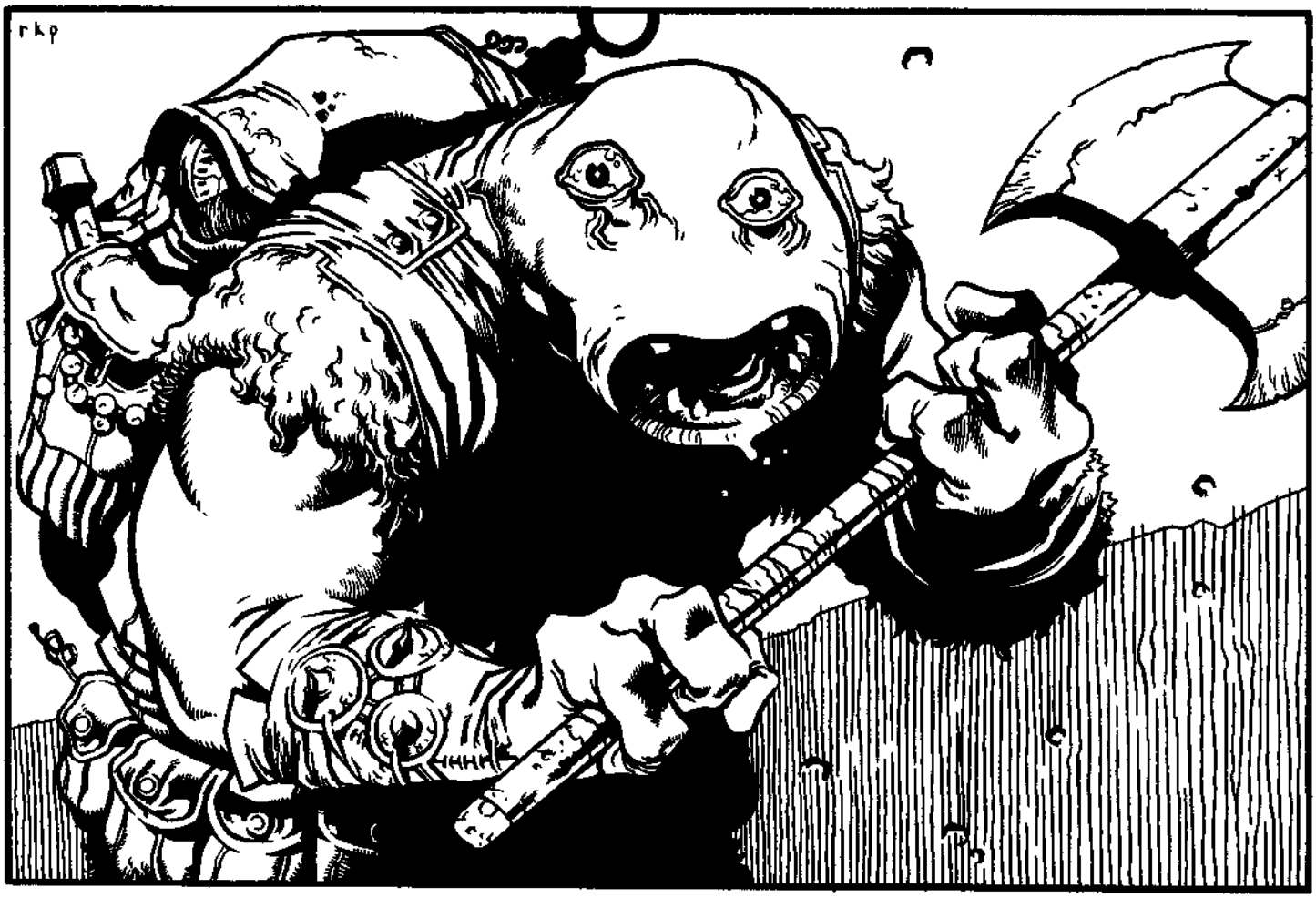
son, hold a special place in the Horga heart, and most of these humanoids will, over the span of their lifetime, collect entire arsenals of useless militaria. The Minion War is the perfect collecting ground for these unusual supernatural creatures, and some people speculate that the Horga's entire involvement in the conflict is just a pretext for them to scrounge up some really good junk. Since many Horga eventually leave this world after fighting in the Minion War for a few years, some folks have suggested that somehow, the miscellaneous debris the Horga collect actually has great value back home, and that those who gather the biggest piles of junk here end up retiring fabulously wealthy elsewhere in some twisted demonic realm.

About a quarter of Horga society does not share this compulsive urge to collect junk, and assemble a treasure horde of quality weapons, gold, gems, magic items and trinkets (only 20% of which is what humans would consider useless junk). These individuals tend to stay on other worlds for longer periods of time, often fighting in the Minion War the entire time, seemingly loyal to one side or the other. The prevailing theories about this is that since the Horga are supremely selfish beings (certainly not as evil or cunning as the Demons and Deevils they fight for), those who participate in the Minion War (or any war for that matter) for a long period of time must do so because they enjoy it and want to see their side win. That way they can share in the spoils of victory. Little do these self-serving optimists know that the Minion War will most likely never end, and that soldiers such as they will certainly die fighting it. And even if there were some kind of lasting victory, whatever Minion Lords the Horga fight for would never let their pawns profit from it. The Horga, it seems, are living in a fool's paradise. Still, every time their side (they side with the Minions of Hades) gets the upper hand, there is much rejoicing among the Horga rank and file.

A very few Horga neither have their fellows' obsession with junk collecting or their other fellows' naive devotion to the Minion War. This third faction - who maybe comprise 2% of the total population - act as free thinkers and want no part of the war or the insidious Lords who engineer it. Instead they crave adventure elsewhere, on their own, and are found threading their way through the battlefields of the Minion War to other parts of the Land of the Damned or on their way to the Northern Mountains. Those who head for the mountains often hope to escape the endless grind of the battlefield and find some measure of peace somewhere and settle down! Of course, peace for these infernals is a (relatively quiet) life as mountain bandits, raiders and bushwhacker, preying upon mortals and other creatures weaker than they. To that end, they may join a multi-racial gang that may include humans, monsters or other demonic creatures. Some actually settle down in a multi-racial community where they are likely to serve as one of the village's defenders. Such rare individuals might even become an unlikely defender of the weak and champion of justice. After all, this is the Land of the Damned. Stranger things have happened.

Note: Considered to be a lesser demon and typically sides with Demons.

Alignment: Typically Anarchist (33%), Miscreant (33%) or Diabolic (30%; 4% other).



Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6+5, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 5D6+5 (Supernatural), P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6+5, P.B.: 1D4, Spd.: 5D6.

Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +50.

S.D.C.: 1D4x10+50.

Natural A.R.: 12

Horror Factor: 14

P.P.E.: 1D6x10.

Equivalent O.C.C.s: A thieving mercenary (see O.C.C. skills below).

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+2.

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills: The exact level of skill proficiency depends on the creature's level of experience; the numbers in parentheses are the bonus for that skill, if any. Basic Math (+30%), Concealment (+10%), Palming (+10%), Pick Locks (+5%), Pick Pockets (+5%), Camouflage, Locate Secret Compartments/Doors, Land Navigation, Swim, Climb (+20%), and three W.P. of choice. Also see Natural Abilities, Attacks, Bonuses and Damage.

Natural Abilities: Impervious to disease, resistant to cold (half damage), magically knows and speaks all languages, and bio-regenerates at a rate of 4D6 points of damage per hour.

Ultra-vision: Horga have such finely tuned eyesight that they can see perfectly through darkness (even magical darkness), smoke, sandstorms, snow whiteouts, and so on. They can also see the invisible and they can see auras without trying. The range for their remarkable sight is 500 feet (152 m).

Spit Sticky Globs: Horga can spit forth a big glob of sticky mucus, similar to that emitted by a Blow Worm. The range for this attack is 100 feet (30.5 m). Those struck by the glob are partially engulfed in the thick, sticky substance and can not move whatever part of their body is covered. Typically, a single attack can cover an arm, leg, the torso or the head. It generally requires an intense effort of about 4D4 melee *actions* to pull oneself free of the glob. Characters with a P.S. of less than 24 simply can not pull free of a Horga glob and must either wait 1D4 hours for the glob to dry up and crumble off, or they must pour alcohol on it to make it dissolve in a single melee round (15 seconds).

If an arm is hit, the victim loses use of it until the glob is somehow eliminated. Those fighting with a two-handed weapon had better find a new means of defending themselves.

If a leg is hit, the victim's speed is reduced by 40%, and they lose one melee attack per round due to being unbalanced and stiff.

If the head is struck by the glob, the victim is blinded (-10 to strike, parry and dodge) and will suffocate and lose consciousness within six melee rounds (one and a half minutes) and die from suffocation eight melees thereafter (two additional minutes). Characters who are protected by magic body armor, a force field (telekinetic, etc.), the Breathe Without Air spell or can hold their breath for a long period will not smother, but may still be blinded.

Multiple globs will have accumulative effect.

If a victim should escape a Horga glob, he will find himself covered in a thick, sticky, unpleasant smelling slime. To clean himself completely will take at least an hour and to thoroughly clean his armor and possessions will take another 1D4 hours washing them in alcohol and then soap and water.

Note: Horga consider slaying opponents immobilized by a glob to be dishonorable, and will spare such victims. However, they have no compunctions about letting a victim smother, kicking him while he's down or robbing him of his possessions.

Fire Gout: Horga can breathe fire, flame-thrower style. The range for this is 50 feet (15.2 m). Anything hit in the fire stream takes 4D6 damage instantly. Targets then will take an additional 2D6 points of damage per melee round for the next 1D4 minutes unless the flames are extinguished. Combustibles have a 01-66% chance of igniting.

Blowhard: Horga can also breathe a blast of air similar in effect to a Wind Rush spell. This air blast is capable of knocking people down, blowing small objects 20 to 120 feet (6 to 36 m) away, or creating a cloud of billowing dust or snow. (Horga warriors are especially fond of the dust storm effect, which they use to temporarily obscure the battlefield so their opponents can not see what is going on. The Horga, with their Ultra-vision, have no such problems and gain a tactical advantage. The cloud lasts for 2D4 melee rounds.) This breath weapon can be directed at a specific target or a general sweep (maximum width of 20 feet/6.1 m). Anyone caught in the blast is helpless and unable to attack or move forward. It takes an additional melee round to recover and 2D4 melee rounds to gather up all the items blown away.

A Kiss Goodnight: This breath weapon entails the expulsion of a cloud of knockout gas with effects similar to a Cloud of Slumber spell. When the Horga uses this weapon, it creates a 20x20x20 foot (6x6x6 m) cloud that instantly induces magical sleep upon all who pass through it. Those who fail to make a successful save vs magic (13 or higher) sleep until the cloud dissipates. They will remain asleep until the cloud dissipates 2D4 minutes later, or until they are dragged out of the cloud. (Rescuers should be careful not to succumb to the cloud themselves, by the way.) Horses and other animals dragged from the Horga cloud will rouse within a single melee round.

Spitball of Death: Horga often swallow round stones up to a tennis ball in size. They can then regurgitate these stones and spit them forth with bullet-like force. These rocks have a range of 400 feet (122 m) and inflict 3D6 damage. Horga love to use this ability during night ambushes, when they can snipe at their targets in the darkness.

Attacks Per Melee: Five.

Damage: Horga can attack using just their brute Supernatural strength, but they prefer to rely on their *breath weapons* or on giant-sized melee weapons. The use of a weapon upgrades the Horga's Supernatural strength's hitting ability by one bracket, regardless of the weapon type or base damage. Thus, a Horga with a Supernatural P.S. from 31 to 35, when using a weapon, hits as if he has a Supernatural P.S. of 36 to 40; basically an extra die of damage. (G.M. **Note:** This effect can be used as a basic rule of thumb to determine weapon damage for creatures with Supernatural P.S.)

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +2 to strike in hand to hand combat, +3 to strike with all breath weapons, +2 to parry and dodge, +1 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +10% to save vs coma/death and +2 to all other saving throws.

Magic: None.

Psionics: See Aura only. It is an automatic ability and costs no I.S.P.

Physical Appearance: Horga have highly muscled bodies, but their thick hide covers up any muscular definition, giving their body a smooth, thickly structured appearance. The hands are large with two thick fingers and a thumb; no fingernails. Atop their powerful frames, the Horga have large, sinuous, slug-like heads. Their eyes are on the ends of short stalks, and their mouths can open up very wide to expel their variety of breath weapons. Horga have soft tan or yellow flesh with darker yellow, orange or brown spots. They often wear full suits of heavy plate armor, but without helmets.

Size: Eight to nine feet (2.4 to 2.7 m).

Weight: 400 to 500 lbs (180 to 225 m).

Kaadj

The Kaadj are cantankerous frog-like beings with a pair of small bat wings, clawed fingers, and a love for haranguing any mortals they encounter. They are one of the few demonic races who have come to the Palladium World through the Great Rift but do *not* play a substantive role in the Minion War. Usually, such infernals are quickly enlisted (or enslaved) for combat and ground up by the war's never-ending bloodshed. The Kaadj have survived largely because many Greater Demons and Deevils find these creatures strangely likable and adopt them as mascots and pets rather than front-line troops. The Kaadj, for their part, are hangers-on and loafers that have no interest in serving anybody's interests other than their own. They do have a good ear for gossip and intelligence, however, and a fair number of them are accomplished spies. Those Kaadj willing to subject themselves to a little espionage work can infiltrate enemy camps, learn battle plans, troop positions, and recruiting strategies, and return this information to their own side. More commonly, though, Kaadj who discover such valuable information prefer to confront those they stole it from and demand some kind of payment *not* to turn the info over to their enemies. In this regard, the Kaadj have become expert blackmailers and extortionists, traits that they would very much like to apply to other aspects of life. The few Kaadj who have learned of the outside world have become obsessed with leaving the Land of the Damned, since they are convinced they could make a killing in the various human empires and kingdoms. In fact, a handful of Kaadj have already made it to the Western Empire, where they serve as honorary members in sinister doomsday cults and powerful wizards' guilds. A few even hold honorary positions in certain Western noble houses. To a lesser extent, Kaadj have also been found worming their way into interesting positions of power within the Island Kingdom of Bizantium and causing conflict among the barbarian hordes of the Northern Hinterlands. They also like to take up with adventuring groups where they inevitably try to sway individuals in the party against one another and toward evil ("Go ahead, kill the prisoner. You know he deserves it.").

Kaadj are accomplished vulgarians who seem incapable of forming an entire sentence without applying a liberal dose of profanity. These creatures can curse in ways that would make a sailor blush, something they are oddly proud of. They also revel in making life miserable for any of the "soft ones" - humans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes and mortals in general. Kaadj usually have little feelings other than contempt for mortals. The only exceptions are when a mortal might have something the Kaadj wants or if they are powerful in the ways of magic. In that case, these repulsive little cretins will make a dramatic turnaround in personality and can suddenly simper and grovel with the best of them.

Note: Considered to be an impish, lesser demon; typically sides with Deevils.

Alignment: Nearly 75% of all Kaadj are Miscreant. The remainder are either Anarchist or Diabolic. These creatures are entirely alien to the concept of honor. They know only self-gratification and using others to meet their own needs and wants.

Attributes: I.Q.: 3D6+4, M.E.: 4D6, M.A.: 4D6, P.S.: 2D6 (Supernatural), P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 1D6, Spd.: 4D6 (x3 when flying).

Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +32.

S.D.C.: 6D6+23.

Natural A.R.: 10

Horror Factor: 8 (More like a "what the hell is *that*?" factor).

P.P.E.: 2D4x10 +P.E. attribute number.

I.S.P.: M.E.x3.

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills: The exact level of skill proficiency depends on the creature's level of experience; the numbers in parentheses are the bonus for that skill, if any. Streetwise (+10%), Intelligence (+10%), Land Navigation (+10%), Escape Artist (+10%), Pick Locks (+10%), Palming (+10%), Concealment (+5%), Locate Secret Compartments (+10%), Demon and Monster Lore (+10%), Basic Math (for counting

up booty, mostly; +10%), Brewing (+5%), Gemology (+15%), Recognize and Use Poison (+10%), and Prowl (+20%).

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+2.

Natural Abilities: Magically knows and speaks all languages, adhesive pads on the fingers give great climbing ability (98%) even on vertical and upside-down surfaces, breathe underwater indefinitely, swim (98%), leap up to 20 feet (6.1 m) in any direction, flight (triple Speed attribute), long sticky tongue enables the Kaadj to snatch a small item (coins, keys, gems, food, small weapons, etc.) up to 12 feet (3.6 m) away and retrieve it into its mouth almost instantaneously.

Penalties and Vulnerabilities: Fire based magic does 50% more damage.

Attacks Per Melee: Three physical or (more likely) psionic or magic attacks.

Damage: Kaadj punches do 1D6 damage, but a kick does 2D6+3, a power kick 4D6+6 and their bite does 2D6 damage. Rarely uses any type of weapon, except maybe a dagger.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +1 on initiative, +1 to strike (+4 to strike with its tongue), +5 to dodge, +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to all saving throws, and +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: All level one and two Wizard spells, plus Fool's Gold (10) and Escape (8).

Psionics: All Physical psionic powers and *one* Super Psionic ability of choice.

Physical Appearance: Picture a really big bullfrog with small bat wings, two spiky ridges going down its back, a mouth filled with little, sharp, pointy teeth, and small hands on the ends of its front legs. That is the Kaadj.

Size: Two feet to two and a half feet (0.6 to 0.75 m) long/tall.

Weight: Ten to twenty lbs (4.5 to 9 kg).

Note: Kaadj are often seen smoking stubby and foul-smelling little cheroots (cigars). Their insatiable love for tobacco is a weakness frequently exploited by other creatures to get the Kaadj to serve them.

Kokossan

Also known as *Midgelings,* these bloodthirsty gremlin- or goblin-like creatures are one of the longest-standing participants in the Minion War. They have been present in and around the Great Rift for at least twenty thousand years, if not longer. (The lack of formal records on the Minion War makes it impossible to determine exactly how long Kokossans, or any other Minion Race for that matter, have participated in the conflict.) They are also one of the few Minion Races that are encountered with any regularity in the outside world. There, as in the Great Rift, Kokossans are experts in the art of murder, mayhem and misery. Using their unique abilities, they specialize in stealing the breath out of sleeping mortals and love to kidnap women and children to keep as tormented pets and playthings.

Able to shrink to only six inches (15 cm) tall, Kokossans have an uncanny ability to sneak, skulk and hide. This enables them to dodge the heavy fighting of the Minion War and carry out whatever missions of mayhem they feel like executing. As it turns out, Kokossans delight in acts of assassination and sabotage, things which make them highly prized fighters. However, their rebellious, cruel and miscreant nature makes them impossible to harness into a structured fighting force. As a result, the factions of the Minion War often try their best to make sure that if there are Kokossans in their midst, they can be enticed somehow to spy and kill on their behalf. This is best done by leaving them substantial gifts of candies, liquor, the blood of mortals (which is intoxicating for the diminutive monsters) and precious metals. However, most times, Kokossans simply take these things and do mostly as they like anyway. That is why some in the Minion War are considering launching an all-out campaign to exterminate the Kokossans in the Land of the Damned and forever terminate the troubles they cause. Indeed, Kokossans have recently been blamed for the mysterious and untimely deaths of a number of Minion Lords, and this has incited their soldiers to find and kill Kokossans wherever they can in retaliation. Since most Kokossans can easily avoid such payback squads, they find the wrath of the large Demon and Deevil Minions to be a great laughing matter. As such, these sinister little gremlins often make things worse by attacking those who hunt them as a way of celebrating their inability to get caught, and by luring outsiders to cause distractions and trouble for the warring parties. Infuriating? You bet. Foolish? Definitely, not that the Kokossans themselves care. They are as short-sighted as they are vicious and until death comes calling for them, they will never see the error of their malicious ways.

Note: Considered a lesser demon but will side with any dark force that offers it opportunity.

Alignment: Miscreant (75%) and Diabolic (25%; most of whom are little more than homicidal maniacs).

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6+2, M.E.: 2D6+2, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 3D6, P.P.: 4D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 2D4, Spd.: 3D6.

Hit Points: 6D6 +P.E. attribute number.

S.D.C.: 30+3D6.

Natural A.R.: 7

Horror Factor: 8

P.P.E.: 2D4xlO.

I.S.P.: 2D4xlO.

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills: The exact level of skill proficiency depends on the creature's level of experience; the numbers in parenthesis are the bonus for that skill, if any. Recognize and Use Poison (+10%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors (+15%), Carpentry (+5%), Detect Concealment & Traps (+10%), Prowl (+20%), Surveillance (+10%), Intelligence (+15%), Land Navigation (+15%) and W.P. Knife. Also see Natural Abilities.

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+2.

Natural Abilities: Magically understands and speaks all languages, can climb walls effortlessly (98%), can track humanoids (88%), bio-regenerate 3D6 points of damage per hour, and a super keen sense of smell (80% to track by scent, 90% to recognize smells/odors, 50% to recognize a specific individual by scent even if metamorphosized or disguised).

Reduce Size: Kokossans can, at will, shrink to a mere six inches (0.15 m) tall in an effect similar to that of the Reduce Self spell (does not use up P.P.E.). The act of shrinking (or growing) counts as two melee actions/attacks. The Kokossan's clothes and possessions all shrink proportionally to his tiny size, and the demon's weight is reduced by 75%.

Shrunken weapons do only one point of damage unless hitting a sensitive spot like an eye or the throat, in which case they inflict 1D4 points of damage, and tiny poisoned weapons do half the usual poison damage. Tiny magic weapons always do 1D4 damage, while the range of any special magical powers will be turned into *inches* rather than feet. Attributes and psionics, S.D.C., Hit Points and spell damage, duration and strength remain unaffected. Note: In small form, the Kokossan can Prowl at 90%. However, at such a small size, any incoming strike from a full-sized weapon automatically inflicts *double damage.* In fact, most Kokossans slain in action are killed upon discovery in small form, whereupon they are smashed flat on the spot. It does not help the Kokossans any that when detected, they almost always try to scurry away in their small form rather than assume full size (which takes two melee actions, about 7 seconds to do).

Steal Breath: Kokossans can literally pull the living breath out of a mortal being, stealing 1D6 Hit Points (bypasses S.D.C.) every minute. This sinister ability usually takes several minutes to perform on an adult, however, so Kokossans typically reserve it for sleeping victims. They could use this ability on those who have passed out from drinking, but Kokossans loathe foul-smelling breath. Consequently, those with alcohol, onions, or garlic on their breath are safe from these foul creatures. Likewise, clouds of stench will send them running for hundreds of yards/meters, choking and gagging all the way.

If the Kokossan is interrupted at all during its breath stealing ritual, then the victim will automatically wake up, coughing terribly as he gains his breath back along with all the Hit Points stolen so far. The victim will be more or less helpless, shaken and stunned for one melee round (half the character's normal number of melee attacks and combat bonuses), but by that time, the Kokossan should be busy trying to escape. If the loathsome little demon is not disturbed while stealing breath, then the victim dies quietly, leaving no marks or indications that he did not just pass away in his sleep of natural causes. In the region of the Great Rift, however, anyone who dies in their sleep is assumed to have fallen prey to a Kokossan. Note: Victims of a Steal Breath attack get a chance to save and wake up to break the deadly enchantment (as above) once every two melee rounds starting with the second. A roll of 16 or greater is required to save vs magic ritual. Victims who survive the attack are +5 to save if that type of attack is tried again later that same night, even if it is by a different Kokossan.

Penalties and Vulnerabilities: Can not swim, can not learn to swim and fears water deeper than they are tall. Also repelled and repulsed by the strong scent of alcohol, onions and garlic.

Attacks Per Melee: Four by hand to hand or psionics, or two by magic.

Damage: By weapon, magic or psionics. Kokossans often carry poisoned daggers with them to use on victims; even though their weapons do little damage, their poisons still do, as many a Minion Lord has found out the hard way when a Kokossan got in close and stuck him with a poisoned knife.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, +1 to parry and dodge (+6 to dodge when shrunken down to six inches).

Magic: All **Kokossans** have a number of elemental air spell-like abilities, which they may use at the designated P.P.E. cost: Breath of Life (50; in the rare case that they feel like reviving a victim), Breathe Without Air (3), Cloud of Slumber (4; for setting up the Breath Stealing attack), Float in Air (5), Fingers of the Wind (5), Create Air (6), and Heavy Breathing (5).

Psionics: Deaden Pain (4; so that its victims do not realize how badly they are injured until it is too late), Induce Sleep (4; for obvious reasons), Suppress Fear (8), Death Trance (1), Levitation (varies), Catatonic Strike (40), and Induce Nightmare (15).

Physical Appearance: Kokossans appear much like a shriveled cross between a Goblin and a Gnome. They have greenish to grayish skin, broad, bulbous noses, a wide mouth filled with small, stubby teeth, and beady, red eyes. They often dress entirely in leather armor, and they have a penchant for wearing comical outfits, like a jester's cap or a formal ball mask. The reason for these ridiculous outfits is something the Kokossans will not explain; it is just something they do. When stealing breath, Kokossans salivate excessively, giving them the additional nicknames of *Drooling Fools* or ***Drooligans***, particularly by those looking to insult them.

Size: Three to four feet (0.9 to 1.2 m) tall, but many Kokossans spend most of their time shrunken down to six inches (15 cm) because they feel safer that way. Though they can get smashed up easily, they can also hide well, which is their specialty. At that size, they can make their way across even the most dangerous parts of the Minion War like mice, unseen and **unthreatened.**

Weight: 60 to 70 **lbs** (27 to 31.7 kg). About 15 **lbs** (6.7 kg) when at six inches.

Lasher

Lashers are hideous **humanoids** thought by some to be distant cousins to the Gorgons of **Dyval,** whose snaky hair and petrifying gaze have made them infamous among men and monsters. Lashers possess red and angry eyes, a large and **fanged** mouth, clammy and lumpy skin, and a thick mane of writhing octopus-like tentacles instead of hair. Topping all of this off, the Lasher has oversized forearms and hands, each of which house a coiled tentacle-like appendage that exits through the creature's palm with explosive force. Using this internal weapon, Lashers can harpoon victims and reel them in like a fish on a spear. More frequently, however, Lashers extend their tentacles and use them to whip and flay their enemies to pieces. They also might use these terrible weapons to grab and entangle opponents and constrict them into submission ... or to death.

Lashers are simple creatures governed by their appetites and their inherent hostility to most other living things, including other Lashers. What makes them worthwhile to the Minion War is the sheer number of them that come through the Great Rift. Though many thousands of these creatures die on the battlefields every year, even more come to this **world,** making the net Lasher population one that is constantly on the rise.

The Deevil Minion Lords whom the creature's serve, confident in their never-ending supply of Lashers, love to send them into battle as pure attrition troops. Though Lasher casualties are often horrific, and though Lasher units fall apart under pressure,

the Minion Lords know that if they send enough of these creatures at the enemy, they will inflict the kinds of losses to make their deployment worthwhile. Besides, there are more where they came from.

The average life span of a Lasher in the Minion War is about six months. However, there is a very, very small corps of Lashers who somehow survive for years, even decades. Some of these have bred amongst themselves and have Lasher offspring - ultra-rare second generation Lashers of the Palladium World.

Left to their own devices, Lashers wander the landscape as supernatural predator whose favorite prey are mortal humanoids. They seem particularly fond of large prey like Ogres, Trolls and Bearmen, as well as Giants - perhaps because these beings offer the demons some level of challenge or perhaps because they were originally created (by the Old Ones?) to hunt and slay Giants (the Titans and other large folk did fight on the side of Light). Free Lashers are frequently solitary hunters but may gather in packs of 1D6+3 other Lashers, or join forces with other demons, Deevils or monstrous beings. One or more Lashers may also be made to serve a powerful Priest of Darkness or practitioner of magic, but most will resent being under the thrall of a mere mortal unless given a fair amount of freedom to torture and kill. Likewise, Lashers respect raw physical power and magic, so they may also work with or submit to powerful creatures of magic such as the Sphinx, dragon, Lizard Mage, Za and so forth. A small horde are counted among the demonic army of The Citadel, for example. Those living in the western side of the Northern Mountains are usually found prowling the Lowland and Midlands where they have an ongoing war with Winter Storm Ice Demons and Tyrannoth. They are worshiped by the Gullikin who love to have one or more Lashers living near or among them.

Note: A greater demon of savagery and death who sides with Deevils and may be related to the Gorgon Deevil.

Alignment: Miscreant (60%) or Diabolic (40%). Cruel and murderous in the extreme.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6+5 (instinctive hunters with near human intelligence), M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 1D6, P.S.: 1D4+16 (Supernatural), P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 3D6, P.B.: 1D4+1, Spd.: 4D6.

Hit Points: 1D4x10+P.E. attribute number.

S.D.C.: 113. Tentacles have 30 each.

Natural A.R.: 11

Horror Factor: 15

P.P.E.: 3D4xlO. I.S.P.: 1D6x10+M.E. attribute number.

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills: The exact level of skill proficiency depends on the creature's level of experience; the numbers in parentheses are the bonus for that skill, if any. Land Navigation (+15%), Prowl (+5%), Climb (+20%), Track Humanoids (+20%), Swim (+5%), Forced March, Lore: Demon and Monster (+10%), Lore: Magic (+5%), Basic Math, Detect Ambush, Horsemanship: General, and Recognize Weapon Quality.

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+2.

Natural Abilities: Magically knows and speaks all languages, see the invisible, nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), immune to poisons and disease, resistant to heat, fire and cold (does half damage), and bio-regenerates 2D6 points of damage per melee round and a severed tentacle regrows within eight hours.

Tentacle Harpoons (2): Housed in the forearm of each of a Lasher's arms is a coiled tentacle-like appendage tipped with a wicked, bony blade. The Lasher can extend this harpoon tentacle with incredible force, shooting it out through a portal in the base of the wrist, beneath the palm. This harpoon tentacle is very strong (30 S.D.C. to sever) and elastic (has a range of 50 feet/15.2 m). An initial rocketing, power thrust inflicts 1D4x10 damage! A Natural 20 does double damage! And actually *impales* the victim if the body armor was penetrated (i.e., roll to strike was higher than A.R.), meaning the poor soul is stuck fast to the harpoon like a fish on a spear. To unhook himself the character can pull the spear tip out but needs a combined strength (others can help) of a P.S. 24 and the act of removal does 2D6 damage direct to Hit Points! Meanwhile, the Lasher can remove it at anytime or thrash around, yanking and pulling its victim around, but not so hard as to pull the shank completely out of him. This tactic does an additional 1D6 damage with every move/yank/attack and makes the victim -4 on his next strike to attack. The monster can also choose to "reel" in its victim like a fish on a line. If stuck fast, the victim can either cut through the harpoon tentacle, try to pull the barb out of his body, or just try to kill the Lasher itself. Lashers can reel in victims at a rate of 10 feet (3 m) per *melee attack.* Once they bring their victim in close, they usually go to work on them with slashing claws, bite attacks or weapons.

In the alternative, Lashers can extend these harpoon tentacles and swing them around like a slashing whip. When striking this way, the harpoon lines inflict *3D6 damage,* and can also be used to entangle opponents, wrapping up weapon arms, binding legs and knocking foes off balance, etc. Lashers can also use their tentacles like Paired Weapons when whipping them about.

Lastly, victims who are entangled can be squeezed and crushed. Constricted opponents will find themselves wrapped up with the Lasher's tentacle, unable to move unless they have a combined strength of 30 (or supernatural strength). While constricted, a Lasher's victim suffers 2D6 points of damage per each crush/squeeze attack (counts as one melee attack/action).

Attacks Per Melee: Six hand to hand or two by magic.

Damage: 2D6 damage from a bite. 2D6 damage from a punch, 3D6 damage from a kick, 4D6 damage from a claw strike or 3D6 by slashing tentacle (as described above), or by weapon. Lashers like blade weapons of all kinds, particularly picks and sickle-swords.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +4 on initiative, +3 to strike in hand to hand combat (+5 with harpoon tentacles), +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to disarm, +4 to entangle, +2 to pull punch, +1 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, and +1 to all saving throws.

Magic: Sense Evil (2), Sense Magic (4), Sense Traps (7), See Wards (8), Chameleon (6), Shadow Meld (10), Globe of Daylight (2), Ignite Fire (6), Levitation (5), Turn Dead (6), Repel Animals (7), Faerie Speak (5), Tongues (12), and Armor of Ithan (10; does not protect the tentacles when they are extended).

Psionics: Sense Magic (3), Sense Dimensional Anomaly (6), Presence Sense (4), Death Trance (1), and Meditation.

Physical Appearance: These creatures possess dark red, angry eyes, a wide and fanged mouth, clammy and lumpy skin, and a thick mane of writhing tentacles instead of hair, clawed three finger hands (plus opposable thumb), and oversized forearms and hands, which house their infamous harpoon appendages.

Size: Six to seven feet (1.8 to 2.1 m) tall.

Weight: 200 to 280 lbs (90 to 126 kg).

Rabbler

This pathetic creature is one of the most wretched sub-demons to walk the Land of the Damned. Coming through the Great Rift in horde-like numbers, hundreds of thousands of Rabblers can be found in and around the battlefields of the Minion War. Here, they live amongst the corpses and carnage, looting what they can, eating the dead, and generally trying to stay out of harm's way. More powerful Minion races (including many lesser Demons and Deevils) routinely enslave, abuse, torment and even slaughter Rabblers with cold indifference, seeing them as little more than vermin.

Despite the rough treatment most Rabblers get from supernatural and other powerful masters, multitudes of these wretched creatures pledge themselves to one side in the War or the other, with the hopes of living off whatever scraps their hostile masters might provide them. Most Rabblers have no self-esteem and live to serve those more powerful than they, like cringing curs living on the scraps and what kindness their superiors offer them. Those who get underfoot or displease their superiors (which is most everyone), only live as long as their hosts can tolerate them.

Rabblers have no significant impact on the Minion War, serving as cannon fodder, thieves, and spies for both sides. They are the "rats" of the infernal races, cretinous vermin that contribute nothing to any civilization or society and leech off whomever they can. Slaughtered by other races as often as they are, Rabblers avoid extinction only by the grace of their huge numbers and extraordinarily prolific breeding habits.

Alchemists are perhaps the only people who have a real appreciation of the Rabbler, since they insist that if one were to grind up an entire Rabbler carcass and infuse it with the right mixture of alchemical ingredients, the end result would be a waxy salve that when rubbed on the skin would impart shape-changing abilities like that of the Changeling. So far, this is all theoretical, but certain high-level individuals in the Western Empire have shown intense interest in this, perhaps because it hopes to create a spy corps armed with Rabbler salve and able to infiltrate the ranks of any enemy effortlessly.

Note: Considered a lesser demon or sub-demon born to serve any strong enough to command them to do so. This may include humans and other mortal beings, for Rabblers are easily tricked and intimidated by brute strength, cunning and magic. Yet, although they will kowtow to those stronger than they (and even large groups will not consider attacking a single lord and master), they are spiteful, mean and cruel to other slaves, prisoners and those judged to be weaker (or more frightened) than they, including children.

Alignment: Anarchist, Miscreant or Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6, M.E.: 2D6, M.A.: 1D6, P.S.: 3D6, P.P.: 4D6, P.E.: 2D6, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 4D6 (increase by 50% when running on all fours).

Hit Points: P.E.+10.

S.D.C.: 5D6+5.

Natural A.R.: 4

Horror Factor: 6

P.P.E.: 3D4x10. There is no explanation for this huge amount of P.P.E. other than that it must play a role in their unique and formidable shape-changing abilities and explosive end.

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills: Prowl (+15%), Climb/Scale Walls (+20%), Swim (+5), Streetwise (+10%), Detect Concealment and Traps (+5%), Intelligence (+5%), Pick Locks (+10%), Pick Pockets (+10%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors (+10%), and W.P. Blunt. Also see Natural Abilities.

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+1.

Natural Abilities: Magically knows and speaks all languages, nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), immune to poisons and disease, and bio-regenerates 2D6 points of damage per hour.

Oily Skin: Rabblers constantly exude a slick oil from their skin that makes them extremely slippery. This gives them a great bonus to roll with punch, fall or impact. It also makes them *natural escape artists* (86%).

Acute Hearing: The Rabbler's acute sense of hearing allows it to hear tiny, almost inaudible sounds several hundred feet away. At 75 feet (22.9 m) it can hear sounds as quiet as one decibel. At 150 feet (45.7 m) it can hear sounds as quiet as 10 decibels. At 360 feet (109.7 m) its audible perception

begins to give out and it can hardly hear a normal conversation in the 30 decibel range. Loud or constant noise will reduce the quality of the Rabbler's hearing. If the surrounding noise is 70 decibels or so, the creature's hearing range reduces by -10 feet (3 m). It will continue to reduce by 5 feet (1.5 m) for every additional 10 decibels.

Using this ability, Rabblers can estimate the distance of a sound (65%), estimate the speed and direction of approach (55%), recognize a voice or sound (65%) and imitate voices (55%).

In some ways, this ability can be more of a curse than a blessing, for the plains of the Great Rift can be excessively loud, clamorous places. When the air is torn asunder by the sound of battle, the Rabblers often must endure the racket in serious pain, and after the battle ends their ears will ring for days.

Acute Sense of Smell (Special): The Rabbler's exceptional sense of smell enables it to identify any scent it comes into regular contact with. Most Minion Lords therefore use Rabblers as bloodhounds to track escaped prisoners and traitors. Rabblers resent this duty because most of the Great Rift area smells like rotting flesh and masks softer scents (-15% to tracking by smell). The Rabbler's sense of smell allows it to recognize/identify specific odors (84% for scents the creature is familiar with; -20% for new scents and -30% to recognize the scent of a specific individual), recognize poisons/toxins/chemicals by scent (56%), recognize a person by scent alone (54%), and track by scent alone (76%).

Limited Metamorphosis: Rabblers can turn into a Goblin, Serpent Rat, rat, muskrat or large hairy spider (the size of a grapefruit) at will and maintain that form indefinitely; +5% to Prowl in any of those forms other than Goblin.

Body Weapons (Special): The Rabbler can turn its limbs into a variety of melee weapons. That is, it can elongate and transform its fingers into stabbing spikes, cutting knives, scythe-like claws, and so on. The fingers and hand might turn into a two- or three-pronged fork, hatchet, hammer, metal ball, etc. The hand and forearm might transform into a sword, axe, club, mace, morning star, trident, etc. These "body weapons" can NOT be removed from the body. Limbs can be elongated up to double their normal length (i.e. a sword could be as long as twice the length of the Rabbler's combined hand and forearm). These weapons inflict the same damage as their real-life weapon equivalent +3 additional points of damage.

Shield Arms (Special): The Rabbler can also form its hands and forearms into a medium-sized shield that can be used to parry/block incoming attacks. When successfully blocked by the Rabbler's shield arms, these attacks do *no damage*, even though it is the Rabbler's body they are bounding off of. +5 to parry with shield arms.

Powder Keg: This is what makes Rabblers such a one-way ticket on the battlefield. Every time a Rabbler is reduced to "zero" Hit Points, it explodes! An exploding Rabbler inflicts 1D4x10 damage to everything within a 20 foot (6.1 m) diameter, which makes them ideal suicide troopers, from a warlord's point of view (minions, even the most submissive of the lot, are not keen on the idea and try to avoid an explosive demise.) Still, Greater Demons and Deevils force Rabblers to make a massed charge at the enemy, warning them that they can take their chances in the field of battle or die at their master's hands there and then. When one goes off, it often sets off the ones on either side, who set off the ones on either side, and so on down the line. This also makes them ideal spies, because too much torture will kill and ignite the little bugger, taking its interrogators with it. And sometimes, a Rabbler will let itself get killed or commit suicide to extract a terrible revenge. Given the Rabbler's inherent cowardice and aversion to what fate awaits it on the battlefield, these creatures are the very picture of misery at the Great Rift. Every day they survive the Minion War is one more day in which they live in constant fear of taking the hit that will blow them to smithereens.

Attacks Per Melee: Three, but most Rabblers are so cowardly, they will turn and run at the first sign of facing a powerful wielder of magic or warrior (6th level or higher). Those that do stay are either unusually bold, courageous or suicidal.

Damage: See *Body Weapons* and *Powder Keg*, above, or by weapon.

Bonuses: +2 to strike (+4 when using body weapons), +1 to parry (+5 when using arm shields), +6 to dodge, +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact, impervious to poison, fumes and disease.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 3-12 years! For many of those involved in the Minion War, it is 1D6 months after their arrival. This conflict is thought to have inflicted *millions* of casualties upon Rabblers. Still, their hordes keep coming through the

Great Rift, and the newcomers keep getting shanghaied and sent to their deaths.

Physical Appearance: Rabblers look an infernal version of the Goblin. They are small, wiry humanoids with bald, oversized heads, saucer-like eyes, and wide, toothy mouths. Their hands and feet are at twice as big as they should be, and they often run about on all fours rather than walking upright. Rabblers typically adorn their bodies with intricate tattoo and scarring patterns, and it is said that a Rabbler's entire family history can be read by interpreting one's body markings.

Size: Three to four feet (0.9 to 1.2 m).

Weight: 80 to 120 lbs (36 to 54 kg).

Skreed

A nightmarish demonic race is the Skreed. They have humanoid body frames with long, sinuous biting serpents for arms, grossly misshapen, bison-like heads with twisted and curling horns, and intense hellfire blazing forth from their eyes, nose and mouth (depicted here and on the cover). Whenever the Skreed speaks, it sounds as if there are three different voices all talking at once, each using a different voice, but saying the same thing; sometimes in two different languages. This makes it difficult to understand what these creatures are saying, and as a result, most people do not bother trying to communicate with the hulking monsters.

Even compared to the other participants of the Minion War, Skreed are fairly horrifying and grotesque. Minion Lords recognize this and enjoy using them as a tool of terror, especially against humans and other mortals. This means Skreed may be used to guard slaves and prisoners, keep troops in line, and enforce their warlord's orders, as well as being sent onto the battlefields as shock troops and special forces carrying out raids to maximize surprise and horror among the enemy. The sheer carnage Skreed cause goes beyond their terrifying visage. In addition, powerful beings and greater infernals like employing Skreed for torturing prisoners and traitors, and extracting terrible revenge on their enemies, a task to which Skreed are especially well suited (and enjoy immensely).

In recent years, the number of Skreed coming to this world through the Great Rift has dropped off considerably, leading some to believe that the Skreed population has been tapped out and that the race in general is teetering on the brink of extinction (or perhaps being utilized in infernal wars on other worlds). Why they continue to pour forth to this world and fight in the conflict that is destroying them is a bit of a mystery. Perhaps the Skreed are as monstrous and stupid as they appear, and are unable to deviate from the crash course with suicide that they are presently traveling. A contrary theory claims that the dimensional doorway through which the Skreed are coming is itself unstable and on the verge of shutting forever. This is a natural course of things in the Great Rift - portals to other infernal dimensions open and close all the time. Should the dimensional door to the Skreed's home shut off, no doubt a new one to a different kind of hell will open, bringing a new entrant to the Minion War.

Note: Considered an enigmatic greater demon who sides with the Deevils of Dyval. Although considered by most mortals

to be a brutish, dull-witted monster, the Skreed are actually quite intelligent and cunning, making excellent sergeants and lieutenants, as well as special operatives. However, they are, indeed, engines of destruction who delight in bringing carnage and suffering to the world.

Alignment: Diabolic; always.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6+5, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 2D6+2, P.S.: 2D6+27 (Supernatural), P.P.: 3D6+2, P.E.: 2D6+20, P.B.: 1D4, Spd.: 6D6+20 (double when flying).

Hit Points: P.E.+99.

S.D.C.: 1D4x100.

Natural A.R.: 15

Horror Factor: 17

P.P.E.: 3D6xlO+30.

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills: The exact level of skill proficiency depends on the creature's level of experience; the numbers in parentheses are the bonus for that skill, if any. Land Navigation (+20%), Climb (+20%), Swim (+10%), Forced March, Intelligence (+15%), Interrogation Techniques (+15%), Streetwise (+20%), Lore: Demons and Monsters (+15%), Lore: Religion (+15%), and Lore: Geomancy and Ley Lines (+10%).

Average Level of Experience: 1D6+4.

Natural Abilities: Can fly using its huge bat wings, see the invisible, nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), teleport (self; 80%) up to one mile (1.6 km) in any direction, dimensional teleport (42%), impervious to poisons and disease, impervious to fire (magic fire does half damage), resistant to cold and electricity (do half damage; magical cold and electricity do full damage).

Superior Bio-Regenerate: 1D4x10 points of damage per melee round, and regenerates its snake limbs or lost appendages within 15 minutes!

Metamorphosis Bison: Turns, at will, into a giant, demon bison for up to 12 hours at a time. The bison is 10 feet (3 m) tall at the shoulders and weighs tons. In this form the Skreed can run twice as fast and perform a running charge and body slam that does 2D4x10+20 damage (counts as three melee attacks/actions) or can bellow and stomp its feet to cast the Warlock Earthquake spell.

Metamorphosis Two-Headed Snake: Turns, at will, into a giant, demonic serpent for up to 12 hours at a time. The serpent is 40 feet (12.2 m) long, can raise itself up 25 feet (7.6 m) tall and both heads can attack two different foes simultaneously. In this form the Skreed's number of attacks per melee round is doubled! Six for *each* head; for a total of 12! Each head is also +3 on initiative. Furthermore, the right head spits bolts of 5D6 damage fire and the left spits a burning saliva that blinds its victims if spat in the face (Serpent is +3 to strike; blinded victims are -10 to strike, parry and dodge until eyes are washed out).

Now you can see why the Skreed are so terrifying.

Attacks Per Melee: Six by physical attack or two by magic.

Damage in its normal form:

Burning Fire Bite: The fire brimming mouth can bite to inflict 4D6 damage. Those vulnerable to fire take double damage. Can also breathe out a short burst of fire for 20 feet (6 m), also doing 4D6 damage.

Serpent Arm Attacks: Each of the Skreed's arms are giant serpents that can reach out 20 feet (6 m) and either strike like a punch inflicting 4D6 damage (power punch is not possible) or bite doing 5D6 damage. The arms can also entangle and constrict, doing 6D6 damage with every constriction (counts as one melee attack).

Kicking: The full damage for its Supernatural P.S.; typically 6D6 damage.

Head Butt: The full damage for its Supernatural P.S.; typically 6D6 damage. A power butt does 2D4x10 but counts as two melee attacks.

Running Ramming Attack: 1D6x10 damage but counts as two melee attacks. See Bison Metamorphosis for superior ram damage: 2D4xlO+20 damage.

Note: Also see magic.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +4 to strike and parry, +2 to dodge, +5 to entangle, +4 to disarm, +5 to pull punch. +3 to roll punch, fall or impact. +3 to all saving throws, +10% to save vs coma/death, and +10 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: Fire Warlock spells: Cloud of Smoke (2), Cloud of Ash (5), Circle of Flame (10), Extinguish Fire (8), Darkness (8), Fiery Touch (5), and Fire Ball (10).

Earth Warlock spells: Dust Storm (5), Rock to Mud (6), Track (6), Earth Rumble (10), Repel Animals (10), and Travel Through Earth (20); can only do an Earthquake (60) when in Bison form.

Psionics: None.

Physical Appearance: Terrifying giants that evoke every bad image of infernal creatures that one might imagine. They have giant, fur-covered bodies with enormous serpents for arms, a shaggy buffalo head, fire streaming from the eyes, nose and mouth, enormous, curled horns, bat wings, their legs are bent backwards like a dog's, and they have a long, serpentine tail.

Size: 20 feet (6.1 m) tall.

Weight: 2-3 tons.

Soulhunter

The dreaded Soulhunters are the collection agents of the infernal underworld. Whenever a Demon or Deevil Lord, or dark god has a debt outstanding (usually some mortal who owes his soul, promise or favor but refuses to pay up), it is the Soulhunter who gets the job to track down the deadbeat and make him pay, pay, pay. Powerful Summoners and evil ancient creatures of magic may also enlist the service of these enforcers, but may have to make a deal with the hunter or treat it as an associate or partner.

Where the Soulhunters come from is unknown, as is what nefarious power they ultimately answer to. Indeed, Soulhunters work for Greater Demon and Deevil powers, but they also make it clear that they are beholden to nobody unless they decide it is so. Only the most powerful, god-like beings can risk mistreating, tricking or cheating one of these infernals, for all others will find swift and terrible retribution. Revenge is delivered by the offended Soulhunter, but he is likely to be accompanied by two or three others of his kind to make things right. Unfortunately, that usually means the ruination and/or killing of the individual responsible. Thus, it is said that wise dragons and even Demon

Lords and dark gods treat these underlings with respect and pay them their due.

When the **Soulhunters** go to war, their numbers swell to several times their supposed population in the region, striking a very tangible fear into the hearts of all who oppose them. The only people a **Soulhunter** will not consider opposing are its brethren. Soulhunters *never* clash against one another, not even brawls or arguments. If two opposing sides both have Soulhunters among their troops, the armor clad demons will go about their business only to the extent that it does not cross a fellow Soulhunter.

Despite their rare autonomy and fearsome reputation, Soulhunters are still subservient to greater powers and can even be summoned and commanded by **Summoners** and other mortal creatures. They are by nature and design, servants made to enforce the will and bidding of greater beings. That said, Soulhunters command an unusual degree of respect from fellow Greater Demons, Greater Deevils, infernal Lords, demigods, gods and other **powerful** beings. Certainly all **infernals,** and many mortals, have heard of them. Indeed, tales of dark armored riders persist throughout the **world,** and wherever they appear, death and misery are sure to follow.

Soulhunters are so named because they specialize in trapping the souls of their quarry for deliverance to whomever ordered their capture. In this regard, all Soulhunters carry a special kind of rune sword that does not steal the souls of whoever it slays, but instead traps those souls so they might later be released. The manufacture of these strange and powerful weapons is as unknown as the secrets to **rune** magic itself, and no alchemist has even come close to figuring out how these weapons work. Furthermore, if a Soulhunter is slain, the demon, its weapons and its armor all vanish, as if they never existed at all! Presumably spirited away to be given to a new Soulhunter.

Though most famous as the re-possessors of lost souls, Soulhunters are also agents of retribution and enforcers of powerful demonic masters. Thus, they may just as well be sent on a mission of torture, murder, destruction, and war as they are anything else. Infernal powers often dispatch these man-hunters to bring them back the head of a traitor or betrayer, as well as enforce a pact, claim a first born, and (literally) sever a relationship with a servant that has broken *a pact.* In combat, one might lead an army or work in secret, independent of the rest of the forces, or stand ready to defend and protect its master. Sometimes a Soulhunter fights or serves because of a debt it owes to a greater power. Note that retribution may not start and end with the culprit, himself, and many start with the loss or destruction of everything that individual holds dear.

Note: Considered a Greater Demon who serves dark and powerful supernatural lords.

Alignment: Aberrant; never breaks their word of honor, and conversely, will punish **and/or** destroy those who make a pledge to them and break it. And it is said none may hide well enough or run far enough (even if it is to an alien realm) to escape the **Soulhunter's** retribution.

Attributes: I.Q.: 4D6, M.E.: 4D6, M.A.: 4D6, P.S.: 2D6+24 (Supernatural), P.P.: **2D6+17,** P.E.: 4D6, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 2D6+17.

Hit Points: 100 +P.E. attribute number.

S.D.C.: 4D4xlO.

Natural Soulhunter A.R.: 16; any attack that is 16 or lower does *no* damage, not to the armor, nor to the creature within.

Horror Factor: 15

P.P.E.: 4D6xlO.

I.S.P.: 3D4x10.

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills: The exact level of skill proficiency depends on the creature's level of experience; the numbers in parentheses are the bonus for that skill, if any. Basic Math (+20%), Literate in Elven/Dragonese and all human languages (+20%), Land Navigation (+20%), Climb (+20%), Swim (+20%), Forced March, Intelligence (+20%), Track Humanoids (+20%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors (+15%), Interrogation Techniques (+20%), Streetwise (+20%), Imitate Voices and Impersonation (+15%), Military Etiquette (+20%), Recognize Weapon Quality (+15%), Lore: Demons and Monsters (+20%), Lore: Religion (+15%), Lore: Magic, and Lore: Geomancy and Ley Lines (+10%).

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+6.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 200 feet (61 m), see the invisible, turn invisible at will, metamorphosis into a humanoid at will (and indefinitely), dimensional teleport (56% +2% per level of experience), impervious to normal fire and cold (half damage from magic fire and cold), bio-regenerates 4D6 points of damage per melee round, magically knows and speaks all languages.

Attacks **Per** Melee: Six physical, magic or psionic attacks.

Damage: Melee combat, psionic, magic or by weapon. Though the Soulhunter can use any weapon with equal proficiency, their main weapon is their rune sword.

Soulblade Rune Weapon: Soulhunter rune weapons are typically large swords, axes or spears, that radiate (Aberrant) evil, inflict 1D6x10 damage and possess a special kind of soul-drinking ability that behaves much like the soul-drinking feature of certain "conventional" rune weapons. However, instead of actually consuming the soul of the victim, the Soulblade, as they are called, takes and *temporarily* contains the soul for transport back to whoever it "belongs" to or is "owed retribution." The soul is then taken to that individual, expelled and subjected to whatever dark fate is waiting for it. Nobody knows how many souls a Soulhunter weapon can contain at once, but it has been rumored to be 1, 3, 13 or 99. It is also rumored that the higher a Soulhunter's rank amongst its own kind, the more souls its dark weapon can contain. Otherwise, this weapon is like any other greater rune weapon, usually with healing spells, Warlock spells or psionic powers. (See page 250 of **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®** rule book, for more on Rune Weapons).

Note that Soulhunters only claim the souls that they are sent for, on behalf of a third party. They NEVER use their Soulblades to claim the soul for themselves. Never.

Also see Magic and Psionics.

Vulnerabilities and Penalties: Holy weapons and rune weapons of a good alignment inflict 50% greater damage to the Soulhunter and double damage if specifically designed to be a "demon slayer." Furthermore, that damage can NOT be bio-regenerated for 24 hours!

Bonuses (in addition to probable attribute bonuses): +5 on initiative, +4 to strike, parry and dodge, +4 to disarm, +2 to entangle/pin, +7 to pull punch. +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact. +3 to save vs magic and psionic attacks of all kind, +2 vs all other saves.

Magic: Soulhunters know all Wizard spells levels 1-6 *or* they know all Warlock spells of one specific elemental discipline (Air, Earth, Fire or Water).

Psionics: Soulhunters know all Physical and Sensitive psionic abilities. They also know four Super Psionic abilities of choice, but they *never* choose the Psi-Sword or Psi-Shield abilities. They would rather rely on their dark rune weapons and their naturally armored form.

Physical Appearance: Soulhunters appear as a walking suit of Ogre-sized, humanoid plate armor whose eye slits and other openings on the face plate glow with an ominous yellow light (presumably some eldritch energy). The armor is always a sleek, polished black or blue or dark grey color and always plate. All are ornate in their design and may be marked with alien signs and sigils that glow with the same yellow light. Nobody has ever seen a Soulhunter outside of their armor. Some believe them to be energy beings whose armor is merely an outer shell formed by the energy within, or made specially for them. Others seem certain that the armor and being inside (whatever its true nature) are one and the same and the energy is the light of the souls they steal. They are never seen without their Soulblade and usually have two or three other conventional magic weapons; swords, axes, and maces seemingly their weapons of choice.

Size: Seven to twelve feet (2.1 to 3.6 m); 6 +1D6 feet.

Weight: 300 to 500 lbs (135 to 225 kg).

Ur-Tosk

The Ur-Tosk are savage warriors whose love and aptitude for combat makes them one of the more heavily recruited races for the Minion War. Ur-Tosk have been part of the Minion War for a thousands of years and see themselves as one of the (if not "the") elite combat forces deployed.

The portal to their home dimension is one of the largest and most stable that the Great Rift has to offer. Home is strangely similar to the Palladium World, and it is one of the few portals in the Great Rift that creatures may *enter* as well as exit. (Most other portals in the Great Rift are strictly one-way portals that give alien worlds the ability to travel to the Palladium World, but not back.) More enterprising Minion Lords have been known to send recruiting parties through the Ur-Tosk portal to gather additional forces (more than what already are coming through, that is). Whether or not these recruiting efforts actually work is questionable. Although the numbers of Ur-Tosk coming through to this world are on the rise, any recruiters sent through to their home dimension are never seen or heard from again. It is assumed the Ur-Tosk simply eat them and come to this world looking for more free vittles, only to be pressed into service by the overwhelming might of the various Minion Lords already in power here. A different opinion is that the Ur-Tosk see extra-dimensional emissaries as gifts (to be eaten, of course), and so the grateful Ur-Tosk come to this world to fight in the Minion War as a show of gratitude.

Ur-Tosk are covered in a bony body armor that renders them nearly invincible to physical attack. This, coupled with their supernatural strength, size, speed and wicked natural weapons,

makes these creatures utterly fearsome on the battlefield. Just one Ur-Tosk has been known to rip an entire company of humans to ribbons. Of course their effectiveness will vary depending on exactly who and what they are facing.

The Ur-Tosk are bestial and simple, with scarcely greater than animal intelligence. They have no real culture, no civilization. They exist in a loose tribal or pack-like society where the strong rule the weak, and the ultimate war chieftain is simply the biggest and strongest of the lot. Ur-Tosk hold no loyalty to themselves or any ideals, and so as their leaders show weakness, the mob simply destroys them and replaces them with somebody younger, stronger, and more vicious.

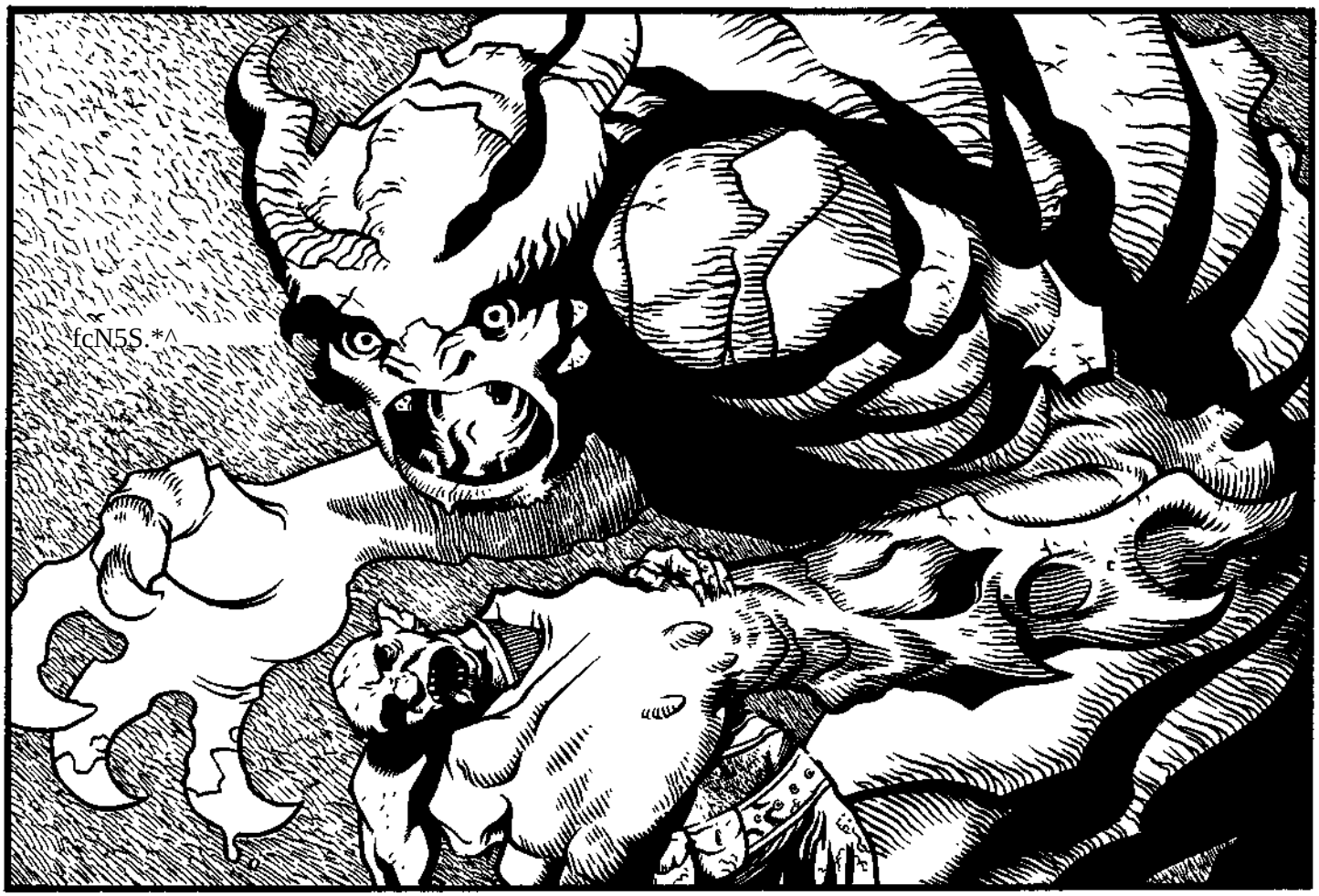
The Ur-Tosk openly enjoy participating in the Minion War, where they thrive on the constant carnage. Their utter lack of initiative and leadership (beyond their own piddling war chieftains) means they are willing to bow to the wishes of the various Minion Lords. As far as these warlike creatures are concerned, the less they have to think about the war, the better. To them it is far more enjoyable simply to revel in the havoc of combat and let others do all the worrying.

Note: Considered a greater demon, and prefer to side with their fellow demons; dislike Deevils and other infernal races.

Alignment: Diabolic.
Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6+4, M.E.: 1D6+4, M.A.: 1D6+4, P.S.: 2D6+40 (Supernatural), P.P.: 4D6, P.E.: 4D6, P.B.: 1D6, Spd.: 6D6.
Hit Points: 6D6x2 +P.E. attribute number.
S.D.C.: 1D4x100+40.
Natural A.R.: 16; silver weapon bypasses the Ur-Tosk's carapace as if it had no A.R. at all! Any roll to strike of five or above that is not parried or dodged hits and does damage, triple damage at that!
Horror Factor: 16
P.P.E.: 2D6
Equivalent O.C.C. Skills: Climbing (+5%), Track Humanoids (+10%), Swim (+5%), Forced March, Lore: Demons and Monsters (+10%).
Average Level of Experience: 1D6+3.
Natural Abilities: Nightvision 120 feet (36.6 m), see the invisible, turn invisible at will, dimensional teleport (30% +2% per level of experience), impervious to disease, impervious to normal fire and cold (half damage from magic fire and cold), bio-regenerates 2D6 points of damage per melee round, and magically knows and magically speaks all languages.

Shock Wave: Ur-Tosk have an interesting form of distance attack. By stomping the ground or slamming it with their fist, they can send a directed, straight-line shock wave that does 6D6 damage to living beings and knocks them off their feet (lose initiative and two melee attacks/actions), but does 1D6x10 damage to fences, walls, towers, bunkers, bridges, and other man-made structures. This attack is like a kind of energy bait that stops after it hits the target in its path. Can only strike a single opponent at a time, and it counts as two melee attacks/actions. Maximum range is 500 feet (152 m).

Vulnerabilities and Penalties: For all their natural armor and great strength, the Ur-Tosk have two critical weaknesses,



magic (they have no spell casting powers themselves) and *silver*. Silver weapons inflict *triple damage* upon these creatures, and also bypass their armor entirely! A silver weapon cuts through an Ur-Tosk carapace like a knife through butter. But even more than that, damage inflicted by silver can NOT be bio-regenerated for 24 hours!

Silver manacles, chains or restraints made of silver will hold an Ur-Tosk fast, robbing them of their strength and wholly incapacitating them. Also, any opponent wearing armor of silver or a silver alloy takes half damage from any physical Ur-Tosk attack, such as clawing or biting. An Ur-Tosk can still harm silver-armored foes, especially by throwing things at them or using other forms of distance attack (like their shock wave ability, described above).

Luckily for the Ur-Tosk, silver is rare on their home world and in dreadfully short supply within the Land of the Damned, so its use in the Minion War is uncommon at best. However, when faced with an opponent wielding silver weapons, restraints or other such implements, an Ur-Tosk may actually break ranks and flee, especially if it engages the individual and the first few rounds go poorly for the demon. In fact, silver weapons have a Horror Factor of 13 for these walking tanks. They fear the accursed metal *that* much. To that end, certain Lords of the Minion War routinely send their scouts in search of any quantities of silver, to be kept around as a kind of "Ur-Tosk repellent," should it ever need to be used.

As for magic, these demons just don't have any defense against it, which is probably why they subjugate themselves to the service of other beings.

Attacks Per Melee: Seven.

Damage: As per supernatural strength; typically 6D6 or 1D6x10 from a punch or head butt, double for a power punch, but counts as two melee attacks. Ur-Tosk can also bite, inflicting 4D6 damage.

Bonuses (in addition to likely attribute bonuses): +2 on initiative, +3 to strike. +1 to parry. Ur-Tosk never dodge because they believe they are invincible and likewise do not use finesse to disarm, entangle or anything else. This works against them when forced to fight silver-wielding opponents.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Physical Appearance: Ur-Tosk stand somewhat crouched over, as if they never really evolved into walking fully upright. Their entire body is covered by a bony carapace that often has wavy, uneven flanges along the outer edges of the arms, legs, and down the back. Every Ur-Tosk has a unique carapace growth pattern, so the end result is these creatures all look just a little different from each other. All Ur-Tosk carapace is the color of bone. Ur-Tosk teeth are especially white; their eyes glow an unholy red, as does the pit of their stomach, the glow of which can be seen in the Ur-Tosk's mouth if they open wide enough.

Size: 15 feet (4.6 m) tall.

Weight: 1-2 tons.

Wrathmonger

Also known as *Vulgians*, Wrathmongers are weird, brutish creatures with large horns, the upper body of a great ape, the legs of a goat and a short reptilian tail. Most importantly, they sport not one, but *two* heads from their shoulders, heads which have separate brains and personalities.

As their name suggests, Wrathmongers are almost entirely governed by feelings of rage towards all things. They find no pleasure in anything, and their entire existence is one defined by anger, pain, and hostility toward others. Nowhere is this more evident than with the Wrathmongers themselves, for while they are strong and powerful, they are also undermined by the fact that their twin heads are constantly at odds with each other. While a Wrathmonger's heads will not actually attack each other physically, they can be heard constantly bickering with themselves. As such, these creatures are perpetually distracted by it and have little mental faculties with which to concentrate. This makes them undisciplined fighters who are easily outwitted by more intelligent, focused opponents.

To other Minion Races, Wrathmongers seem buffoonish and laughable, and indeed they are in their own way. But these creatures should not be underestimated. Get one mad enough, and its two heads will snap out of their self-absorbed arguing to focus on their *mutual* enemy, for to insult or attack one is to attack both. During these rare spells of concentration, Wrathmongers become deadly enemies who fight without fear or mercy. Those who stand before them frequently find themselves either beating a hasty retreat or employing some powerful kind of magic to tip the scales of battle in their favor.

Wrathmongers have been seen infiltrating the Northern Mountains in ever-increasing numbers as the Minion War drags on. Though few are willing to discuss the reasons for this migration with the Wrathmongers themselves, the conventional wisdom is that a growing number of these beasts are weary of taking orders from the various warlords and seek to escape the madness in the Northern Mountains, so they might live freely, killing and destroying whatever *they* like, instead of what some other being tells them to. In the wild, Wrathmongers are rarely found in groups larger than three or four members strong. They simply do not get along with each other well enough to congregate in groups larger than that unless some other being is compelling them to do so (as is the case with the armies of Wrathmongers fighting in the Minion War and commanded by Faceless, Advocates and other major beings).

Alignment: Miscreant and Diabolic; two heads, two different alignments; both evil. Likewise, both heads will exhibit different, usually contrary personalities; one quiet and the other boisterous, one neat and orderly the other sloppy and slovenly, one a hot head and quick to take action, the other cool under fire and able to suck up an insult.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6 (roll separately for each head), M.E.: 3D6 (roll separately for each head), M.A.: 2D6 (roll separately for each head), P.S.: 2D6+20 (Supernatural), P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 4D6, P.B.: 2D6 (roll separately for each head), Spd.: 4D6.

Hit Points: P.E.x2.

S.D.C.: 100+4D6.

Natural A.R.: 13

Horror Factor: 14

P.P.E.: 6D6

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills: Wrestling, Gymnastics, Swim, Climb/Scale Walls (+15%), Detect Ambush (+5%), Intelligence (+5%), Palming (+10%), Pick Pockets (+10%), Sing (+5%), Ventriloquism **(+5%),** Basic Math **(+5%),** Locate Secret **Compartments/Doors** (+10%), Land Navigation **(+10%),** and W.P. Blunt - typically divided between the two heads (i.e. one can sing, the other can do math, one can palm, the other can swim, etc.). Also see Natural Abilities.

Average Level of Experience: 1D6+2.

Natural Abilities: Both heads and body have the same abilities. **Nightvision** 90 feet (27.4 m), see the invisible, turn invisible at will, resistant to **fire** and cold (half damage; full damage from magic fire and cold), **bio-regenerates** 3D6 Hit **Points/S.D.C.** per melee **round,** magically knows and magically speaks all languages, can not be surprised, and is immune to poison and disease.

Attacks Per Melee: Six; three per head. When making bite attacks, however, the action is considered a Paired Weapons attack since the **Wrathmonger** is biting with two heads at one time. **Wrathmongers** are so adept at biting that they can even parry with their mouths, catching incoming attacks with their teeth. Thus, the creature can still choose between making a twin attack on a single target, splitting attacks between two targets, or making a parry and an attack simultaneously.

Damage: As per Supernatural strength (typically 4D6 damage from a punch or kick), butt with horns adds an additional 2D6 damage, bites do 3D6 damage, or with giant weapons that typically inflict 3D6 damage **+Supernatural** P.S.

Bonuses (in addition to probable attribute bonuses): +4 on initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry, +3 to dodge, +2 to save vs magic, +1 on all other saving throws.

Vulnerabilities and **Penalties:**. -2 to save vs psionics; sometimes two heads really aren't better than one. Reduce combat bonuses by half if the two heads refuse to cooperate.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: 50 years.

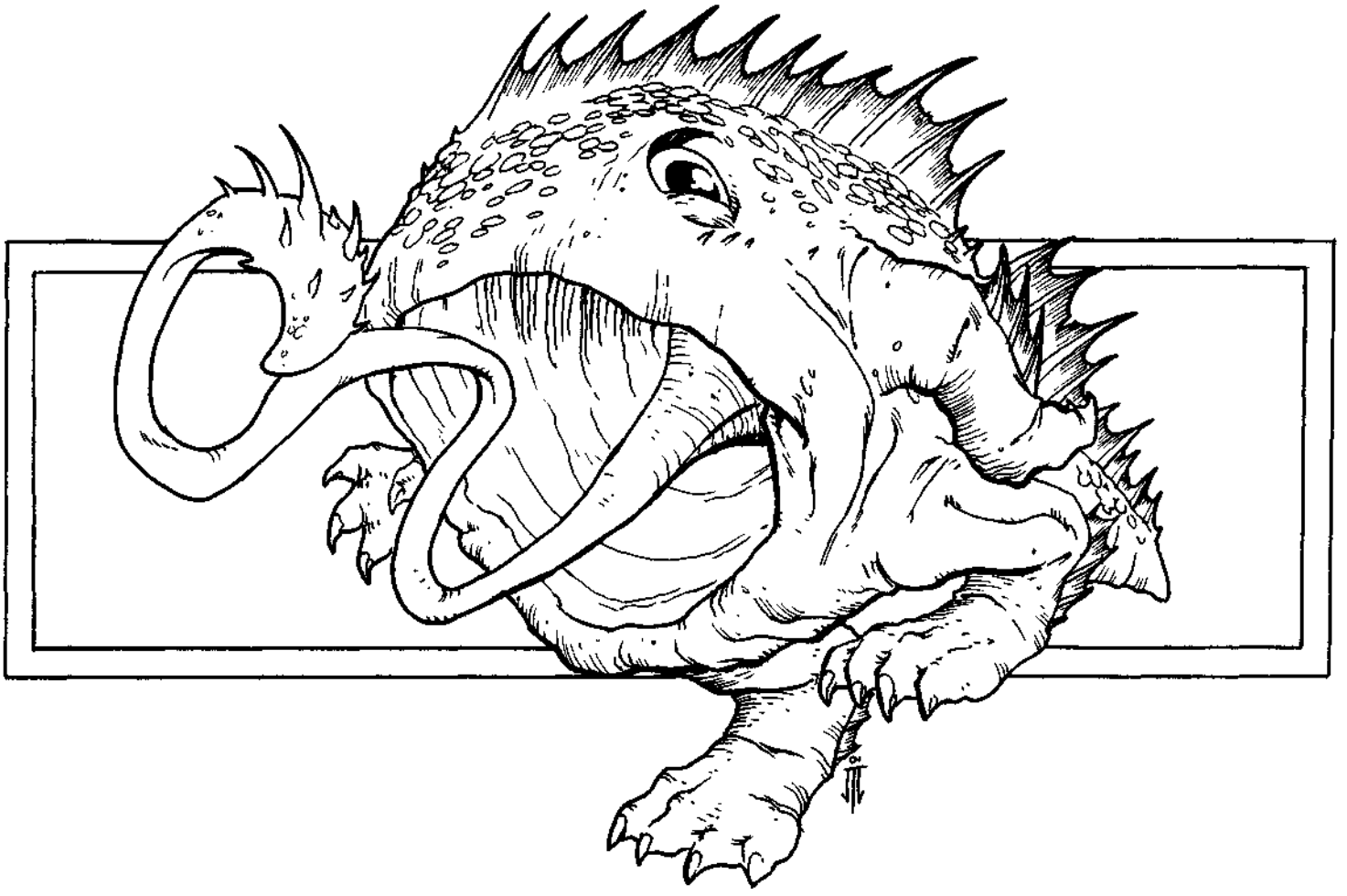
Physical Appearance: A two-headed abomination (described earlier) that is part ape, part goat and living contradiction. Wrathmongers often wear suits of chain mail or heavy armor when they can get them. Since their body **frames** are so odd, their armor must be custom made, and with the constant shortage of smiths in the Minion War, those who do score some armor will be loath to give it up.

Size: Nine to ten feet (2.7 to 3 m) tall.

Weight: 500 to 600 **lbs** (225 to 270 kg).

Random Monster Generator

The Land of the Damned is home to a huge variety of strange monsters, animals, and humanoids not seen elsewhere in the world. These include Demons, Deevils, the mutant Gigantes, eldritch races, vicious supernatural predators, remnants of bizarre ancient civilizations, freaks, alien life forms, and much, much more. The new Monsters and Animals, Dying Races and Minions of the Damned described in the sections above present those creatures which are encountered most often and exist in largest numbers in the Land of the Damned (especially in the *Northern Mountains* and *Great Rift* regions), but they hardly constitute a total list of the nasty creatures that make the Realm of Monsters their home. Other regions of the Land of the Damned, such as the Darkest Heart, the Eternal Torment, the Broken Horn and the Bleakness, all have their own unique creatures to be encountered as well. On top of those, there are dozens, maybe even *hundreds* of other species of creatures present



in the region that are in such small numbers and they probably never be chronicled, catalogued, or even recognized by the outside world. Many of these creatures are the last of their kind, or they are lone travelers or small groups that wandered into the Land of the Damned from another world or dimension. Others are mutants, one-shot alchemical experiments and misanthropes that will not last another generation.

Many of these lone-wolves and freaks pose the greatest danger to those who encounter them because there is no way to know what these mystery beasts might be capable of. Can they cast spells? Will they spray acid? Do they turn into something else? Do they wield weapons like **humanoids** or do they have natural (perhaps hidden) weapons and defenses? Are they solitary hunters or do they roam in packs? Can they use psionics or possess some other unexpected ability? The myriad of questions such as these are what roll through one's head when first encountering an unknown being, especially one displaying hostile intent. When adventurers are trying to get a handle on what they are facing, that is when their opponent has the upper hand, that critical moment of surprise in which to capitalize on their victim's perplexity. As the many gravestones of the Northern Mountains can attest, more than a few adventurers have run into some weird beasts only to promptly lose their life to it. Such is the way of the Land of the Damned.

It is impossible to detail every single creature that *might* be encountered in this region, especially since every day, one or two never before seen creatures might arrive on this world by way of magic gateway, summoning, or just coming up through a long-forgotten cave, grotto, or forsaken piece of coastline. Since the Land of the Damned is such a wild monster menagerie, the G.M. is encouraged to cut loose his imagination and create whatever new monsters and animals he feels would help add life, color and danger to the region. However, not every G.M. has the time, energy or inspiration to create a host of new monsters from scratch. For those who want to throw something completely unknown at their player characters but are strapped for time, we offer a Random Monster Generator in the pages that follow. It is a quick and dirty method for rolling up instant monsters of great diversity.

These random tables provide all the pertinent statistics a G.M. will need for his new monster to enter into the world and jump into conflict with the player characters. However, the Random Monster Generator will not provide what is perhaps the most important aspect of the strange creature - its personality. What makes it tick, why it does the things it does, what function do it serves in the world, and why it should make the player characters sit up and take notice are all left to the Game Master to develop. The best monsters are more than just a series of statistics. They are characters unto themselves. Sometimes, they might not be able to talk like standard NPCs, and what drives them varies wildly from an ordinary villain, but they are characters nonetheless. By giving them their due consideration and touch of personality, they become more than just tooth and claw. They become something compelling, a living, breathing part of the role-playing experience. Something you and your players will not forget any time soon.

Alas, the best something like the Random Monster Generator can do is provide you with a roughly fleshed out creature - a skeleton and muscular system on which to hang the final touches to make it memorable and unique. The job of breathing

life into whatever this Random Monster Generator produces is still up to the G.M. and the player characters who will ultimately interact with it. Hopefully, by using this Generator, the creatures that come out of it will kick loose one's creative process, give out some ideas, and get those imaginative fires burning. Have fun with this, and good luck!

The Basics

All of the monsters here are considered to be monstrous bipedal **humanoid** creatures. The vast majority of them are evil predators who prowl this world in search of food and perhaps to wreak mayhem just to satisfy their dark, evil natures. For the most part, these are creatures who rely on their natural abilities and do not employ weapons, armor, tools or magic items (though they may if the G.M. wishes them to). Whether or not any of these creatures would have O.C.C. training is something else left to the G.M. It would probably be easier to decide that the Generator is for making creatures that have no appreciable culture, education or specific training. If nothing else, this should make crunching their statistics easier. If the G.M. has a more ambitious sort of enemy in **mind,** then O.C.C.s or specific skills would be entirely appropriate. After all, the only thing more menacing than a drooling demon from another dimension is a drooling demon *assassin* or ***wizard*** from another dimension.

The appearance of these creatures was intentionally left undisclosed so each G.M. can mold the beast into his or her own unique vision. Creatures coming out of this Random Monster Generator can look as human or as inhuman as the G.M. likes. For a variety of detailed random appearance tables, check out the *Gigante Warlord R.C.C.* in the Mount **Nimro** sourcebook.

Note: Unless otherwise **specified,** roll or select only *one* entry from each of the following tables when randomly generating a monster. Bonus are accumulative.

Attacks Per Melee

01-05%: One attack per melee, but at +3 to strike *or* to parry and dodge.
06-15%: Two
16-27%: Three
28-40%: Four
41-60%: Five
61-73%: Six
74-85%: Seven
86-95%: Eight
96-00%: 1D4+8

Base S.D.C. and Hit Points

01-05%: *5* Hit Points and 10 S.D.C.
06-10%: 10 Hit Points and 20 S.D.C.
11-15%: 15 Hit Points and 30 S.D.C.
16-20%: 20 Hit Points and 40 S.D.C.
21-25%: 25 Hit Points and 50 S.D.C.
26-30%: 30 Hit Points and 60 S.D.C.
31-35%: 35 Hit Points and 70 S.D.C.
36-40%: 40 Hit Points and 80 S.D.C.
41-45%: 45 Hit Points and 90 S.D.C.
46-50%: 50 Hit Points and 100 S.D.C.
51-55%: 55 Hit Points and 110 S.D.C.
56-60%: 60 Hit Points and 120 S.D.C.
61-65%: 65 Hit Points and 130 S.D.C.
66-70%: 70 Hit Points and 140 S.D.C.
71-75%: 75 Hit Points and 150 S.D.C.
76-80%: 80 Hit Points and 160 S.D.C.
81-85%: 85 Hit Points and 170 S.D.C.
86-90%: 90 Hit Points and 180 S.D.C.
91-95%: 95 Hit Points and 190 S.D.C.
96-100%: 100 Hit Points and 200 S.D.C.

Natural A.R.

01-10%: No Natural A.R.
11-18%: **Natural A.R.** 6
19-26%: **Natural** A.R. 7
27-34%: Natural A.R. 8
35-42%: Natural A.R. 9
43-50%: Natural A.R. 10
51-58%: Natural A.R. 11
59-66%: Natural A.R. 12
67-74%: **Natural** A.R. 13
75-82%: Natural A.R. 14
83-90%: Natural A.R. 15
91-94%: **Natural** A.R. 16
95-97%: Natural A.R. 17
98-00%: Supernatural Creature! Normal weapons of any kind will do no damage to these creatures. They are vulnerable only to magic, rune, holy and silver weapons, as well as psionic and magic powers and creatures with Supernatural P.S. themselves. In addition, these creatures sometimes have special vulnerabilities to a particular item or element (such as **cold,** iron, fire, light, etc.) which will do normal or double damage to them.

Alignment

With very rare exceptions, the creatures generated here are Anarchist or evil (Miscreant, Aberrant, Diabolic), otherwise they would not be instant antagonists for our heroes. Evil beings usually love to torment, use and belittle others, especially intelligent creatures weaker than they. They have no remorse for their actions and delight in torture, deceit, revenge, and all manner of cruelty. Humans and **humanoids** are just the *playthings* in a foul and twisted game or the pawns used for the acquisition of their wants. From their victims' point of view, these fiendish creatures are terrible monsters who prey on the misery of others (which is pretty much true). There can be no understanding or sympathizing with the motives of these creatures unless one is evil, just like them. The only reasonable response to such creatures, the conventional wisdom states, is to kill them first and ask questions later.

There are, of course, the predators who are effectively self-serving and survive by preying on other living creatures. Is it their fault that humans or other humanoids are easy prey, or taste so darn good that they are a favorite prey animal? Likewise, the occasional Anarchist or good "monster" exists even among those who are usually murderous or evil. These tend to be outcasts and loners, cut adrift in a hostile territory with nobody to back them up. Such creatures often die quickly in the Land of the Damned, but from time to time, there arises those special few who can fend off the attacks of the legions of evil that cover this land. These bold individuals may manage to survive and wage a war of their own against a rising tide of evil, and even their own kind. While such high-minded crusaders are used to going it alone, they often welcome help with open arms, and more than a few adventuring parties have taken into their ranks the odd monster or inter-dimensional creature whose abilities and appearance might be outlandish, but whose love for peace and **justice,** courage and honor, steadfastness and loyalty, run as strong as any other hero's. When it comes to fighting the good fight and facing evil in its purest form, these are the things that bind all heroic creatures together, regardless of their biology or place of origin.

01%: Principled. The rarest of the rare, a true champion for all that is good and right in the world. Too bad there are so few of these guys.

02%: Scrupulous. A crusader who knows that in the Land of the **Damned,** sometimes one must make the occasional moral compromise to serve a greater good. With so few settlements around, there are few laws to break or organizations to chafe under, so these heroes rarely have the sorts of trouble with authority that they and other characters might have in a "civilized" environment.

03-05%: Unprincipled. Sometimes heroes, sometime rogues, these creatures often finding themselves doing the right thing, even when their every base impulse tells them to take the money (or revenge) and run. Still, even when they find themselves fighting the good fight, they often figure out some way to make it profitable.

06-25%: Anarchist. **Freewheelers** in the extreme, creatures of this sort could hardly care about brewing any wars between good and evil that defines the Land of the Damned. They simply want to survive and enjoy themselves. Well, as much as one *can* have a good time in a region full of monsters, war and strife.

26-50%: Miscreant. Self-serving opportunists who do whatever it takes to survive, make a profit and get what they want. These people are often filled with anger and hate. They live at others' expense, and where better a place to do that than the Land of the Damned, where there are only two classes of people: "Victims and **abusers."** Or at least that's how they see it. Miscreants don't see heroes as a third class of people; they see them as victims and chumps who are too thick-headed or blinded by ideals like nobility to know any better.

51-75%: Aberrant. Abiding by their own twisted code of morality, these evildoers somehow try to make sense of their brutality and wicked deeds by comparing them to all the bad things they have chosen *not* to do. So often, people mistake **Aberrants** for heroes who play hardball, but this is not the case. They are monsters and villains whose apparent morality is just a smoke screen, a means of consoling what little moral sense they have against the truth of the evil deeds they do.

76-00%: Diabolic. The most evil of evil. Sadly, these are the strongest and most notable creatures roaming the Land of the Damned. They are the antithesis of life itself. They exist at others' expense and make a career of mocking, marring, and destroying all that is good, just and beautiful. They endeavor to destroy the efforts of the rest of the world. They survive so others may perish. And when their lives have run their course, the wake of destruction left in their wake shall be the true measure of the sum efforts of these sinister creatures.

Intelligence

01-10%: Instinctive Hunter. Roll 2D4+1 for **I.Q.** Of the vast number of creatures that come through the Great Rift, many are subhuman in both form and intellect. These are simple, savage predators that instinctively prey on other animals and humanoids (especially the Great Races, such as Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes and humans). They attack with brute strength and have little sense of tactics or strategy. They simply like to overwhelm their opponents and destroy them outright and devour them. To these beasts, there can be no other way. Instinctive Hunters are

very alert, capable of noticing even minute movement nearby and automatically moving to engage. As a result of their quick reflexes, Instinctive Hunters have +1D4 on initiative and +1 to strike.

11-20%: Intelligent Predator. Roll 1D4+5 (or 2D6) for I.Q. These creatures also are voracious and callous hunters and killers, but they are much more clever, much more calculating about it. These intelligent monsters are also motivated by needs and desires other than an instinct to hunt. Many crave power, wealth, fame, glory, revenge, etc., as well as the emotions of hate, love, anger, greed, envy, etc. Many of these creatures fall into the generic category of "monsters" or "demons," as humans like to call them. They tend to be evil, maniacal beings that enjoy inflicting pain and sorrow on innocent and unsuspecting people. May possess supernatural strength and powers to help them accomplish their goal.

21-30%: **Primitive Thinker.** Roll 2D4+4 (or 2D6+1) for human I.Q. The creature chooses its fights wisely and risks itself only when it thinks it has the advantage. These creatures remember their opponents, and they can carry a grudge for quite a long time. They possess only limited capabilities to form plans and to predict the future, so as a result, their goals tend to be short-sighted, linear and basic (no elaborate schemes or strategies) and their actions tend to be a little more impulsive than they should be. Highly intelligent individuals should be able to outwit these creatures with ease.

31-40%: **Basic Tactician.** Roll 3D6 for I.Q. Creatures of this intellect tend to defer to greater minds when they can but have a reasonably good head for details and organization. They *accept their limitations and are mare than willing to let* somebody else do their thinking for them. While they possess decent problem solving ability, their lack of initiative and true insight hinders them most of all, and quick-thinking foes can out think these guys every time, provided they strike while the iron is hot and make command decisions while these Basic Tacticians are busy trying to figure out what to do next. They make good support people but not leaders or innovators.

41-50%: **Quick Thinker.** Roll 3D6 for I.Q. These guys are adaptive and flexible, able to revise plans on the spot, recognize problems, see the bigger picture and to look ahead at potential trouble. They are able to devise and execute intricate schemes, plans, ambushes and traps, but their abilities begin to fail them when they try putting a long-ranging strategy in motion. Their strength is in keeping track of all of their immediate details and improvising on the spot, not extrapolating into the future. They make good Lieutenants and idea people.

51-60%: **Master Planner.** Roll 2D6+6 for I.Q. and +2 to M.E. Like the Quick Thinker, the Master Planner is an adroit tactician, but he also has a sense of strategy and long-term thinking. He can look into the future, identify trends and see how to manipulate the present in order to build a better future. He is not especially good at this (certainly not when compared to the more intelligent categories to follow), but at least he can *do* it at all. To those of lesser intelligence, the Master Planner seems like a genius, and are willing to follow him on his raw intellect alone. This is the "lowest rung" intellect that begins to routinely attract followers.

61-70%: Cold and Calculating. Roll 2D6+6 for I.Q. and +3 to M.E. At this level, the creature has a head for details and an analytical mind. Sees the big picture and can easily plan many contingencies for the furture. Tends to become bored with the mundane details of things and would rather have some lackeys take care of the day-to-day work so he can focus on long-term plans and plots. These are the kinds of creatures that make strong leaders and military commanders. They wish only to think in terms of high concepts, letting subordinates hash out the sometimes messy details. While these characters have vision (and often a compelling and brilliant one), they begin to lose sight of the real-world requirements that are needed to bring such visions to life, or see their vision tarnished by the inadequacy of their underlings.

71-80%: **Fiendishly Clever.** Roll 3D6+3 for I.Q. With brainpower to spare, these creatures fully immerse themselves in the cerebral aspects of putting their elaborate schemes into motion. Everything must be delegated to subordinates or else nothing would get done. The thing is, some of this character's thoughts are so "out there" that he might need a trusted lieutenant or confidant to be able to interpret his leader's thoughts and translate them into something the rest of his followers can understand.

81-90%: **Evil Genius.** Roll 4D6 (or 3D6+6) for I.Q. These sinister villains are too smart for everybody else's good. They know exactly how to make a plan that works and how to implement it as well. They are extremely detail-oriented, and very little gets by them without being noticed. They are also so clever and conniving that their subordinates may see their leader as untrustworthy and arrogant or standoffish; or possibly with their head in another world, dealing with ideas and concepts they can *not possibly comprehend At this level, creatures of this intellect* often feel bored or isolated from the world because they can not find somebody else as intelligent as they, however, most find satisfaction in manipulating others and proving their superiority. Even opponents who provide an intellectually rousing challenge are admired and appreciated.

91-00%: **Genius Mastermind!** Roll 5D6 (or 3D6+12) for I.Q. Creatures possessing this kind of advanced intellect are rare indeed. And a good thing, too, since most of those encountered in the Land of the Damned are true world beating villains who invariably apply their remarkable brainpower towards conquering, enslaving, or destroying the world. They are experts at manipulating large chains of events from behind the scenes, playing off large power blocs of entire nations against each other like chess pieces, while all the time the true culprit, the mastermind, remains in the shadows, untouchable.

Psionics

01-10%: **Lame Brain.** Not only does the creature have no mental stability and easily frightened and intimidated, but has zero psionic potential and is -5 to save vs psionic attack and in-

sanity. Moreover, roll once (or twice) on the Random Insanity tables to determine just how crippled the creature's mental health really is.

11-20%: **Dimwit** No psionic potential, and it is at -2 to save vs psionic attacks and insanity.

21-30%: **Low Wattage.** No psionic potential.

31-40%: **Level Head.** An ordinary Joe with reasonable mental stability but no psionic potential.

41-50%: **Strong-Minded.** No psionics, but +1 to save vs psionic attacks and +2 to save vs insanity.

51-60%: **Has Potential: Minor Psionic.** Select two powers from the category of Sensitive or Physical. Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number plus 2D6. Gets an additional 1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

61-70%: **Curious Mind, Sensitive Soul: Major Psionic.** Select eight powers from the category of Sensitive *or* Healing. Or may select a total of six powers from both categories. Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number plus 4D6. Gets an additional 1D6+ I.S.P. per level of experience.

71-80%: **Iron Will, Mind Over Matter: Major Psionic.** Select eight powers from the category of Physical and is +2 to save vs possession. Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number plus 4D6. Gets an additional 1D6+ I.S.P. per level of experience.

81-90%: **Healer and Optimist: Major Psionic.** Select eight powers from the category of Healing, and is +1 to save vs psionic attack and possession. Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number plus 4D6. Gets an additional 1D6+ I.S.P. per level of experience.

91-00%: **Visionary and Brainstormer: Master Psionic!** The creature is a natural Mind Mage. See page 161 **of The Palladium Fantasy RPG®** for details on this supremely powerful physic.

Mental Endurance

01-10%: **Fragile Mind.** Roll 1D4 for M.E. Sees self as valueless. Lacks sense of self-worth and mental stability. Can not handle stress and is easily frightened, intimidated, and manipulated; -4 to save vs psionic attack, possession and insanity. Moreover, roll once (or twice) on the Random Insanity tables to determine just how crippled the creature's mental health really is.

11-20%: **Subservient.** Roll 1D6 for M.E. This weak minded creature sees himself as inferior. Rarely takes charge and hides behind others. Nervous, easily unnerved, intimidated, and manipulated, as well as a bit paranoid; at -2 to save vs insanity and possession.

21-40%: Insecure. Roll 2D4 for M.E. The creature tends to question and doubt himself, rarely takes charge and tends to be the nervous type.

41-60%: Average Joe. Roll 1D6+7 for M.E. Thinks of himself as okay, but nothing particularly special. Handles stress as well as most folks and can be decisive when he really has to be.

61-80%: Strong-Minded. Roll 2D6+6 for M.E. Bold, confident and sharp minded. Stands his ground, and handles stress well and can deal well with surprises and trauma. +3 to save vs insanity, +1 to save vs Horror Factor, and +1 to save vs possession.

81-90%: Iron Will. Roll 2D6+10 for M.E. Bold, determined, and true to oneself. Stands his ground, and handles stress well, not easily intimidated and stands up for himself and takes charge of his destiny. Deals well with surprises and trauma. +5 to save vs insanity, +2 to save vs Horror Factor and +2 to save vs possession.

91-00%: Unshakable resolve. Roll 3D6+12 for M.E. Implacable and unshakable. Determined and true to oneself. Stands his ground, cool under fire, and seems immune to stress and confusion. Can not be intimidated and stands up for himself and others. +6 to save vs insanity, +4 to save vs Horror Factor and +2 to save vs possession.

Mental Affinity

01-10%: Peon. Roll 1D4+1 for M.A. attribute.
11-20%: Lackey. Roll 2D4 for M.A. attribute.
21-30%: Grunt. Roll 2D6 for M.A. attribute.
31-40%: Average Joe. Roll 2D6+2 for M.A. attribute.
41-50%: Charming. Roll 2D6+6 for M.A. attribute.
51-60%: Captivating. Roll 2D6+8 for M.A. attribute.
61-70%: Wonderful/Visionary. Roll 2D6+10 for M.A. attribute.
71-80%: Bold and Commanding. Roll 2D6+12 for M.A. attribute.
81-90%: Charismatic/Conqueror. Roll 2D6+15 for M.A. attribute.
91-00%: Electrifying/Leader! Roll 2D6+18 for M.A. attribute.

Physical Strength

01-10%: **Feeble.** Roll 1D4+1 for P.S. attribute. Creatures of such minimal strength are often either very, very small, and scrawny or thin and sickly. Feeble creatures often compensate with book learning, cunning, treachery and/or the pursuit of magic (or psionics).

11-20%: **Weakling.** Roll 2D4 for P.S. attribute. Creatures this weak generally avoid physical confrontations, preferring either sneak attacks or using magic or psionic means of dealing with their enemies. These creatures also tend to be small or

scrawny, so the G.M. may wish to keep this in mind when determining Size later on in the Random Monster Generation process.

21-30%: **Featherweight.** Roll 2D6 for P.S. attribute. The creature is rather puny to average. That said, they should probably focus their efforts on developing magic or psionic forms of attack, or using a potent natural weapon such as fire breath, a poison stinger or other device that can debilitate opponents without requiring a lot of brute strength. Some have lightning fast reflexes and bonuses to strike (i.e. a high P.P. and/or Spd.); precision and speed over brute strength.

31-40%: **Lightweight/Average Joe.** Roll 2D6+6 for P.S. attribute. The creature is about as strong as the average human. Whether or not it uses physical strength to hunt, fight and kill depends on how else the creature is designed. Those with claws or purely physical forms of attack might enhance these weapons by attacking in large numbers or by stealth. Those without special physical weapons might be more reliant on magic or psionics or develop a high P.P.

41-50%: **Middleweight.** Roll 3D6+6 for P.S. attribute. Here is where the strongmen begin to emerge. Creatures of this strength usually have some kind of strength bonus, and they are not afraid to use their brawn to intimidate and fight.

51-60%: Powerful. Roll 3D6+12 for P.S. attribute. This is the rough equivalent of Troll strength. Creatures this strong often live by their brawn and the rest of their abilities follow suit. A creature might have other special (and powerful) abilities, but chances are it simply enjoys using its strength in combat so much that other abilities are merely back-up forms of attack.

61-70%: **Ripped!** Roll 3D6+16 for P.S. attribute. Creatures in this P.S. bracket enjoy extraordinary strength, which means they can pick up and hurl much larger objects than those with ordinary strength. They often do, too, taking special relish in using grossly oversized weapons in combat, like small uprooted trees, or hurled boulders.

71-80%: **Heavyweight!** Roll 4D6+18 for P.S. attribute. This is getting out of the realm of ordinary strength for *any* class of creature. Those with this kind of P.S. are probably known for their tremendous strength. These creatures typically have a massive physique bulging with muscles.

81-90%: Dynamo Strength! Roll 4D6+24 P.S. attribute. These are some of the strongest creatures encountered. At the G.M.'s discretion, the creature may enjoy a +1D4 bonus to either its M.A. or its Horror Factor, depending on the overall look and demeanor of the creature.

91-00%: Supernatural Strength! Roll 5D6+12 and refer to the Supernatural P.S. Table on page 17 **of The Palladium Fantasy RPG®** for an entirely different level of strength. Punches and kicks inflict as much damage as a metal weapon and the character can lift 50 times the P.S. in pounds. When creatures with this kind of hitting power strike out, they leave impact craters.

Physical Prowess

01-10%: Bumbler. Roll 1D4 for P.P. attribute. The creature is also -2 on initiative, -2 to strike and -10% on skills that require manual dexterity and balance, including Climb, Prowl, Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Pick Locks and so on. Creatures may have thick fingers, misshapened claws or no hands at all.

11-20%: Klutz. Roll 1D6 for P.P. attribute; -1 to strike and -5% on skills that require manual dexterity and balance. This still does not dissuade many creatures of this level of physical prowess to become physical fighters, disregarding their handicaps and mixing it up directly with their opponents. Unless the creature is unusually strong, well armed or well armored, such bravado is misplaced and an invitation to destruction.

21-30%: **Butterfingers.** Roll 1D4+4 for P.P. attribute. The creature is not so ungraceful that it suffers negative modifiers, but it is also on the down side of average, meaning it will probably never excel at physical combat or acts of agility. A career in knife-fighting, juggling or cat burglary is right out.

31-50%: Average Joe. Roll 1D6+6 for P.P. attribute. Gets the job done, but nothing special to write home about.

51-60%: Deft Roll 2D6+9 for P.P. attribute. Creatures of this level often begin to enjoy bonuses to strike, parry and dodge, thanks to their above-average P.P. This critical distinction often makes the difference between life and death in the Land of the Damned. With so many hostile creatures about, and forced to live lives of fleeing or fighting, any Physical Prowess bonuses can provide an edge that guarantees one's survival.

61-80%: **Agile.** Roll 2D6+13 for P.P. attribute. Creatures such as these possess agility on the upper scale of what most humanoids consider "normal" and may get bonuses to strike, parry and dodge. Anything higher than this is generally considered superhuman; creatures exhibiting such unusually high Physical Prowess will draw undue attention to themselves. For creatures trying to masquerade as a member of another race, keeping a low profile is very important, so one must not exercise their great abilities too much, else they will scotch the illusion that they are something they are not.

81-90%: Lithe. Roll 2D4+18 for P.P. attribute. This is the first level of superhuman agility. Creatures with this kind of Physical Prowess get bonuses to strike, parry and dodge and enjoy the benefits of *automatic dodge,* even if they lack hand to hand combat training. Moreover, creatures this agile tend to revel in their ability, and as such, often incorporate it in their

fighting styles. Frequent parries, dodging, and even various acrobatic or gymnastic skills are par for the course with creatures of this bracket.

91-00%: Poetry in Motion. Roll 1D6+23 for P.P. attribute. Gets bonuses to strike, parry and dodge, is +2 on initiative, and enjoys the benefits *of automatic dodge.* If the G.M. deems it appropriate, "monsters" can get one additional attack per melee round, +2 to disarm or entangle, +2 to pull punch, and +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

Physical Endurance

01-10%: Sickly. Roll 1D4+1 for P.E. attribute. These creatures usually are very small; those that are not probably teetering on the edge of extinction. Periodically, creatures will be encountered with endurance this low, but they will have an incredible amount of natural body armor **and/or** S.D.C. to offset the disadvantage. Still, such a poor Physical Endurance makes one ***susceptible*** to poison, *magic, and* disease; *-4 to* save against all three.

11-20%: **Frail.** Roll 2D4 for P.E. attribute. A creature such as this is not much better off than the previous bracket. Not only are they -2 to save vs magic, poison and disease, but they also are usually *not* tiny creatures (like frog or rabbit size). They tend to be the size of small **humanoids,** like Gnomes or even Goblins. This makes them fair game to larger, more aggressive humanoids. Rarely is the creature with this frail constitution much of a fighter; they often figure out ingenious ways to hide from or otherwise elude their enemies. Creatures with this kind of Physical Endurance often fill the so-called "victim niche" of the Land of the Damned. They help make up that population of creatures that serve as the collective food and victim population for the rest of the region. These creatures might indeed have special methods of attack, defense, or **magical/psionic** abilities. It is a cruel fate for the members of the victim niche, but one that many of them either are too ignorant to realize, or it is something the more intelligent victim creatures accept with a resigned sense of destiny.

21-30%: Puny. Roll **2D4+4** (or 2D6) for P.E. attribute. This range of P.E. may be okay for civilized humans and city folk, but it's pathetic for a monster. Surprisingly, there is a fair number of creatures to be found with this kind of Physical Endurance. Creatures like this often learn to run **and/or** hide, or they band together and fight as a large pack. Even though the individual may be weak, the pack is strong, and in many cases, strong enough to fend off hostile creatures many times the size of any one pack member. Such is the power of the *group* effort, illustrated beautifully time and again in the ever-hostile Land of the Damned. If they are aggressive, they strike using the element of surprise, traps or an unexpected ability, psionics or magic.

31-50%: Robust - Human. Roll 2D6+6 (or 3D6) for P.E. attribute. This is roughly equivalent to the average human Physical Endurance. At this level, creatures tend to be more than capable of defending themselves. They may or may not have exceptional endurance (and the bonuses that come with it), but they are not hamstrung by a lack of physical fortitude.

51-70%: Strapping and Tough. Roll 2D6+12 (or 4D6) for P.E. attribute. Creatures with this level of endurance often enjoy the bonuses from a high P.E. score, but they also are able to work for long periods of time without tiring. Monsters with this level of P.E. can labor continuously for a number of hours equal to the P.E. score. After that they will need a 1D4 hour rest (minimum), but for the most part, creatures such as these are remarkably **endurant** and make excellent soldiers and workers. In the Northern Mountains, high levels of Physical Endurance are a critical attribute for surviving the rigors of the mountains themselves. Creatures with this kind of P.E. are more likely than others to find a niche for themselves in the Northern Mountains. Sure, the mountains are lethal and filled with hostile monsters, but in many ways they are the friendliest place to live in the Land of the Damned ... for those who have the fortitude to survive their natural challenges.

71-80%: **Ironman!** Roll 3D6+12 (or 5D6) for P.E. attribute. These creatures can endure great physical stress and labor, work long **hours,** ftinction with **little** sleep (5-6 hours), and resist disease, poison and even magic. They are well suited for outdoor survival, especially in the Northern Mountains. Heals 50% faster *than humans, gets 4D6 extra S.D.C. and is +1 to save vs* possession and Horror Factor. Bonuses are in addition to normal attribute bonuses and abilities.

81-90%: Dynamo! Roll 3D6+20 (or 6D6) for P.E. attribute. These creatures are more than human, enjoy all of the benefits of the Ironman, above, but are immune to disease, drink fouled or little water, can eat spoiled and rotten food, and are resistant to normal cold and heat (do half damage; magic cold and heat do full). They heal twice as fast as humans and are +2 to save vs possession, poison and Horror Factor, +1 on all other saving throws and get **+1D4x10** extra S.D.C. Bonuses are in addition to normal attribute bonuses and abilities.

91-00%: Superhuman! 4D6+20 for P.E. attribute. This creature is impervious to disease and poison, impervious to normal cold and heat (magic cold and heat do half damage), **bio-regenerates** 2D6 points from damage per minute (4 melee rounds), and will **regrow** lost limbs in **1D4x10+6** days. +4 to save vs possession and Horror Factor, +2 on all other saving throws and gets +2D4xlO extra S.D.C. and 4D6 extra Hit Points. Bonuses are in addition to normal attribute bonuses and abilities.

Physical Beauty & Horror Factor

Horror Factor is not just a scary or disturbing appearance. It is an aura of menace that chills the casual observer to the very bone. Indeed, some creatures have a Horror Factor because their physical appearance is shocking **and/or revolting**. but others, and often the ones with higher ratings, do not look too bizarre at first glance. It is when somebody gets a good, close-up look at them that they might see a sinister gleam in the eye, a set of demonic teeth, etc. *That* is when the horror sinks in the deepest, when victims have opened their hearts and minds to a thing or a

person, only to find out too late that what they've opened themselves up to is actually something evil that could destroy them.

01-25%: Hideous! Roll 1D4 for P.B. attribute. It's like this creature's face caught fire and somebody put it out with a rake. Horror Factor: 1D6+11.

26-50%: Ugly! Roll 1D4+2 for P.B. attribute. As if the creature fell out of the Ugly Tree and hit most of the branches on the way down. Horror Factor: 1D6+9.

51-60%: Plain-Looking. Roll 3D4 for P.B. attribute. In the Land of the Damned, one is likely to find plenty of creatures that are neither especially ugly or beautiful to behold, but still there is that touch of something that may be disturbing. Horror Factor: 1D6+4.

61-70%: Attractive. Roll 3D6+1 for P.B. attribute. The creature has certain endearing and attractive features and characteristics that might make others drop their guard for a moment. ("Aw, it's sooo cute!") That is often all the time a predator or killer needs to strike, taking advantage of its victim's lapse in judgment to terminal effect. No H.F.

71-80%: Beautiful or Striking. Roll 3D6+5 for P.B. attribute. Despite this creature's true nature (which is probably a vicious hunter and killer of humanoids), it has a lovely exterior that demands a certain amount of admiration. That does not make the creature any less dangerous, though, and adventurers with a level head will know that the only thing more untrustworthy in the Land of the Damned than a ugly monster is a beautiful one. No H.F.

81-90%: Ravenous Beauty. Roll 2D6+14 for P.B. attribute. This creature has an "Awe Factor" of 1D6+8 rather than a Horror Factor. It possesses a certain kind of intense beauty and magnetism that *entrances* anyone who gazes upon it (at least to some degree). This even works on those who *know* they have reason to fear the creature. Unless those looking at the creature have had a run-in with it or its kind previously, the characters will be struck by its beauty, grace and power. By the time the victim breaks free of the momentary stupor, it is usually too late.

91-00%: Breathtaking. Roll 2D6+18 for P.B. attribute. This creature has an "Awe Factor" of 1D6+11 rather than a Horror Factor. Only those with no love for beauty in any form could look at this creature and *not* be moved by its stunning appearance. Such beauty is usually seen only among gods and goddesses.

Speed

01-10%: Glacial. Roll 1D4 for Speed attribute. These creatures are so slow on their feet that they are at -1 attack per melee and -4 to dodge.

11-20%: Molasses. Roll 1D6+1 for Speed attribute. Thanks to the poor reflexes and low speed of these creatures, they suffer a penalty of -2 to dodge.

21-30%: Sluggish. Roll 1D6+4 for Speed attribute. These creatures are just on the low end of what might be considered average speed for a human. While they have no negative modifiers to their dodge rolls, they won't be outrunning cheetahs without some divine intervention.

31-40%: Steady. Roll 2D6+5 for Speed attribute. This is average speed for many humanoid races. Compared to many other monsters and monstrous humanoids, however, this is fairly poky, and creatures of this speed are unlikely to outrun their pursuers. If they care to survive, they will have to have some kind of weapon to deter attackers or a defensive measure (like high Natural A.R.) to render their assault ineffective.

41-50%: Middle of the Pack. Roll 3D6+6 for Speed attribute; roughly equivalent to a fast human. This is hardly remarkable speed for the Land of the Damned, though, and the creature will still need something other than running ability to succeed in fight-or-flight situations.

51-60%: Lightfoot. Roll 3D6+12 for Speed attribute. Fast for a humanoid, but still not as fast as most animals, monsters and predatory humanoids from other worlds and dimensions.

61-70%: Rapid Runner. Roll 4D6+20 for Speed attribute. Faster than most humans can run without going to magic.

71-80%: Speed Demon. Roll 5D6+30 for Speed attribute. Fast, equal to many animals that have a reputation for being fast runners. Creatures of this kind are usually ambush killers, capable of closing the distance between them and their quarry before their quarry ever knows what hit them. Such creatures also are difficult to catch and kill, since their speed gets them out of most tight spots.

81-90%: Greased Lightning! Roll 6D6+46 for Speed attribute and +2 to dodge. Virtually no animal (or many monsters for that matter) can keep up.

91-00%: Superhuman Speed! Roll 2D4xlO+60 for Speed attribute and +4 to dodge. Blink, and you'll miss this creature as it blazes by. This creature has a resting heart rate that would sound like a snare drum roll. It is a voracious eater to supply its energy requirements.

Size & Bonus S.D.C.

01-10%: Five feet (1.5 m) tall. Equal to a small human, just taller than a Dwarf.

11-20%: Six feet (1.8 m) tall. Equal to a typical human.

21-30%: Seven feet (2.1 m) tall. Equal to a really tall human; just under Giant size.

31-40%: Eight or Nine feet (2.4 to 2.7 m) tall. Equal to a Wolfen or small Ogre. The short end of Giant-sized.

41-50%: 10 feet (3 m) tall. Giant-sized.

51-60%: 12 feet (3.6 m) tall. Add 3D6 S.D.C.

61-70%: 15 feet (4.5 m) tall. Add 4D6 S.D.C.

71-80%: 18 feet (5.4 m) tall. Add 5D6 S.D.C.

81-90%: 20 feet (6.1 m) tall. Add 6D6 S.D.C.

91-95%: 22 feet (6.7 m) tall. Add 1D4x10 S.D.C.

96-00%: 25 feet (7.6 m) tall. Add 1D6x10 S.D.C.

Natural Weapons

Roll twice or select two from the following table. Bite and claws are the most common.

01-10%: Horns. Stabbing/goring attack: 2D4 or 2D6.

11-20%: 1D4+1 tentacles instead of arms and hands. Quite powerful; 1D6+3 per punch.

21-30%: Bite. Large, powerful jaws and fangs; 2D6.

31-40%: Bite. Small, razor sharp teeth; 2D4.

41-50%: Clawed hands; 1D6 plus normal P.S. damage with bonuses.

51-60%: Clawed hands with large, retractable claws; 2D6 plus normal P.S. damage with applicable damage bonuses

61-70%: Thick, slashing tail; 2D6, does not add to the number of melee attacks per round.

71-80%: Prehensile tail. Used like an additional arm/hand for hitting and holding;same as the creature's punching damage and adds one additional attack per melee.

81-90%: Slashing prehensile tail with spikes or a bladed tip. Used as a third claw or a stabbing/slashing weapon; 2D6.

91-00%: Exotic Weapon! This is left entirely to the G.M.'s discretion, but it should be something out of the ordinary. We're talking breathe fire, squirting acid, firing quills, a special swallowing attack, something along these lines. For ideas on exotic attacks, check out the various abilities featured by some of the monsters in this sourcebook, in the Monsters and Animals sourcebook, or take a look at the *Gigante Warlord R.C.C.* featured in the Mount Nimro sourcebook. Damage inflicted will be no less than 2D6 and no more than 4D6.

Natural Abilities

Roll 1D4 times or select three from the following (only one selection can be Psionic or Magic):

01-05%: Swim (70+3D6%); 01-60% chance of being able to breathe underwater indefinitely too.

06-10%: Hawk-like vision. Can see clearly out to 1D4 miles (1.6 to 6.4 km). +1 on initiative, +1 to strike with long-range weapons or attacks (more than 60 feet/18.3 m away).

11-15%: Nomad/Traveler. Land Navigation (60+4D6%) and Wilderness Survival (60+3D6%).

16-20%: Hider. Camouflage (60+3D6%), Detect Ambush (50+3D6%), and Prowl (42+3D6%).

21-25%: Stalker. Prowl (60+3D6%) and Surveillance (50+3D6%).

26-30%: Tracker; by sight. Track Humanoids (60+3D6%) and Track and Trap Animals (70+3D6%); follows trails, footprints and other visual signs, knows the habits of the prey.

31-35%: Quick & Alert +3 on initiative, +1 to dodge.

36-40%: Natural Climber. 90/80% at full speed. 01-33% chance it can climb along the side of walls and ceilings like an insect! +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

41-45%: **Nightvision**. Can see clearly for 1D4x100 feet (30.5 to 122 m) in total darkness and can see 2,000 feet (610 m) in outdoor night/darkness with other sources of light, such as the stars, the moon, distant torchlight, etc.

46-50%: See the Invisible. Like the Psionic Sensitive ability, except can be performed at will and at no P.P.E. or I.S.P. cost.

51-55%: Advanced Hearing gives the character the ability to hear very faint sounds (light footsteps, small animals breathing). The character can also overhear conversation at a much greater distance than is normally possible. +1 on initiative.

56-60%: Advanced Smell. Enables the character to detect very faint scent traces. Tracking by smell (as a bloodhound) is possible at 50+5D6% (+10% to follow blood scent). Characters can also recognize the distinct scent of a specific individual at 40+4D6%.

61-65%: Natural Leaper. Can leap twice their height or length both lengthwise and height-wise, and four times leaping down from a height (no injury, lands on feet or all fours).

66-70%: Bold and Fearless. +1D4+2 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 to disarm and entangle.

71-75%: **Winged Flight;** flies 2x faster than its running speed.

76-80%: Physical Psionic. Select 1D4+5 Physical powers. Has M.E. x3 for I.S.P.

81-85%: **Sensitive Psionic.** Select 1D4+5 Sensitive *or* Healing powers. Has M.E. x3 for I.S.P.

86-90%: Incredibly Psionic: Select 1D4+1 Physical psionic powers, 1D4+1 Sensitive powers and 1D4+1 Super Psionic powers! Has M.E. x5 for I.S.P.

91-95%: **Bio-Regeneration.** Regains lost Hit Points and/or S.D.C. at a rate of 3D6 per hour. Will regrow tail, tentacles or lost limb in 1D6x10+12 days.

96-00%: Magical! Select a total of 1D6+3 Wizard or Warlock Spells (one type only). Selections can be made from levels 1-4. Has P.E. x3 in P.P.E.

Supernatural Powers

Roll for or select two (or three) of the following.

01-05%: **Reborn; semi-indestructible.** Unless the creature's head is chopped off and burned, it will completely regenerate 24 hours after its demise, even if blown to bits! Will usually seek revenge upon those who last "killed" it.

06-10%: **Impervious to ordinary weapons.** Normal weapons made of steel do NO damage whatsoever, nor do physical punches or kicks unless they are from an opponent with Supernatural strength. However, magic and magic weapons inflict full damage, plus the creature will have one substance that it is especially vulnerable to and which inflicts double damage. It is one of the following:

01-25% Stone (includes gemstones)

26-50% Wood

51-75% Silver

76-00% Magic/enchanted weapons (spells only do normal damage)

11-20%: **Superior Nightvision**. Can see clearly for 1D4x100+400 feet (152 to 244 m) in total darkness and can see 6,000 feet (1838 m) in outdoor night/darkness with other sources of light, such as the stars, the moon, distant torchlight, etc.

21-30%: **Impervious to Fire and Cold.** Normal fire and cold do no damage. Magic fire and cold do half damage.

31-45%: **Bio-Regeneration.** 3D6 points per *melee round* and impervious to disease and poison.

46-50%: **Limited Metamorphosis.** Can transform into ONE specific other type of animal (large or small) only.

51-55%: **Humanoid Metamorphosis.** Can transform into a human and/or a humanoid version of its monstrous self.

56-60%: **Shape-Changer!** Can transform into any animal and humanoid creature it chooses. 01-50% Can only keep that form for 2D6+12 hours. 51-00% Indefinitely.

61-70%: **Incredible S.D.C. +1D4x100** to S.D.C. and recovers them twice as fast as normal (even quicker if the beast has bio-regenerative powers).

71-80%: **Natural Magic Powers!** Knows 1D6+1 Wizard spells from each level, levels 1-4. P.P.E. is P.E.x2 +28.

81-90%: Natural Warlock. Has all standard Warlock abilities and knows 1D4 spells from each level, levels one 1-6. P.P.E. is 1D4x10+21. Spells can only be selected from one elemental category: Air, Earth, Fire or Water.

91-00%: Master Wizard! Has vast spell knowledge and P.P.E. Knows 1D6+1 spells from each magic level 1-9. P.P.E. is 2D6x10+32.

Achilles' Heel

01-10%: Water. Normal water burns the creature like acid. A small squirt of water, like from a water skin, does 1D4 damage. A splash from a glass or cup does 2D6 damage. A half gallon (1.6 liters) inflicts 6D6 and a gallon (3.7 liters) inflicts 1D6x10 damage.

11-20%: Energy. All types of energy including fire, electricity, magical energy bolts, etc., inflict *double damage*. Physical attacks, such as punching, kicking, stabbing, slashing, falls, etc., however, do *absolutely no* damage to the creature!

21-30%: Light. All forms of light blind and frighten the creature (-10 to strike, parry and dodge while blinded). Lives in a dark cave or dwelling during the day. Hunts only at night or other dark conditions (eclipse, magical darkness, etc.). Exceptional night vision equal to a human's day vision.

31-40%: Fires, even normal fires, inflict normal damage (2D6 from a flaming torch). Magic fire inflicts *double damage*. Doesn't care for heat in general.

41-50%: Weapons of Pure Iron (must be 88% pure iron or higher) will harm the creature, bypassing its Supernatural defenses/A.R.. In addition, iron weapons inflict 1D6 more damage than usual.

51-55%: Weapons of Wood. The supernatural fiend is vulnerable to weapons made of wood (at least 98%). These include arrows (without a metal or stone head) and spears. Wooden weapons inflict an additional 1D6 damage against the monster.

56-65%: Silver. Ordinary weapons made of, or coated in, silver inflict *double damage* instead of the usual damage.

66-70%: Weapons of Stone. Ordinary weapons made of stone inflict *double damage* instead of the usual damage.

71-80%: Weapons of Magic, including Holy and rune weapons, inflict double damage.

81-90%: Symbols of goodness and purity (not necessarily religious/holy symbols; the insignia of a pure and ri$\teo\is army of Palladins would also do the trick) invoke fear in the creature and will hold it at bay. If the symbol touches the creature, it will inflict 2D4 points of damage and most likely will leave a nasty scar. Contact with the symbol will send most of these creatures running at least 2D4x100 yards/meters away.

91-95%: Mirrors. The creature's reflection is terrifying, even to itself! If the creature sees its own reflection, it must roll to save vs its own Horror Factor (if it doesn't normally have an H.F. it must roll a 13 or higher). A failed roll means the creature is momentarily stunned per the usual Horror Factor, then flees and hides for 1D6x10 minutes.

96-00%: Cold. The creature can not stand the cold. Exposure to freezing or below temperatures will inflict 2D6 S.D.C. every minute (four melee rounds). Weapons made of ice do an extra 1D6 damage and magical cold, snow and ice attacks do double damage.

Numbers Encountered

01-10%: Loners. Never found in the company of others.

11-20%: Mated pairs; where there is one, another is near by. Kill one, and the other will make it its mission to hunt down the culprit.

21-30%: Tiny Group. Typically encountered in groups of 1D4 individuals.

31-40%: Small Group. Typically encountered in groups of 1D6+1 individuals. These groups are often very tightly knit and the individuals are conditioned to think of the group's welfare as highly as of their own.

41-50%: Medium Group. Typically encountered in groups of 2D6+2 individuals. The focus on the group is as strong as in a small group. Only here, there are enough individuals that there can be a crude division of labor. While many tasks are shared throughout the group, everyone has his or her specialty, too.

51-60%: Large Group. Typically encountered in groups of 3D6+3 individuals.

61-70%: Small Horde. Typically encountered in groups of 6D6. 1D4 individuals will stand out as leaders and especially gifted warriors, mages or some other kind of champion.

71-80%: Medium Horde. Typically encountered in groups of 1D4x10+10. 2D4 individuals will stand out as leaders and especially gifted warriors, mages or some other kind of champion.

81-90%: Large Horde! Typically encountered in groups of 1D6x10+30. 3D6 individuals will stand out as leaders and especially gifted warriors, mages or some other kind of champion.

91-00%: Small Army! Typically encountered in groups of 3D6x10. 4D6 individuals will stand out as leadets and especially gifted warriors, mages or some other kind of champion.

Feeding Habits

This is only important insofar as to the extent that the creatures consider humanoids (e.g., the player characters) to be food. Most of the creatures to be found in and around the Land of the Damned are predatory, meat-eating entities that are used to hunting and slaughtering their meals. To the majority of them, the business of killing is just another life function with no moral overtones. To some others, though, killing is not just a way to fill one's belly. It is a means of entertainment, of exercising evil urges, and of satisfying a wanton desire to destroy life itself, one being at a time. And for a few others, eating does not mean the killing of *anything.* These oddballs tend to fall into two camps: those that have virtually no aggressive impulses towards others (they don't last very long in the Land of the Damned), or those who are hostile towards every living thing they encounter, but for reasons unknown.

01-10%: Mineral Eater. This rare creature subsists on a diet of rocks, stones and metals. Creatures of this kind often consider special alloys or precious metals to be delicacies. This grants the creature with the equivalent of the Gemology skill. The creature's base chance for identifying precious metals, rocks, gems, and other minerals is 76%. After the creature has tasted a specific kind of mineral 1D4 times, its ability to identify it rises to 98%. In the alternative, this could be a herbivore; plant eater.

11-20%: Scavenger. Eats pretty much whatever it can scrounge, from table scraps, to garbage to carrion.

21-30%: Meat eater, dead or alive! Any living creature, butchered meat or dead carcass is fair game to this voracious creature. Unintelligent creatures will attack anything they think they can slay. Intelligent predators and humanoids will at least *consider* everything as a potential prey source but will be more selective about what it actually kills and eats. While a humanoid creature might eat other humanoids, its hunger rarely is so great that it will eat other humanoid friends it might have acquired, for example.

31-40%: Basic Predator. The creature typically feeds only on prey "it" kills. Tends to stalk creatures smaller or less powerful than it. They often go for prey (humanoid and animal) that

are easy to slay and put up a minimal fight. For most ordinary animal predators, humanoids do not fit into this category, but for "monsters," humans and humanoids may be desirable and even preferred. When faced with quarry that fights back or possesses magic, the Basic Predator will usually retreat, passing up on that particular meal because it is not worth the trouble. Never fights to the death unless cornered.

41-50%: Anthrophage! The creature simply loves the flesh of humanoids or it can only digest humanoid meat; either way, that which walks upright is the main food source here. Bestial creatures will stalk settlements and wandering parties of travelers and adventurers, looking for an opportune time to strike and carry off a victim. Intelligent creatures might show a little more discretion. Creatures from an advanced society, for example, will have undoubtedly developed some kind of culture around the eating of other humanoids. Maybe they only eat criminals or defeated warriors or willing sacrificial victims, etc. Whether or not the anthrophagic creature is willing to eat its own kind (the ultimate irony, huh?) is left to the G.M.s discretion.

51-60%: Drinks Humanoid Blood, vampire-style. Victims do not rise as undead after death. (Or do they? G.M.'s call.) The creature requires between one and four pints of blood a day depending on body size. Some creatures of this type require a specific kind of blood, or conversely, they can drink any kind of blood except that from a certain race. Either way, those around the creature tend to view its eating habits as gross and repulsive, yielding a Horror Factor of 2D4+4. (If the creature already has a Horror Factor, add this number to it.)

61-70%: Carrion Eater! Eats the flesh of the dead only. And not the freshly slain, either. We're talking about corpses at least 1D4x10 hours old, usually once they get really nasty. The upside is that these creatures tend to have acute senses of smell (+1 to initiative and track by smell (76%). The downside is they themselves stink terribly, are easily detected by creatures with sensitive senses of smell (up to one mile/1.6 km away!), and are generally considered repugnant creatures with a Horror Factor of 1D4+4.

71-80%: **Psychic Vampire!** The creature subsists on P.P.E. alone. It can not even digest solid food and drink, even though it might consume such things for pleasure reasons (and to fit in with normal society). These creatures eat by slaying a victim and then absorbing the victim's P.P.E. surge at the moment of death. In some cases, absorbing this energy does not even affect the creature's own base level of P.P.E. Such creatures simply need raw P.P.E. to survive, and they dine on it regularly. Others need the energy for nourishment, but they can also tap into that energy to power their spells and other such abilities. These second types are really dangerous since they tend to fritter away their hard-hunted nourishment, thereby always requiring more and more energy to stay fed.

81-90%: Fear Feeder! A psychic vampire that empathically feels and absorbs its victim's emotions of fear and terror. Creatures of this sort often have high Horror Factors and use them to terrify their "prey," although they might not even want to hurt them. AH too often, creatures of this sort are considered evil predators and are wiped out where they live.

91-00%: Thrill Killer. The creature hunts and kills both for food and the sheer pleasure of the kill. Half the time it does not eat or use any part of its prey. Might collect bodies, bones or body parts to decorate its lair with. Similarly, it might also ritually mutilate its victims, especially if it leaves its kills where they lay.

The Great Northern Mountains

The Land of the Damned is inaccessible from the sea, as any ship that gets closer than a few miles to its shores disappears beneath the waves and is never seen again. On the northern shore, this phenomenon is attributed to sudden violent storms and a massive infestation of sea serpents in the Sea **of Despair.** On the southern shore, sailors also sight sudden squalls, tall waves and sea serpents, but the main problem here are super-aggressive undersea humanoids who have declared the entire Gedorma Strait (the thin body of water connecting the Great Inland Sea to the outer ocean) as their domain. These are the *Kappa* and a larger creature know as the *Zaranceti* (described elsewhere in this book). The Zarenceti are especially paranoid and destructive and will destroy any ship that does not pay them tribute. It is rumored that the West has figured out how to keep these sinister aquatic raiders at bay, but will not share their secrets with anyone else, which explains why the nations of Phi and Lopan have been unable to successfully navigate *any* ships through the Gedorma Strait in over 300 years.

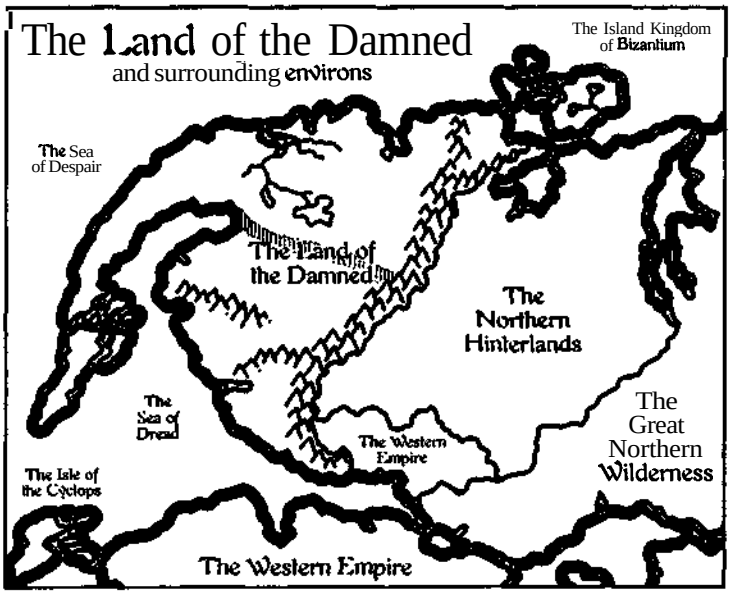
It might be possible that a few light vessels (mainly lifeboats and skiffs) have successfully landed on the dark shores of the Land of the Damned, but if any crew have lived long after the landing, or been able to brave the rough seas, there has been no record of it. Enough tales of the futility of sailing to the Land of the Damned have spread through the nations of the world that any adventurer who knows something about the *End of the World* knows enough to try entering it from the land, not the sea. However, land travel means going over the indomitable **Northern Mountains,** a wall of stone so high that it is said no air exists at the chain's highest peaks. The number of people who successfully find a way over the Northern Mountains is only slightly better than the success rate for those assaulting the coast by sea, but it is the only option that offers any honest chance of survival. And to approach the Northern Mountains, one must first travel through the **Northern Hinterlands,** a forbidding and monster-filled wilderness in its own right. There is just no other or easier way.

The Roof of the World

Greater than the mighty Himalayas of Earth, this is the tallest and most forbidding mountain chain on the Palladium World. According to every major source of religious, magical and scholastic lore, the mountains were crafted by the coalition of beings who defeated the Old Ones and put an end to the Age of Chaos. The victors of that titanic conflict (few that there were) erected the Northern Mountains to exile the Old Ones' many *minions*

from the rest of the world, so they could do it no further harm. More importantly, those same minions are trapped together, where they can practice their evil ways on each other in an endless cycle of fear, victimization, pain, treachery and war. This is the punishment for those who served the Old Ones, and it is a sentence that will remain in effect so long as the Northern Mountains remain standing. Or so the legends say.

The Northern Mountains are nearly impossible to climb (just as the gods said to have made them, intended). They are incredibly tall and sheer, with terrible wind, foul weather, and other treacherous conditions, providing the ultimate challenge to even the most skilled mountain climbers.



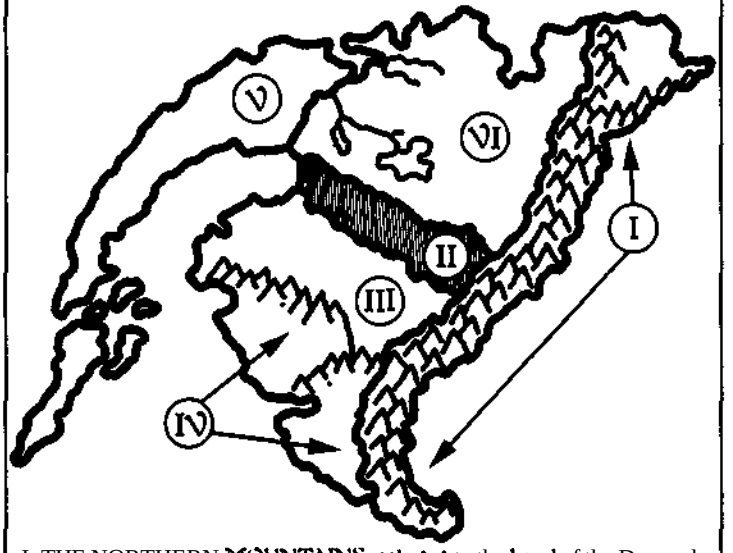
Player and G.M. Note: Most of us city folk and flat landers have a rather "cartoon" idea of how mountains work. Most of us have a nasty habit of thinking, first you climb up, then you climb down. If only it were that simple. Not only are mountains tall and treacherous to climb, but they are wide - miles and miles wide, and covered with a rugged terrain. The foothills are 6-12 miles (9.6 to 19 km) of up and down travel through scrub, forest and rocky terrain. The Lowlands are miles more of rocky, up and down incline covered by scrub and alpine forest broken by rivers, streams, valleys, ravines and debris fields from rock slides. Some of these debris fields can be scaled (and become new hills), others of them and other barriers will force the traveler to go around, perhaps making a detour that burns up an entire day and covers miles. The Midlands have thin forests and more scrub. The incline is steeper, the terrain rocky and more rugged and one may have to go up, down and up again. The Midland region is also miles wide with valleys and plateaus; not a simple straight shot up. The Highlands offer a new challenge, a steep vertical climb, often up nearly sheer walls of stone or stone and ice that rise 2000-4000 feet (610 to 1219 m) above the Midlands (the top of which is already thousands of feet above sea level). Some areas will be too steep, sheer or covered in loose stone and ice that the traveler may have to travel tens of miles along the side (horizontally) in order to find a less hazardous avenue of ascent. Once the top is reached, comes the equally dangerous and time consuming climb down, first from the tallest peak, then through miles and miles of lesser mountain peaks and then Midland peaks and valleys (both inhabited by monsters and demons), and across mountain after mountain of lowlands, before one can begin the true descent on the other side, through the last Lowland mountains and finally into the basin (the interior) of the Land of the Damned. The whole trip could take months or even one to several years and still end in failure or death.

Despite the poor odds of success, there will be a select few with the right mix of skill, cunning, courage, strength and *luck* to find a way across the "uncrossable." Most of those survive because they find a hidden path *through* the mountains, one that threads its way around the base of the mountains in the Midlands and into the numerous lowland valleys found throughout the chain. Here, pocket communities can be found, the only semblance of civilization one is likely to find in the Northern Mountains. In the Lowlands, valley communities sit sheltered from the rest of the world by mile-high stone walls on every side. Elsewhere, in the Midlands and Highlands, small communities can be found in caves or tunnels carved out of the rock, or small villages that cling to mountain faces or rest on natural plateaus or ingeniously designed terraces. It is even rumored that certain mountaintops have entire cities perched on top of their summits, viewing the world from a most unique vantage.

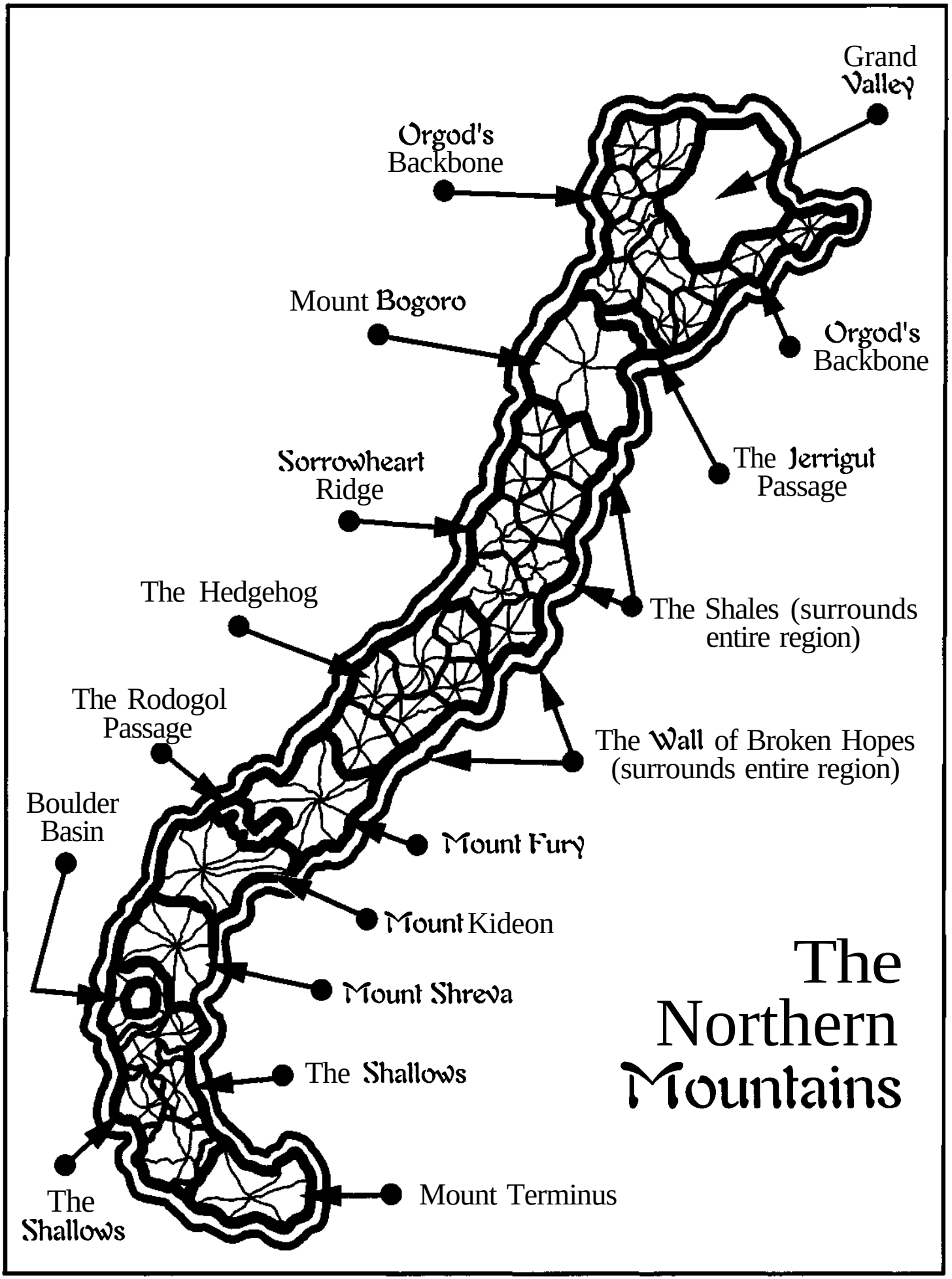
Some of these places, it is said, house collections of adventurers and their descendants who tried making it over the mountains and could never find their way out. Others are the home to the last great civilizations of Gnomes, Troglodytes, and even Changelings who have never known persecution, and the remnants of ancient races thought to have perished when the Age of Chaos ended. Still others are the lairs and retreats of monsters, demons and powerful winged creatures such as the dragon, Sphinx, Za and others.

Tucked away in the mountains' folds of stone might travelers begin to learn the terrible secrets of the Land of the Damned, as well as the incredible promise of knowledge and treasure it holds. For some, the Northern Mountains will spell the end of

Regions of the Land of the Damned



I: THE NORTHERN MOUNTAINS, gateway to the Land of the Damned
II: THE GREAT RIFT, where Demons and Deevils wage the Minion War
III: THE DARKEST HEART, the forest of eternal solitude and madness
IV: THE ETERNAL TORMENT, where the undead roam unchecked
V: THE BROKEN HORN, last refuge of the dying Minotaur Nations
VI: THE BLEAKNESS, where the Citadel stands, and darkest evil rules


Grand Valley
Orgod's Backbone
Mount Bogoro
Orgod's Backbone
Sorrowheart Ridge
The Jerrigut Passage
The Hedgehog
The Shales (surrounds entire region)
The Rodogol Passage
The Wall of Broken Hopes (surrounds entire region)
Boulder Basin
Mount Fury
Mount Kideon
Mount Shreva
The Shallows
The Shallows
Mount Terminus
The Northern Mountains

their adventuring careers. For others, this is just an ambitious beginning.

Those who are unwilling or unable to "take the low road" are faced with the supreme difficulty of ascending the highest peaks on the Palladium World if they wish to enter the Land of the Damned. For most climbers, ascending any one of the major peaks in the mountain chain would be the adventure of a lifetime. But for the adventurers driven enough to traverse the range, they will climb *mountain after mountain,* enduring untold hardships and suffering, through a test of the mind, body and spirit like they have probably never endured before. It is said that the hardships of the Northern Mountains are a test of the faithful, a mechanism to weed the weak and unprepared from entering a realm where they would have no chance of surviving. Those who cross the mountains must have what it takes to make it in the Land of the Damned, or so the theory goes, for why else would the *mountains* let them through? Indeed, it would seem to many that these mountains do have a sinister mind of their own, and they engineer the absolute worst travel circumstances whenever they are being climbed. But those who have the guts and the heart to make it are unfazed by such things. They will let nothing get in their way, and they soldier on despite all of their pain and difficulties. For when they get to the top of each mountaintop, one peak closer to the Land of the Damned, the successful climber knows that deep inside, he *must* have what it takes to beat this region and all the dangers it holds. And for a moment, up there, on the Roof of the World, one might feel invincible, triumphant ... until the descent begins, and the cycle of hardship starts all over again. Only now our heroes have a new weapon in their arsenal, something that no monster or mountain can ever take away: the knowledge that if they really want to, they can beat these Northern Mountains.

Northern Mountain *Lowlands*

The Northern Mountain Lowlands consist of all territory within the Northern Mountains (excluding the Great Rift) that ranges in altitude from zero to 10,000 feet (3,048 m) above sea level. This is a fairly substantial height for any mountain chain, but for one as grandiose as the Northern Mountains, these are merely the foothills.

If the Lowlands could be viewed from above, they would appear as a "Swiss cheese" territory, with big holes where the land rises up to the Northern Mountain Midlands. All told, the Lowlands are the most expansive portion of territory within the Northern Mountains in terms of *horizontal* ground covered. The Midlands and Highlands probably cover close to the same amount of land mass, only most of it is in the form of *vertical* rock faces that nobody can live on.

Throughout the Lowlands, adventurers can expect to find small, isolated settlements tucked away against the surrounding stone walls of the region's many valleys. Here, the land of the Northern Mountains is at its *mostforgiving,* and as such, it is the easiest and perhaps best place for people to settle down. But with pleasure comes pain, and what makes this land good for settlement also makes it prime land for bandits, monsters and

evildoers of every kind. They especially love to prey on whomever has put their roots down in the remote Lowlands, for they know that such folk are often out by themselves, miles from the nearest outpost or village, and largely unable to defend themselves (though there are the rare exceptional communities populated by warlike people like the Kaejor or Maledon, or have large and organized militias, or one or more superhuman or magic wielding protectors, and which can defend themselves quite well, thank you).

For the majority of villages that have very little military capabilities, the only way to combat this is for people to gather in large numbers as best they can or to find some remote, hidden place difficult to find. As mentioned before, most villages and hamlets of this region are tiny (6D6x10 people, occasionally 400-1000) and separated from each other by great distances and difficult terrain. Given the strength of any of the monsters, demons, gangs and would-be warlords that roam the area, most settlers have little chance to defend themselves in open battle. Their best bet is to hide and to make their homes as invisible or as inaccessible as possible. For the most part, this is a successful strategy, thanks to the ingenious methods villages use to conceal their location, including camouflaging the entire settlement, settling in hard-to-reach places, and building natural-looking defenses such as walls made to look like rock or the site of a landslide. Others choose to live at the bottom of ravines and canyons, atop of plateaus and inside caves and tunnels hewn from the very rock of the mountains. These methods are so successful, in fact, that for an outside adventurer who is walking by without trying to spot the village, he has only a 01-05% chance of noticing it. Even if he is looking, it will require a *Detect Concealment* skill roll at -10%.

Naturally, Lowland villagers are a tight-knit and suspicious lot, regardless of their race, class or creed. Many of these villages are of racially mixed populations, containing members of the various Dying Races as well as outsiders like humans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, Orcs, Ogres, etc. What *unites* them is their mutual need for survival and close contact, living, working and fighting together to stay alive. For many of these settlements, not receiving unwanted visitors is a also a prime component of keeping safe. Thus, adventurers are unlikely to receive a warm welcome from any village they might stumble across, and some will have a hearth and home or outpost on the outskirts where the inhabitants are really village defenders charged with leading outsiders *away* or even leading them to their doom. Often times, even if adventurers enter a village with smiles and open arms, they will only receive cold or fearful stares and the silent treatment in return. *Some* villages might even attack unwanted visitors, firing a few warning shots from a sling or bow before attacking in earnest, satisfied with driving them away, killing them (or at least trying to) if necessary. Only travelers who have something important to share with the locals - such as important news about an approaching horde of monsters or barbarians or other danger, healers, sages and those carrying food and/or vitally needed supplies or medicine - can expect to receive any kind of warm reception. There are even a few villages that will not let visitors leave once they have arrived for fear that they will bring bandits, monsters or some other doom upon their heads. They will try to entice and keep visitors with them forever, and failing that, enslave them or, if powerful psionics is available, make them forget where the village is or even that it exists at all via Hypnosis, Insert Memory, Mind Wipe and illusion. Without that recourse, these paranoid souls may take their chances and let visitors leave on their solemn word that they will tell nobody the village exists or where it is located, or follow behind and bushwhack them, selling them into slavery to bandits, barbarians or monsters, or killing them outright and taking their gear. Some force the visitors to stay for at least a year or two, helping build and defend the settlement. Other places (of more sinister temperament) will just kill visitors after seeing what they might have that is worth looting. And still others simply turn away all visitors at the gate as a matter of course, and may have stronghold entrances, walls and fortifications (or natural defenses) to keep visitors out. Any outsider found to have snuck inside is assumed to be a spy, thief or worse, and beaten, interrogated and either enslaved or killed outright, even if the interloper was only curious and had no hurtful intentions - curiosity kills the cat in these paranoid strongholds.

It is not that these Lowland villagers are evil, crazy or selfish. Most are not. Many have just endured so much hardship, treachery and death already, that they are scared and distrustful, and will not make themselves vulnerable to outsiders unless they know 100% that they can be safe in doing so. A lot of Lowland villages are not prosperous communities. Hardship is everywhere here, and there is no universal cure for it. Every settlement wants or needs something, so the trick for visitors looking to gain entrance to them is to find out what that is and using it as leverage. If the travelers are smart enough, they can use the settlements of the Lowlands to their advantage. If not, those settlements will become a virtual minefield of additional hazards in a region already dense with danger. But that is only for those who can actually find these places. To all others, the hidden villages of the Lowlands might as well be the habitat of chameleons or ghosts, ever-present but silent, hidden, and invisible.

On the other hand, there *are* hearth and homes, outposts and villages that cautiously, and some even warmly, welcome any outsiders. These are typically thriving places who have it comparatively well. They are also likely to have an easily defendable entrance (the rest of the community protected by natural or magical defenses) and powerful defenders by way of experienced warriors, friendly monsters (i.e. dragon, Sphinx, clan of Titans, etc.) or practitioners of magic and/or psychics, or a combination of them all! These are also likely to have the largest populations and may even exceed the norm with over a thousand people (although seldom more than 1600).

The Lowlands themselves fall into six main regions: The *Wall of Broken Hopes,* the *Shales,* the *Grand Valley,* the *Jerrigut Passage,* the *Rodogol Passage,* and the *Shallows.*

The Wall of Broken Hopes

The Lowlands are what travelers to this region will enter *first* when trying to traverse the Northern Mountains. Ignoring the harsh Northern Hinterlands, they are the Land of the Damned's *first line of defense* against outside intruders, and as a result, the Lowlands jut up out of the ground by about one thousand feet (305 m) as low-laying mountains all along their perimeter. This stone wall turns away many who haven't the heart to climb it or endurance to weather the hardships, hence the origin of its name, "Wall of Broken Hopes." But the name is really not that

well deserved. For those who actually approach The Wall will find, here and there, well worn series of paths, trails, hand- and footholds from the intrepid explorers who, over the years, have climbed it and the mountains beyond.

Climbing the Wall of Broken Hopes is actually fairly simple for a skilled and well prepared climber. Those scaling it need only check their Climb/Scale Walls skill every 100 feet (of course, failing a roll, unless one is attached to the wall by a safety line, results in a fall that will dole out 1D6 points of damage per 20 feet/6 m fallen). There are plenty of places for one to get their grip and footing, and even more places to secure a climbing line. Plus, the rock is good and solid, unlikely to crack or break apart when tested, something all climbers fear and hate. ("Rotten" rock, which is excessively cracked, will give way when any weight is put on it, often causing climbers to fall when they use such apparently solid rock as a hand or foothold. What's worse, rotten rock can not hold the spike-driven safety lines that climbers depend on to save them if they fall. Thus, falling climbers often end up pulling their own lifeline from the rotten rock wall that caused their descent in the first place. This is not too terribly common on the faces of the Northern Mountains, and it is almost unheard of all along the Wall of Broken Hopes.)

There are hundreds of sites along the wall, at varying altitudes, where ancient graffiti have been carved into the stone face. Often times, these are cryptic messages in an alien or long-dead language, but sometimes they are genuine magic symbols; some are even still-active wards of some kind! Scholars unwilling to brave the full height of the mountains or enter the interior of the Land of the Damned can still make quite a career cataloguing all of the random scrawls on the Wall of Broken Hopes, and indeed, several prominent academics already have begun extensive studies of these markings. A few books of markings have been compiled, but all together, they only comprise about 10% of the total markings along the eastern face of the wall. There are still the markings on the northern and southern faces of the wall, which can only be accessed from the sea (a dangerous task, since the ocean will likely dash any close approaches against the rocks). And there is the Wall of Broken Hopes that rings the western half of the Northern Mountains, too. Despite the daunting (nearly impossible) task of cataloguing *all* of these carvings, a few adventurers and schools of scholars have been trying to do just that. They believe if the entire set of thousands upon thousands of markings were catalogued, arranged in proper order and recited correctly, it would actually be the equivalent of a mystic blueprint for the spell the Alliance of Light used to raise the Northern Mountains from the earth! If one could put this great spell back together again and somehow energize it, the theory goes, one could cause the mountains to recede back into the earth from which they came, effectively lowering an entire wall to the prison that is the Land of the Damned. One need not try very hard to imagine the kind of chaos that would ensue should the Land of the Damned's inhabitants make a mass escape from the region.

Others believe it could not lower or vanish any part of the Northern Mountains, but enable them to raise a new range of low mountains themselves, anywhere in the world. Most see this endeavor as a fool's errand.

The Shales

Only when one reaches the top of the Wall, then do they begin to grasp the magnitude of the task ahead of them. On the top of the wall, the land levels out for 1D4 miles (1.6 to 6.4 km) of alpine forest, and then begins rising steadily, in what becomes a 45 degree angle leading up to the first mountains of the region. This slope, known to climbers as *The Shales*, is a deep field of small, jagged broken stones. It is made up of all the geologic debris that the mountains themselves have shed over the eons. Gradually, all of that debris piled up like this at the feet of the Northern Mountains, and for any climber who must travel over the stuff on foot, The Shales are pure torture.

First, the rocks are very unsteady, like walking on sand or loose gravel, only about ten times harder to get solid footing on. Everywhere one places a hand or foot for steadiness, it causes a small rock slide, denying the climber a firm means of pulling themselves up the face. All climbers walking up The Shales do so at a maximum of one-quarter their normal speed. Plus, by the time one reaches the top of The Shales, chances are they have slid or fallen a bunch of times and hit the larger or sharp rocks all around. A general rule of thumb is that for every 1D6x100 feet (30.5 to 183 m), each climber should roll to Maintain Balance. Roll percentile dice, any roll over 55% means he loses his balance and falls down onto the loose, sharp rocks (those with Acrobatics or Gymnastics skills must roll under their skill proficiency, which is usually much greater, so they are less likely to fall unless tied to a comrade who slips). From the fall itself, the character takes 1D6 points of damage, which may not seem like much until one considers just how many times a climber is

likely to receive such wounds during his trip up The Shales. Plus, the fallen climber slides down 1D6x10 yards/meters after the fall, adding insult to injury.

The Shales are so unsteady that any kind of hoofed pack animal (horse, mule, ox, etc.) is -30% to keep its balance and will fall on a roll above 30% on percentile. Only the donkey can navigate The Shales with a +10% bonus (slips on percentile rolls above 65%). Any animal that falls and slides will tumble, even the donkey, and has a 01-50% chance of breaking one or more of its legs (roll 1D4) EVERY time it falls. Astute climbers and characters with the Animal Husbandry skill will realize this before they try ascending, leaving their animals behind (or never bring them with them in the first place) while going forward on foot alone. Those who foolishly believe they can beat the odds and bring their animals into The Shales anyway often do so because they managed somehow to bring the big animals up the Wall of Broken Hopes, so they certainly are not going to leave them behind now. Ultimately, though, just about any pack animal brought into the Shales will be grievously injured, and will have to be put out of its misery (mercifully put to death), its carcass left behind for predators to devour, and the bulk of the gear it carried for others who might come this way.

On the plus side, the stones making up The Shales are perfectly suited for use as sling stones, and they can be flung an extra 20% farther than usual when used in a sling.

The Shales last for about another 2,000 feet (610 m) from bottom to top. When a climber has finally conquered them, he stands one-third the way up the Northern Mountain Lowlands. Though he still has a great deal of climbing yet to go, he has overcome what is commonly referred to as the "Door of the Damned," the combination of the Wall of Broken Hopes and The Shales. These two obstacles together weed out over 90% of all explorers and adventurers hoping to enter the Land of the Damned. The 10% who make it up The Shales are not necessarily guaranteed that they will make it into the Land of the Damned, but they have already shown uncommon strength, skill and perseverance, all key qualities to those who have learned to survive the harsh realm awaiting on the other side of the Northern Mountains.

The Grand Valley

Although this is the smallest of the Lowland regions, it also contains the largest amount of flat, arable land, and is a perfect place for a small kingdom to flourish. It is called the *Grand Valley*, and it is nestled between a fork in the mountains right before they run off the Land of the Damned's northern coast, in the Sea of Despair.

For years, the Grand Valley has been a gathering spot for adventurers, explorers, and especially, shipwreck victims. The Island Kingdom of Bizantium routinely sends ships through the Sea of Despair, using secret navigation charts to thread those rocky, shoal-infested waters. Most of the time, the Bizantine ships make it through, but about one in every 30 or 40 crossings ends in a shipwreck. With the waters as turbulent and monster-filled as they are, the sailors' only chance for survival is to row to the Land of the Damned's northern coast and climb off the beach into the Northern Mountains. Those who make it over the Wall of Broken Hopes and up The Shales will come to a massive flat expanse of lush grasslands. This is the Grand Valley.

Perhaps because it is cut off from the rest of the northern Mountains, the Grand Valley has a near-absence of monsters and bestial humanoids. In fact, it is tamer than many of the wilderness regions of the Hinterlands and Great Northern Wilderness, featuring only various kinds of relatively harmless wildlife. Game animals abound here, as do wild fruits and vegetables. The soil is rich and fertile, and any crops planted in it yield nearly twice as much harvest as they should. The weather is calm and modest, and the temperature remains at a pleasant level all year round. Locals believe that this place is somehow protected by the gods or some incredibly powerful force of goodness, since evil things never survive here. A fine example is several years ago, when a small barbarian horde swept into the Grand Valley, intent on making it their own kingdom. Within a season, the entire horde had somehow died of starvation, despite the plentiful food and water in their midst. How could it have happened? Whatever force that protects the Grand Valley from being despoiled, took action. *That's* how.

Of course, if there is something protecting the Grand Valley, then one must wonder why no *good* peoples have built a substantial outpost there. Perhaps whatever is protecting the region is as opposed to good as it is to evil. Or perhaps the effects of the Grand Valley are part of a greater and deeper mystery than anybody realizes...

The Jerrigut Passage

Much of the northern Lowlands are part of a large network of valleys called the *Jerrigut Passage*. The Passage extends from the Northern Mountains' eastern edge to over halfway through the region. While the Jerrigut Passage is hardly a pastoral wonderland, it does provide a somewhat less hazardous environment (in terms of weather and other natural hazards) for adventurers and travelers to move through, since they can just follow the passage for a while rather than climb up and down a lot of mountains. However, what makes this place easy to travel also makes it a natural congregating spot for large numbers of predatory animals, hostile monsters, bandits and bushwhackers. As a result, this passage is a bit of a predatory war zone, with all of the vicious creatures of the region actively hunting, killing and devouring each other. Those who decide to take the Jerrigut Passage should have their weapons sharp and their wits sharper, for they will need them. Even the most valiant of warriors face dire peril here from the sheer volume of encounters one is likely to face when traveling the Jerrigut Passage.

When traveling in the wilderness, a good G.M. rule of thumb is to randomly determine if there is an encounter two or three times during the day and once during the night. In the Jerrigut Passage, that rate climbs to 4-6 times during the day, and twice at night. While tough, healthy adventurers could, theoretically, travel the length of the passage in a week or two, the constant dangers, skirmishes and detours to avoid trouble, make it far longer; easily 3-6 weeks, sometimes longer (although that is usually because a conflict leads to an unexpected detour and adventure). Furthermore, travelers will find they must stop and "hole up" to rest and let wounds heal at some (relatively) safe place before moving on. Eventually, this takes its toll in terms of exhaustion and wounds, and many travelers must face the likelihood of either turning back or being slowly whittled to pieces by the Passage's seemingly endless supply of hostile guardians.

Many come to this conclusion once they have passed the point of no return, however, and these unfortunate souls must find a place to hide or easily defend themselves (and fast) before their next unfriendly visitor comes calling. Most of the time, once a party is forced to dig in like this, their days are numbered. More and more monsters congregate around the stricken heroes, alerted to their presence by the sound of battle or the scent of blood, and eventually they overcome them. The few who have ever survived the "wait and hide" tactic have always borne terrible wounds from their ordeal, and they always speak of the "luck" that saved them.

The Rodogol Passage

What the Jerrigut Passage is to the northern Lowlands, the Rodogol Passage is to the *southern Lowlands.* It is a similar series of wide, expansive valleys that facilitate easy passage through a good chunk of the Northern Mountains region, extending from the western border to just about halfway through the range.

Thanks to the relatively gentle nature of these lowlands, large numbers of monsters and animals congregate here as well. But unlike the Jerrigut Passage, where creatures may roam freely throughout, the creatures of the Rodogol Passage are constrained by an odd mix of geology and ancient engineering.

The mountains that define the Rodogol Passage's borders nearly pinch off the valleys in several places, creating natural bottlenecks for any creatures passing through. (Much to the delight of the large bands of evil humanoids who often encamp near these places, since they are an easy hunting ground and make for good ambush sites.) At each bottleneck, however, there extends a massive *steel door* that juts up from the ground, sealing off the passageway like a dam, They are as tall as they are wide (150 feet/45.7 m) and can rise up, sliding through channels in the rock, to around 1,000 feet (305 m) high. These steel doors are more like walls and are covered in rune symbols to make them enchanted for indestructibility. They also are sheer and without any features, textures, or relief large enough to provide a good climbing foothold.

The steel walls are thought to have been built by ancient Dwarves or Minotaurs, or possibly some ancient generation of The Garrison as an experiment to keep the Legions of the Damned from gathering in dangerously large numbers and keeping unwanted intruders out. These walls, when up, section the Rodogol Passage off into a number of "cells," and the creatures trapped within must learn to make do in their new world.

By means no longer known to anyone, the steel walls could be magically lowered into the earth in order to let creatures pass from one cell to another. Indeed, to this day, the Walls of Rodogol will spontaneously raise and lower without warning, making any long-distance travel through the passage dicey. When the walls move, they do so slowly, rising or lowering at a rate of only 10 feet (3 m) per melee round, so one could ride on top of a moving wall and not be pitched over the side or hurry to slip over the massive door-like wall before it rises too high. Given the Walls' great width (150 feet/45.7 m), some adventurers like to camp out on them when they are retracted fully into the earth, wait for them to rise again, and then use them as a head-start point for scaling the nearby mountains.

Some of the Doors of Rodogol have been stationary, locked in place, for over a century, leading some to believe that whatever magical mechanism used to drive the walls is finally breaking down. This being the case, there are some walls that are always up and some that are always down. In cells where both walls are always in place, the bandits and monsters once trapped inside have found or carved steps and trails into the rock or dug out tunnels (often concealed and secret) to get around the barriers of the enchanted steel walls. Many are unfinished and littered with the bones of their makers.

The Shallows

The Shallows are a minor valley network making up the southernmost section of the Northern Mountain Lowlands. Unlike the Jerrigut and Rodogol Passages, however, many of the valleys here are not connected to each other. The inhabitants of any given valley have likely been there for quite some time, and small villages of one race or another are likely to be found throughout the region. Very few of them, however, are likely to be friendly. Over the last few decades, the mysterious amphibian race known as the *Zaranceti* has begun an aggressive push inland, as if they can no longer live in their traditional territories underneath the Sea of Dread. As a result, Zaranceti encampments control all of the waterfront areas near The Shallows, and valley by valley, they plan to take over the rest of The Shallows too.

This "invasion" by aquatic monsters will send the valley communities into an uproar. Unless they are willing to gather together, these small places stand little chance of holding back the concerted efforts of Zaranceti war parties. As a result, the people of The Shallows have begun to search for mercenaries and champions to come to their aid. Meanwhile, they have dispatched special teams to find something, anything, that might help them stem the inevitable Zaranceti tide. Some search for powerful magic items to destroy the invaders. Others look for a means to evacuate the entire valley's inhabitants before an invasion strikes. Still others try to recruit allies and outsiders to help them, but such efforts have proven mostly effective. And still others have tried taking the war to the Zaranceti, making guerrilla strikes against their encampments to slow their colonization of The Shallows.

Northern Mountain *Midlands*

The Midlands is that part of the Northern Mountains ranging from 10,001 feet (3,048.3 m) to 18,000 feet (5,486.4 m) above sea level. Within the Midlands are the majority of the region's smaller mountains, which together present travelers with a dense hedge of sheer rock faces and jagged summits to conquer if they wish to make it in or out of the Land of the Damned. Here and there are thin alpine forests, but much of the land is rock with patches of alpine grass and/or scrub.

Throughout the Midlands, small bands of people have managed to build communities and sanctuaries for themselves, in large part to get away from the large numbers of hostile creatures that fill the Lowlands. Indeed, there are far fewer nasty critters in the Midlands, but up here is where the infamous natu-

ral hazards of the Northern Mountains (crevasses, wind chill, storms, etc.) start coming into play. This makes traveling up and across the Midlands fairly difficult, and the communities here use that to their advantage. Most of them are "pueblo" style villages. and hamlets built directly into a mountain face, or perched atop a terraced and easily defended landscape. In general, the people of the Midlands tend to be distrustful of strangers and would rather turn away all visitors than try trading with them and risk trouble. This is bad news for most adventurers, who, by the time they reach the heights of the Midlands, will probably be in the market for a quiet place to stay, replenish their provisions, heal wounds, and regain their strength. For those in want of such things, they will have to come up with ingenious ways to prove their trustworthiness to the Midland locals before hoping to trade with them or enjoy their sanctuary.

The Northern Mountain Midlands break down into four distinct areas: *Orgod's Backbone, Sorrowheart Ridge,* the *Hedgehog,* and *Boulder Basin.*

Orgod's Backbone

This sinuous line of largish mountains were once the stomping grounds of *Orgulous Orgod,* a renegade Dwarven warlord who, during the Elf-Dwarf War, brought an entire army into the Northern Mountains and encamped permanently. Apparently, Orgod was a master runesmith who felt his gifts were being squandered by his commanders. Throughout the Elf-Dwarf conflict, Orgod's army saw virtually no combat. Rather, it was a support unit that manufactured rune weapons and distributed them to the front-line elements of the Dwarven army.

After nearly a hundred years of service, Orgod, nicknamed "Orgulous" because he was so incredibly fat, grew weary of crafting wonderful rune weapons only to see them put to use in the insane conflict that was consuming both Dwarven and Elven Empires. He wished to set up shop for himself and dictate the terms under which he would supply his countrymen with rune weapons. He needed an expedient reason for doing so to get his troops to go along with the idea, and Orgod got it when Elven soldiers raided the Dwarven homeland and wrought terrible havoc upon his rune works, slaying many of the greatest runesmiths, and making off with dozens of completed weapons. In response to the attack, the Dwarven Imperial Command ordered him to move far from the fields of battle to set up shop someplace secret and secluded. Anywhere he liked.

Orgod thought the Northern Wilderness would be good, since it was still resource-rich and had not yet been ravaged by either colonization or war. But the Elves followed, and time and again, Orgod's army suffered great damage at the hands of their Elven enemies. Orgod moved his forces once again into the Northern Mountains and set up shop there along the tops of a ridge of mountains that soon became known as *Orgod's Backbone.* There, he built a string of workshops and fortresses that could easily rebuff any Elven assault. And there did he also announce his intent to secede from the war and remain as an independent entity, apart from either the Elven or Dwarven Empire, but willing to do business with *both.*

Orgod's superiors did not like this, to say the least. Watching their finest runesmith go freelance was a blow the Dwarven Imperials. One they were not going to take lying down. Thus, they formed an elite army of mountaineers and sappers to penetrate

the Northern Mountains and retake Orgod's facilities one by one. The resulting action became like a small war unto itself that lasted for a full decade before Orgod's last troops were slain and Orgod himself was captured. He was to be sent home for execution, but the crafty renegade slipped his bonds, overpowered his guards and escaped, never to be seen or heard from again.

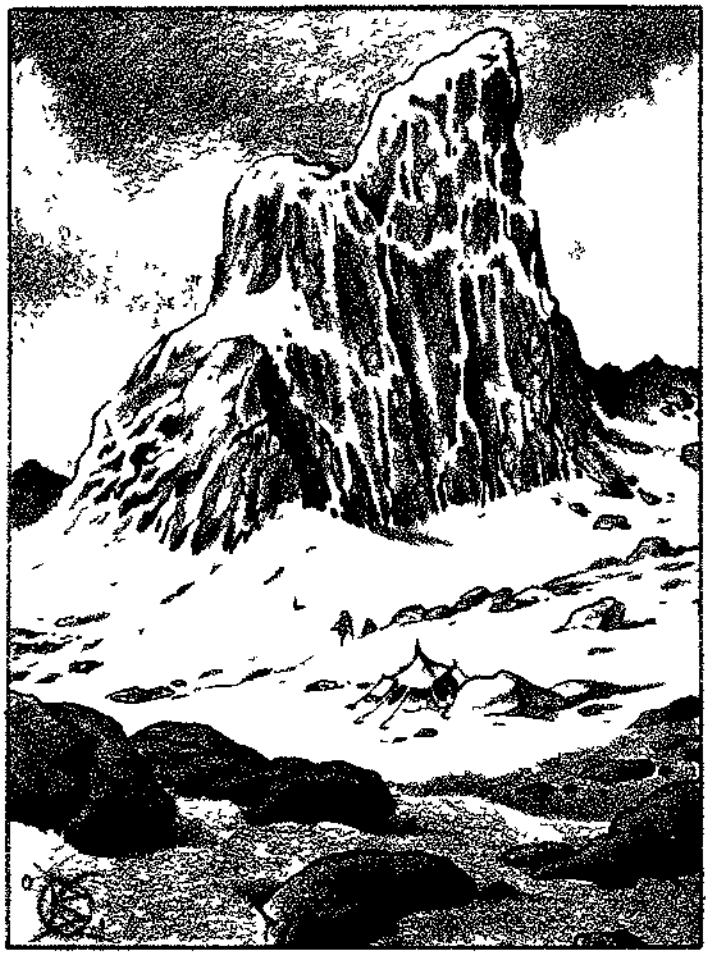
In the centuries that followed, the workshops and fortresses on Orgod's Backbone fell into ruin and have been relentlessly plundered. Legend has it that there still exist numerous rune weapons throughout the region, lost and scattered during the final days before Orgod's capture, but few outsiders have managed to find any. Natives to the Northern Mountains routinely comb the area for signs of just one of these miraculous lost weapons of Orgod, but so far, nothing. Even more compelling are the legends that claim after Orgod escaped his captors, he returned to the Northern Mountains where he built himself a secret lair and continued to experiment and make rune weapons for his own amusement. Sometimes trading them with friendly Minotaurs or giving them away as a boon to noble and deserving heroes (though never Elf or Dwarf). Nobody knows where Orgod's Lair might be, for the aged Dwarf quietly vanished thousands of years ago (presumed to have died quietly in his sleep), his home and secrets gone with him. So it is that many an adventurer searches for Orgod's lair. Despite the fact that many village elders believe that the whole story is phony, hardcore adventurers know a good opportunity when they hear one, and Orgod's Backbone and his fabled lair are good ones indeed.

Sorrowheart Ridge

This long, narrow expanse of steep, short mountains was the site of many battles during the original Garrison's disastrous final days to curb the tide of invasion and incursions by demons and monsters. Many years before, The Garrison (and others throughout the ages) had built dozens of small strongholds into the mountain faces as lookout posts and early-warning towers. By the time The Garrison had been pushed back by the surging ranks of the Legions of the Damned, these pathetic little stronghold towers were all that was left for the warriors to hide in. That The Garrison tried to use these strongholds as defensive structures only sped the demise of their heroic order. For no stronghold was very large, so to use them, they had to divide their numbers; hardly a sound tactic. Furthermore, it proved child's play for the Legions of the Damned to simply overwhelm each stronghold, wearing its defenders down and swarming over the positions, killing whomever remained inside. By the end (the fabled Battle of Terminus), the network of strongholds had entirely fallen into enemy hands, and the huge fields of Garrison corpses left behind spurred locals to dub the place *Sorrowheart Ridge.*

In the years that followed, the Legions of the Damned abandoned the ridge, in part to find better opportunities else where, and because of a wave of killer winter storms that virtually buried the mountains in a blanket of snow and ice deep enough to smother a Giant. Left behind were the vast network of destroyed and partially ruined strongholds, fortresses and battlements.

Today, some are occupied by others who use them as homesteads or campsites. A few have even been rebuilt. But many remain abandoned, for while the bodies of the dead Garrison soldiers no longer litter *Sorrowheart Ridge,* their unsettled spirits remain, roaming the Ridge and mountaintops in an eternal vigil against the forces of evil. Many are Haunting Entities, alien beings who read and capture fragments of the past and relive them as if they were that long dead person. Others are mischievous *Poltergeists* drawn to the powerful psychic impressions left in the stronghold. Other Entities, Banshees and ghostly spirits (many good) are also drawn or held to this place. In one of the greater ironies the Northern Mountains have ever seen, the Sorrowheart Ridge is haunted by a small army of ghostly heroes and crusaders who still, in one way or another, watch over their old stronghold. Ghosts that still try to chase away demons, monsters and evil humanoids, and whom appear to warn good folk of possible dangers or point to safe passages and places to hide. Good travelers rarely even see the Garrison Ghosts (also known as the *Specters of Sorrowheart,* even though they are not real Specters), much less have direct contact with them, except in times of great need. Evil beings on the other hand, can expect spectral visitations warning them to leave and/or give up their evil ways, and suffer the ghosts' wrath by way of pranks and ghostly (or poltergeistly) harassment. Some people, even good folk, avoid the haunted region; not wanting to be visited by even friendly spirits.



The Hedgehog

Consisting of minor mountains like *Spiny Back, Torture Point,* the *Cliffs of Hunger, Quilltop,* the *Pike,* and *Jagged Hollow,* the Hedgehog is one of the more unfriendly mountain ranges to travel. Though its peaks are not the kind of towenng giants found in the Highlands, the Hedgehog is nonetheless a challenging and deadly mountain range. First of all, it is almost

always covered with some amount of snow and ice. Secondly, it presents an unusually high number of snow pits, crevasses, and other such hazards to make any kind of climbing effort a dangerous one. Plus, the Hedgehog routinely suffers terrible storms and freak wind patterns that can trap climbers on rock faces or near the summits and subject them to lethal weather conditions for up to three or four days straight.

Despite the hazards of this region, it remains a popular destination for adventurers because it forms a kind of buffer between the Jerrigut and Rodogol Passages, in the Northern Mountain Lowlands. Both of those passages extend a little over halfway through the entire Northern Mountains before dead-ending against *Mounts Bogoro* and *Fury,* respectively. Since those mountains are two of the largest of the region, most adventurers would rather find some other way of continuing through the range. The logical choice is to make a lateral move north or south (depending on what direction one is traveling in) and enter the Hedgehog. From here, there is a long, mountainous journey, up and down, to the other major passage, and hopefully the other side of the Northern Mountains.

Although none of the Hedgehog's peaks are as challenging as the Great Peaks of the region, there are so many mountains to cross when traversing the Hedgehog that endurance becomes a major factor for adventurers to consider. Even climbing one of the Hedgehog mountains is a trying feat, but when going through the whole region, travelers will probably end up going over six or seven peaks in a marathon test of one's physical and mental strength.

This region is hardly an attractive place for people to settle down, although there is the occassional hearth and home or tiny village. The traffic through the Hedgehog, however, is enough to attract barbarians, bandits and predators to the region in search of easy and unsuspecting prey. After all, not only adventurers move through the Hedgehog, so do local natives who for one reason or another, must migrate or journey within the Northern Mountains. There are also whatever monsters from within the Land of the Damned who wish to break free of the region and end up in this region. Ambushes are especially common in areas with deep snow, where targets can not run or fight very well. Under such conditions, brigands like to fire arrows and hurl spears, stones and/or magic upon the snowbound travelers below. Such attacks are sometimes called *death blizzards.*

Boulder Basin

In the southern reaches of the Midlands stands what once was a major mountain that almost certainly would have stood into the Highlands and possibly the Death Zone. Somewhere along the line, someone or something inflicted such a powerful blow to the mountain that it blew it apart, like a bomb went off in its core. Legend attributes this feat to an incredibly powerful and famous Elven wizard who, from that day forward, became the legendary figure known as the "Slayer of Mountains." All that remains of this peak is a rocky stump housing a deep crater some 60 miles (96 km) in diameter and known to locals as *Boulder Basin* or just, *The Basin.*

The Basin is a valley world unto itself with high stone walls that make it fairly difficult for any monster, animal or humanoid to climb in or out. Those who live here are unlikely to leave, both because it would be difficult to do so, and because there is not much incentive for it. Life in the Crater is very good. Like the Grand Valley of the Lowlands, there is an abundance of food and water. The terrain is gentle, aside from the occasional huge boulder sitting in the middle of nowhere (debris from the crater's formation), and the high mountain walls that keep the worst of the region's weather from penetrating the Basin. Storms and other disturbances tend to roll around the Basin, leaving it with calm conditions and pleasant temperatures all year round.

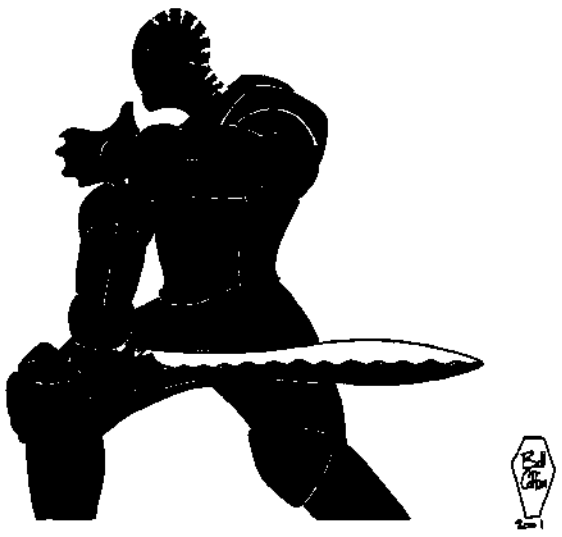
According to certain legends, there is a third, and more sinister reason for the Basin's populace to stay put. Although this has never been verified, it is thought that whatever created the Basin also enchanted it so that any creature living within this mountainous crater would never grow old, never succumb to sickness, and never suffer the effects of hunger and thirst.

A different, but equally popular legend claims time in the Basin is actually frozen at a particularly idyllic period, so there is no significant change of seasons and people age very slowly (but they do age). Anybody entering Boulder Basin *could* return to the outside world, but in doing so would return to a time not their own; past or future.

On top of this is yet another legend that insists a small empire of powerful immortals have claimed the Basin as their own, and that as the local population grows, they all fall under the influence of the lords of this peculiar realm. The Slayer of Mountains is, himself, rumored to be immortal, giving this tale some circumstantial credence.

Numerous adventuring parties of note — including the *Kyderian Masters,* the *Soldiers of Thoth* and the *Sovereign Six,* have all entered the Northern Mountains with the express purpose of finding the truth behind Boulder Basin. None of those groups have ever been seen or heard from again. Some think they simply perished in the mountains, while the more prominent thought is that they found whatever was in the Basin, all right. They found it and it either killed them, enslaved them, or enticed them to stay.

These and a thousand similar stories all swirl about the topic of this enigmatic place within the Northern Mountain Midlands. As long as that remains so (and it likely will for quite some time), then the Basin will continue to draw the occasional group of heroes into its mysterious embrace, never to let go.



Highlands & Death Zone

Towering above the rest of the Northern Mountains is the highest region of the Palladium World: the *Northern Mountain Highlands* and the infamous *Death Zone.* The Highlands are that part of the Northern Mountains ranging from 18,001 feet (5,486 m) to 25,000 feet (7,620 m) above sea level. This is the highest altitude at which life on the Palladium World that is not already adapted to such environments can function normally. At any altitudes higher than that, life begins to have some very serious trouble maintaining itself. Thankfully for the intrepid Palladium mountain climber, there are very few places in the Northern Mountains that exceed 25,000 feet (7,620 m). This territory is called the *Death Zone* because at that height, the average human's life functions begin to fail for reasons that will be described later in this section. Unless magic intervenes or a person has extraordinary abilities that enable him to withstand the rigors of the Death Zone, the average humanoid will only last a few days at that height before they will die, plain and simple.

The majority of the Highlands is well below the Death Zone's threshold. Only the summits of the tallest mountains in the region extend into the Death Zone, and for those who are merely traveling through the region, there is no reason to visit those places. Of course, the very people who visit the Northern Mountains, and who would be driven (or crazy) enough to enter the Land of the Damned, are generally the type that can not refuse a challenge. So it is that many of the adventurers mountaineering across the Northern Mountains eventually find themselves taking a side trip into the Highlands on a quest to conquer one of the Great Peaks of the Northern Mountains, and in doing so, defying whatever danger the Death Zone has to offer.

Precious little is known about the Highlands, and they are considered to be almost entirely unexplored. The major mountains of the range have been named, but that is really about the extent of things. There are a few small citadels and villages rumored to exist in the Highlands, places like the Adept monastery of *Sherezan*, the incredible magic workshops of *Seven Sages*, the secret Changeling city known as the *Shapers' Realm*, and others. While the Highlands and the Death Zone remain largely unexplored places, there *have* been a few attempts to at least track down these fabled settlements to verify that they exist, if nothing else. To date, all such attempts have come up short, so as far as the world knows, there could be absolutely no permanent settlements of any kind in the Highlands or the Death Zone. But this is the Palladium World, where magic rules what ordinary nature does not, where mysteries abound, and surprises exist everywhere, often "hidden in plain view." That being the case, even though none of the legendary settlements of the Highlands have been discovered yet, that does not mean they are not there. They might very well be, and they might be larger and more advanced than anybody ever realized. After all, perched so high atop the rest of the world, with nobody and nothing to bother them, places like Sherezan and Seven Sages and the Shapers' Realm could set any plot into motion, work on any kind of advance, and there might not be any way for the world to know about it until these secrets were already put into motion...

There are five major sites in the Northern Highlands: *Mount Kideon*, *Mount Bogoro*, *Mount Fury*, *Mount Shreva*, and *Mount Terminus*. All five of these mountains are considered the *Great Peaks* of the Northern Mountains. All five extend well into the Death Zone. All five are the tallest mountains in the world. Not even the highest peak of the Old Kingdom Mountains reaches as far into the sky as these stone Goliaths do.

Mount Kideon

The summit to this gargantuan mountain is the highest point in the Palladium World. Since no mortal in recorded history has ever successfully ascended to Mount Kideon's summit, there is no firm measurement of just how tall it really is. The scholars who have studied this topic and the rangers and mountaineers who have actually climbed Kideon, collectively estimate that the mountain probably stands around 34,500 feet (10,515.6 m) above sea level. In real-world terms, that makes Mt. Kideon nearly 5,000 feet (1,524 m) taller than *Mount Everest*!

Since the fall of the Old Ones, there have only been three *recorded* attempts on the summit of Mount Kideon. The first occurred shortly before the Elf-Dwarf War, when a team of Dwarven mountaineers set forth up the slope. They vanished into a sudden storm cloud and were never seen again, though psychics later claimed to have established telepathic contact with the lost travelers who were still very much alive, but somehow trapped in an alien pocket dimension. The second attempt on the summit came during the Millennium of Purification, when zealous Purifiers sought to rid the world of rune magic and powerful magic items. A large party of Purifiers sought to reach the top of Mount Kideon and strand a cache of rune weap-

ons there so that it would be exceedingly difficult for anybody else to find and use them. The party also vanished on the mountain, but the journal from the team leader mysteriously arrived at his wife's house three months after the team's disappearance. In the journal, the team leader said the group had been forced to turn back because of a "demon wind" pummeling them. He further noted the group abandoned their rune weapons and other magic items somewhere near the top of the mountain so they could speed their descent. The journal ends two days later with a scribbled reference to "the guardians," "the pact," and "we have failed and so shall pay doom's wages."

The third attempt on Mount Kideon was carried out thirteen years ago by a group of Western explorers who had been promised by their emperor a lifelong stipend of gold and noble titles if they successfully ascended Mount Kideon and planted an Imperial flag on the summit. The group was lost after ascending into the *Death Zone,* but pieces of their bodies were later recovered miles and miles away from the mountain itself. This suggests the party perished without ever making it to the Highlands, or were either victims of freakishly strong and lethal wind, or they were killed by a giant flying predator and had their remains strewn about, far from where they died.

Mount Bogoro

Standing at 31,995 feet (9,752 m) above sea level, this is considered by mountaineers to be the world's deadliest peak. Its record claims the lives of more climbers than any other mountain in the known world. The "record" part is critical, since there might be more dangerous mountains in the world (Mount Kideon, for example), but death statistics for them are not kept. Bogoro is different because long ago, scholars took interest in the mountain as the possible resting site of the gods slain in the Chaos War. As a result, hundreds of expeditions to find the "grave site of the gods" have been launched over the centuries. For various reasons, many of these expeditions never even make it to the foot of Mount Bogoro, but those who do make sure to send word of their impending ascent (usually by Magic Pigeon) to observing parties in the lower regions. As a result, it gets noticed when climbing parties do not return from Bogoro. The causes of the disappearances are unknown, since Bogoro has been successfully climbed five times, and none of those parties ever noted anything especially odd or dangerous on the mountain. Sure, there was the typical bad weather, crevasses, wind, ice and so forth, but nothing else that would explain the incredibly high death rate for other climbing parties. Some feel there is a curse on the mountain to protect the divine grave sites supposedly somewhere high up on the mountain face (probably up in the Death Zone, if it actually exists at all), and *that* is why so many who climb Bogoro never return. There is a force that makes sure only the pure of heart succeed in their quest. As for the rest...who knows? Perhaps even only those who are NOT looking for the grave site of the gods can successfully scale Mount Bogoro. The five successes were not looking for gods, but climbed the mountain for the challenge. Then again, other like-minded folks have perished and disappeared, so who knows?

Mount Bogoro marks the westernmost end of the *Jerrigut Passage,* down in the Lowlands. Travelers who are looking for an easy way through the Northern Mountains often enter the Jerrigut and follow its course until it smacks right into the base of Mount Bogoro, which practically juts straight out of the ground for many thousands of feet before finally sloping off enough for climbers to scale with any hope of success. Most travelers, after straining their necks just to try to see the top of the mountain, decide it would be better to head south into the Midland's *Hedgehog* region and press forward from there. Most of the people who climb Bogoro do so from the Hedgehog itself, cutting south from the Jerrigut Passage for a few days and then making a circuitous loop around to assault the mountain from its western face, often considered to be its most manageable side.

Mount Fury

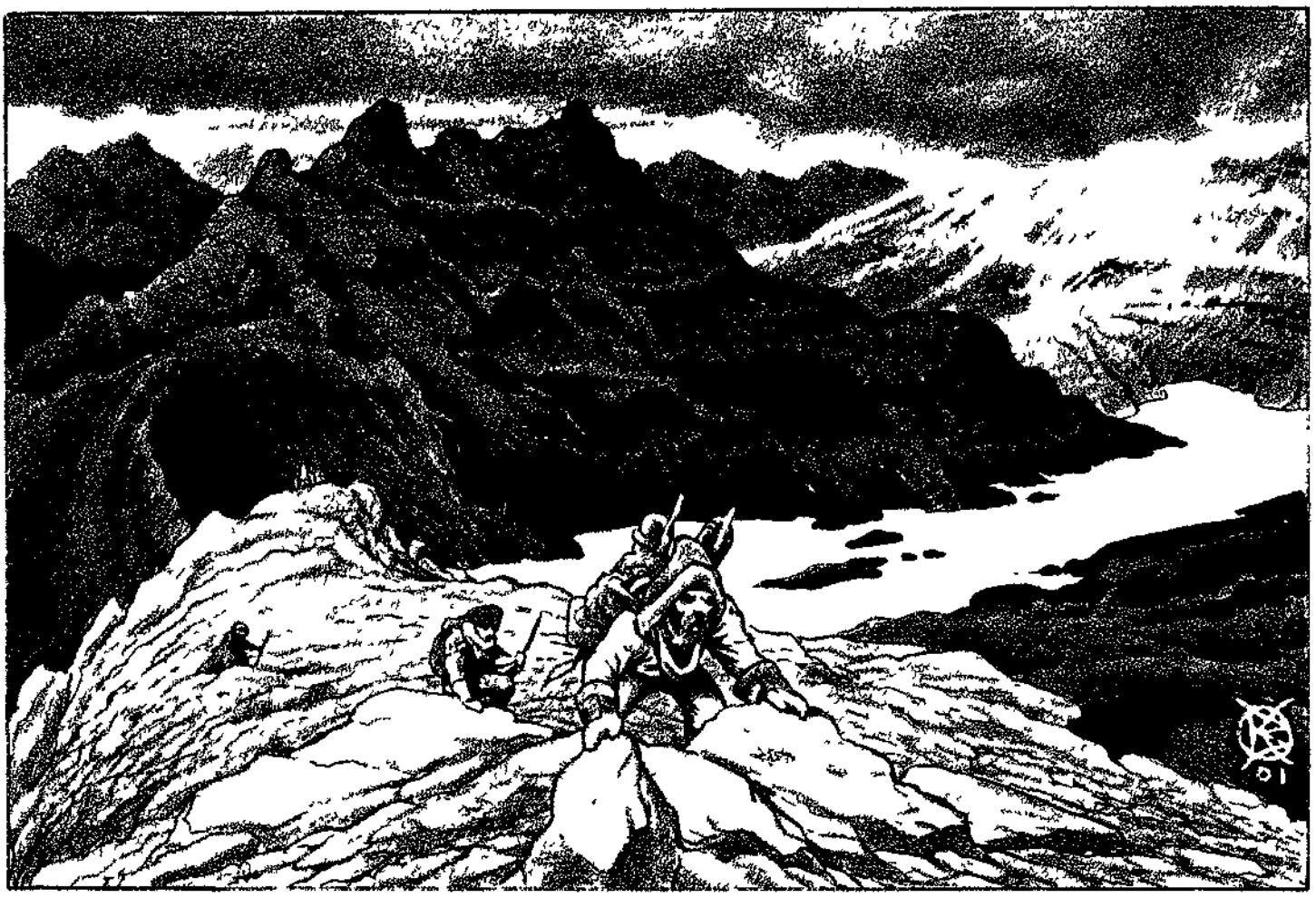
This mountain is thought to stand nearly 30,000 feet (9,144 m) above sea level, but it is impossible to tell because the top of the peak, that which extends into the Death Zone, has been enshrouded by a never-ending snowstorm since the end of the Elf-Dwarf War. Scholars and explorers simply call this storm *The Fury.* Debates rage endlessly on what could have caused it, how it has sustained itself for thousands of years, and why, if it is always snowing up there, don't huge avalanches form?

Mount Fury forms the eastern end of the Lowland's *Rodogol Passage.* Thanks to the mountain's jagged slope and rotten rock, many travelers prefer to either head north into the Midlands' *Hedgehog* region and continue from there, or to back track even further and try scooting around the base of some other large mountain. There is rumored to be a secret underground passage that cuts right through the heart of the mountain and opens up to the Great Rift, in the Land of the Damned proper! Explorers who hear of this often have already dead-ended in the Rodogol Passage and learn of it from a local trader or hermit who offers the advice to be friendly. However, evil creatures are afoot in the Northern Mountains, and it could be possible that anybody who hears of the so-called "Fury underground" is really being snookered by some malicious being that wants explorers to waste their time looking for nothing so that monsters can set an ambush for them.

Mount Shreva

Arguably the world's most *mysterious* mountain, Mount Shreva stands only 26,025 feet (7,932 m) above sea level, a comparative shrimp next to the other Great Peaks. Its primary distinction lies in the inability for anybody to get to it. The Midlands that surround the mountain's base are a vast network of crevasses, sheer walls, cliffs, and terrain too unstable to walk over. Bizarre wind patterns, and what some describe as a "floating telekinetic force field," prevent anyone from flying to the mountain (on top of the usual problems with flying in the Northern Mountains, as described elsewhere in this section). All of these difficulties have made Shreva a hot topic for certain scholars and explorers. After all, to such folks, the mere fact that a place is inaccessible means that there must be something of great interest there, right?

Over the years, numerous scribes and scholars have pored over hundreds of texts in search of any scrap of information on the mountain. As far as anyone can tell, none exist. There have been no historical references to Mount Shreva whatsoever, which only thickened the plot. Practically drooling with wonder, a few of the world's top scholars arranged for a team of powerful adventurers to set foot on Mount Shreva somehow and explore it for the good of all academia.



The expedition would never see Mount Shreva. Only twelve hours after leaving the Island Kingdom of Bizantium, the expedition ship was attacked by a group of a half-dozen dragons who incinerated the vessel and everybody in it. The only reason why this is known is because the dragons then assumed humanoid form and paid a very nasty visit to the scholars who'd organized and bankrolled the expedition. The scholars were told in no uncertain terms that absolutely no mortal was to set foot on Mount Shreva at any time, for any reason, under any circumstance. Those who attempt to will be stopped. Those who somehow reach the mountain will be destroyed. Case closed. End of story.

After that, the world academic community got the point about Shreva and left it alone. Today, the mountain is a bit of a taboo subject. Explorers are still interested in seeing the place, but people are very reticent to discuss the place for fear that the same mysterious dragon enforcers who terrorized the original scholars of Mount Shreva will pay *them* a visit, too.

Mount Terminus

The last of the Great Peaks, Mount Terminus stands some 32,120 feet (9,790 m) above sea level in the southern reaches of the Northern Mountains. This mountain is best known as the site of the *Battle of Terminus,* which signaled the final defeat of *The Garrison,* the group of demon slayers, crusaders and heroes who volunteered to watch over the mountains for the Alliance of Lights to prevent any demon hordes from escaping the Land of the Damned. After The Garrison's fall, there would be no uniform and powerful law-enforcing presence in the Northern Mountains, and the Legions of the Damned would rule The Terminus. And rule it with a vengeance

Mount Terminus is riddled with ancient ruins, mostly strongholds and storehouses The Garrison built back in the glory days, when they had the manpower and resources to keep the collective inhabitants of the Land of the Damned in line Over the years, The Garrison has been whittled down to nearly nothing. The organization calling itself The Garrison today is a pale shadow of what it was at its height, and considered nothing more than a hodgepodge of well meaning heroes and priests hoping to bring back a grand old tradition.

By the end of the Battle of Terminus, the Mount became one great big battlefield as The Gamson desperately held out as long as they could before their eventual rout and slaughter The scars of that conflict still mark the mountain today. Deep trenches have been cut into the stone everywhere, craters pockmark the surface as evidence of high-powered magical warfare, and sections of the rock face were even at one point melted and re-solidified. The ruins of Garrison structures are scattered all over the mountain surface, but most of these have been booby trapped (both conventionally and magically), and are best left alone. To this day, many of the traps on Mount Terminus are active, waiting for a fool to set them off and end their life.

Terminus is also reported to be haunted by the ghosts of the slain Garrison officers and a host of demonic warriors who met their final end here. Psychics are reluctant to pursue this rumor, because using any kind of psychic "readings" or attempts to contact spirits - in effect, opening oneself to any of the psychic impressions and energy in this part of the mountains - can kill

and drive psychics insane. For to do an Object Read on these ancient stones, or to use telepathy or to open oneself to the supernatural world is to invite accidental contact with a dreaming Old One! A nightmarish experience which promptly short-circuits one's brain and usually leaves the psychic comatose and forever changed, and not changed for the better. It is said that half of the madmen loose in these mountains lost their minds when they were touched by the evil of a slumbering Old One. Such is their power even when unconscious and unaware. This has also prompted many to speculate that one of the Old Ones, perhaps Xy, himself, is buried somewhere in the belly of Mount Terminus.

Despite all this, greedy treasure hunters - mostly among the sinister and malicious creatures that roam this region - come to Mount Terminus in search of secret, lost treasures and avenues of power that may still lie buried in the old strongholds and forgotten graveyards. They figure there must be some choice treasure still left to plunder. Indeed, there might very well be.

Wall of Stone

Compared to other mountain ranges of the Palladium Fantasy world, the Northern Mountains reign supreme. The only other mountain chain that compares in magnitude are the *Old Kingdom Mountains,* but even they pale before the wall of stone that seals off the Land of the Damned from the outside world. The other mountain ranges of the world, such as the **Bru-Ga-Belimar** of the Northern Wilderness, the Baalgor Mountains, and Mounts **Nimro** and **Nimrod** are even more mismatched and insignificant when it comes to size, length and height.

The outside edges of the Northern Mountain chain consist of mountains each at least as large as anything found in the Old Kingdom Mountains. But these are just a warm-up exercise to the range's true challenge. In the center of the range is a broad and unbroken series of mountains that dwarf all other peaks known to exist. In real-world terms, these mountains are each at least the size of the infamous *Mount Everest,* which towers nearly 29,000 feet (8,839 **m)** above sea level. The highest peaks in the Northern Mountains are even taller than that, most of which sporting pinnacles that have *never* been scaled by any mortal.

Most who see the Northern Mountains for the first time experience a little shock as they take in exactly how immense the mountains really are. No historical document, no map or illustration, no amount of hearing stories about the region can really prepare the greenhorn for the sheer magnitude of the mountain chain. One can only view its greatness and try to take it all in, but most who see the Northern Mountains for the first time experience a little shock. (Roll to save vs *Awe/Horror Factor of* 77. A failed roll means the characters stare up at the mountains, slack-jawed and mouths hanging open, for 1D4 melee rounds or until one of their friends shakes them out of their amazement.)

The immense size of the Northern Mountains poses a host of challenges to anyone who wishes to traverse them, not the least of which are avalanches, extreme cold, the danger of falling, starvation, exhaustion, and lack of oxygen at high altitudes. These are all in addition to the many hazards posed by the many exotic monsters, animals and **humanoids** dwelling within the range, but far and away, it is the Northern Mountains themselves that present the greatest threat to the lives of those who climb them. The mountains are so lethal, in fact, that nearly *one in every six individuals* who enter the range die there. Of the other five, four will never be seen again, which means they will either die an unseen and unconfirmed death, or more likely, they will have given up halfway through and found a permanent home for themselves within the range. Over the years, so many adventurers and explorers have gotten lost or given up in the mountains that to this day there are numerous villages throughout the mountains populated entirely by adventurers and their kin.

For the very few who successfully navigate and traverse the mountains, their troubles are only beginning. Indeed, they will have conquered the mightiest mountains of the world, but in doing so, they have entered the interior of the Land of the **Damned,** which can be many, many times more deadly. Most often, those who penetrate the mountains never survive long enough to try going back the way they came. And those who do are by no means assured an easy or safe passage through the range just because they managed to do it the first time. Statistically speaking, the odds are overwhelmingly against anybody making it through the mountains, surviving in the Land of the **Damned's** interior and making it back through the mountains. This extraordinarily high death rate just confirms that the Northern Mountains are perfectly suited to the task for which they were built: to keep the monstrosities in the Land of the Damned from swarming out of their region and infecting the rest of the world. As the dozens of frozen corpses all over the Northern Mountains' western faces will attest, the Legions of the Damned have tried many times to find a way through the wall of stone, but very few have succeeded.

No Easy Way In, No Easy Way Out

Due to the extreme altitude of the Northern Mountains, they can not be flown over. Above 20,000 feet **(6,100** m), the air gets so thin and the winds so fierce, that no magic or natural means of flight can keep a body aloft.

In theory, **teleportation** *could* be used to jaunt instantly across the mountain chain, but in practice, things work quite differently. For some reason, *any* attempt to **teleport** has a mere 10% chance of success. For determining the effects of an unsuccessful teleport, consult the table below.

Results of an Unsuccessful Teleport:

01-40%: Appears in the wrong place. Basically, the traveler's unsuccessful teleport has bounced him 3D6xlOO miles (480 to 2880 km) to the *east* of the Land of the Damned. Exactly how far east the character bounces is left to the G.M. The character could bounce straight east, smack in the middle of the Wolfen Empire. Or he could bounce just a little east and far to the north, into the Sea of Despair (not good). Of he could bounce just a little east and far to the south, into the Western Empire. It all depends on the range and direction of the bounce.

41-75%: Appears in the wrong place. This is like the previous entry, only the character bounces a mere **1D6x100** miles (160 to 960 km). There is a full 180 degree range of direction for where the character might end up. He could bounce directly north or south of his current position, or he could bounce directly **east,** or somewhere in between. He will not bounce to the west. Not one bit.

76-98%: The traveler stays in the same spot, but teleports 3D6xlO feet (9.1 to 55 m) straight up into the air and then falls to the ground. Takes 1D6 points of damage per every 20 feet (6 m) he falls.

99-00%: The traveler teleports into an object! Either he materialized in the middle of a mountain, or maybe he just teleported straight down into the ground. Either way, the character dies instantly. This horrifying fate is enough to discourage those who can teleport from actually trying it. Better to risk life and limb crossing the mountains than to risk materializing into them, or so the thinking goes. Besides, argue the more reckless adventurers in the region, what fun is there in simply teleporting across? Actually, this is a fairly valid argument against teleportation in general, since many of the adventurers who come to the Land of the Damned do so to challenge themselves to the utmost; cheating by teleporting across the Northern Mountains defeats that purpose, so many adventurers just don't do it.

Abandon All Hope, Ye Who Enter?

After reading the previous and following sections, it might seems like there is *absolutely no chance* for most characters to make it over the Northern Mountains. If the cold doesn't prevail against the best efforts of those traversing the range, then its many crevasses or an avalanche or a snowstorm or something else will. And the worst part about it is that none of these are particularly glorious ways to go. If a character dies but takes a hundred Orc marauders with him in an epic final battle, then at least there is some dramatic satisfaction to the otherwise sad fact that one's hero has finally perished. But dying in an avalanche? There is no glory in that, and consequently, it's a *real* bummer to any character who suffers such an ignominious fate.

A lot of G.M.s will be tempted to read this section, understand that the Northern Mountains are a dangerous place, understand why so few creatures can get in or out of the Land of the Damned, and then decide *never* to incorporate any of these dangerous environment rules into their game. That's fine. The most important thing is that this information helps set the stage for what the environment of the Northern Mountains is like. It is entirely within a G.M.'s authority to assume that his players' heroes can handle that environment without possibly succumbing to it, or luck out, saving the threats in the game for villains, monsters and such. That said, a party of adventurers who are making their own assault upon the Land of the Damned will probably have a much better adventure if the dangers and challenges of the Northern Mountains not disregarded entirely. After all, hitting the Land of the Damned will be the high point for many characters and campaigns. It would be a shame to cheapen the experience by removing one of its more dangerous components - getting in and getting out.

That does *not* mean the G.M. should arbitrarily unleash the Northern Mountains' entire arsenal of hazards upon the characters, either. Nor spend an interminable time freezing and fighting monsters behind every nook and cranny. The best way to use the Northern Mountains and the dangers they present is, like in all things, to find a happy medium. And the best way to do that is to take the information presented in the following sections and ask yourself how you could craft a challenging but compelling and *fun* adventure out of it.

For example, let's examine a common hazard of the Northern Mountains: Starvation. Now, simply informing the players that they are out of food, are starving to death, and rolling damage until they die is not very engaging. After all, who really wants to role-play their characters' slow descent into emaciation? Far better to take this dire situation and dangling it as a "potential" danger or grim fate. This can be done by having some cretin steal their food supply or allowing it to get lost down a ravine, and then warn the group that unless they take action to find food now, they face starvation. This will send them on a quest to go hunting, possibly finding a homestead or village and having to try to communicate and make a trade with them for new provisions, or have to bushwhack and rob some *bandits* or steal a fresh kill out of the jaws of a monster, or rescue somebody who in turn can help them in some way, and so on. In short, their situation creates new avenues for adventure. And it is the G.M.'s job to present these possible solutions to their starvation problem before they are emaciated wisps of their former selves. Try to provide the characters with a *heroic* (or challenging or even humorous) way to get out of their predicament. Why not, after informing the heroes that their food is gone, have them encounter a sizable barbarian tribe nestled into the mountains? Surely *they* have food, but they will also kill the heroes just as soon as look at them. Unable to fight such a large group and win, the heroes will have to come up with a clever plan, use teamwork, and face danger in order to survive. And if they do, they might have made enemies of the barbarians, they might be on the run from them, they might learn of a treasure the barbarians are after, and so on. All of a sudden, the starvation incident is not just a boring deathtrap. It is a *compelling* situation in which the heroes' backs are up against the wall and they must do something in order to overcome adversity. This is high adventure.

Terminal Thunder: Avalanches

By far, avalanches are the deadliest hazard to mountain climbers. Thanks to the extreme storm activity in the upper reaches of the Northern Mountains, many yards/meters of snow are routinely dumped on mountaintops within the span of a day. These snow packs are rarely stable, and subjected to gravity and other stresses, it is only a matter of time before something sends the entire snow pack rumbling down the mountainside like a tidal wave of ice and snow, brushing aside, covering up or flat out its destroying everything in their path. Avalanches are a truly unstoppable force. They generally can not be diverted. They usually can not be outrun since they move at up to 100 mph (160 km) — way too fast for mountaineers to elude, even if skiing or sliding down the mountain. They can only run their course and stop when they run out of kinetic energy. Trying to slow or stop an avalanche is like trying to hold back the ocean. It just can't be done. There is not even a Spell of Legend in existence that could turn back an entire avalanche. Perhaps divine intervention could, but that has yet to be proven.

Aside from teleporting out of harm's way or taking to the air, the best way to survive an avalanche is to not get caught by one in the first place. The best way to do this is not to traverse snow packs that might still be unstable. After a big storm, prudent climbers will sit tight for a few days while the new snow pack stabilizes. After 1D4 days, the newly deposited snow settles in and can be traversed, just so long as the creatures going across

do not exceed a walking speed of 10 and do not fall or stumble. Otherwise, the travelers will cause the snow pack to dislodge, forming an avalanche. Until the snow pack stabilizes, however, it can be dislodged by *any* physical contact. Even loud noises (anything over 60 decibels - a loud yell) will start the avalanche. The only way to deal with them is to not cause one, or to get into the air when one does occur. Otherwise, those in an avalanche's path are in for a world of hurt.

Still, they must exercise great caution, particularly when traversing large slopes. Such slopes are a constant source of worry when they must regularly be crossed during the establishment of higher camps. If an avalanche does strike, it tends to be massive. Everest avalanches tend to carry those caught in their path down long faces, over cliffs or into crevasses.

In the real world, large avalanches create a wall of air in front of them that inflicts terrific concussive force to everything in its path. Often, the sheer impact of this air blast is enough to kill people and strip trees of their branches in the case of large, fast-moving avalanches. Since it would not be very dramatic to have heroes killed off in this manner, the damage for player characters caught in an avalanche is scaled down considerably.

The air blast of small avalanches inflicts 6D6 damage to anyone or anything caught in its path and throws them 3D6 yards/meters backward through the air.

The blast from medium avalanches inflicts 1D4x10 damage and throws its victims back 1D4x10 yards/meters.

The air blast from large avalanches inflicts 1D6x10 damage and throws its victims back 1D6x10 yards/meters.

Super-large avalanches inflict 2D6x10 damage and throw their victims back 2D6xlO yard/meters.

The crushing damage avalanches do to standing structures from the sheer weight of their snow is far greater than the air blast. To houses, trees, and other such stationary structures, small avalanches inflict 2D6x10 damage, medium avalanches inflict 1D4x100 damage, large avalanches inflict 1D6x100, and super-large avalanches inflict 3D6xlOO. (Note: In real life, the damage would be ten times greater).

Though the crushing damage might be lethal to some characters, it is not the primary physical danger. The real danger is the *knock back factor,* since a character caught at the forefront of an avalanche will (if he is not covered outright) be swept along until the avalanche stops or until he is pushed into a crevasse or over a ledge.

Heroes who are covered by an avalanche might think they have lucked out of some physical damage, but in reality, their situation is far worse. Unless they possess supernatural strength, avalanche victims covered by snow are packed in so tightly that they can not move any part of their bodies, not even opening and closing their mouths to utter spells. Naturally, breathing while buried is next to impossible, and victims have only a short time before they will suffocate. The only hope for a burial victim is to be dug out by friends or to use some psychic ability to effect an escape. Heroes without the Wilderness Survival skill have 6D6 minutes before they suffocate to death. Those with Wilderness Survival get 30+1D6 minutes per level of experience, in part because they will have the presence of mind not to panic, to conserve their breath, and other mountaineering techniques that will buy them some precious time. As a rule of thumb, fellow heroes can dig through a foot of packed, post-avalanche snow at a rate of one foot (.305 m) per minute. If they have a shovel or other tool, they can dig out two feet (.61 m) per minute. Magic can often dig out avalanche victims much faster. (Note: Actually finding buried comrades is the hardest part of an avalanche rescue effort, since a buried character can be just a foot underneath the surface and rescuers might not know it. A good method for finding buried characters is to send them a magic pigeon, since the magic bird will automatically home in on its target and does not move so fast that it can not be followed.)

To determine how deeply the victim has been buried, consult the following table:

01-20%: Lucked out! Only 1D6 feet from the surface. This is still enough to kill, though. Plenty of avalanche victims die under just a few inches of snow.

21-40%: Not bad. Only 3D4 feet from the surface.

41-60%: Buried. 3D6+10 feet from the surface.

61-80%: Bad News. 5D6+15 feet from the surface.

81-00%: Deep Sixed! 6D6+26 feet from the surface. Unless the character does not need to breathe or can psionically teleport, chances are he will meet his end under the snow.

Going Vertical: Climbing ... and Falling

A close second in terms of threats facing mountaineers is falling, either from a great scaled height, or into a deep crevasse. Either can be just as deadly. Standard falling damage for any normal-sized humanoid is 1D6 S.D.C./Hit Points for every 20 feet (6.1 m) one falls. Giant-sized humanoids take 1D6 S.D.C./H.P. for every 30 feet (9.1 m) they fall. Especially small humanoids, such as Gnomes, take 1D4 S.D.C./Hit Points for every 10 feet (3 m) they fall.

Climbing

For the most part, the Northern Mountains can be ascended mostly by walking or crawling up them. It will be an extraordinarily *hard* walk or crawl, but a walk or crawl nonetheless. In any climb, however, there will come at least one point where the mountaineers will have to climb a vertical or nearly vertical rock face to continue their ascent. This is the true test of a mountaineer, and it leads to a great many deaths for those who attempt it unprepared.

The standard protocol for climbing vertical surfaces is to hammer a metal spike or *piton* into the rock and to attach a safety line to it. Then the climber ascends the face as far as he dares, inserts another piton, attaches a line once more, detaches the previous line and moves on. All in all, this is a fairly safe (if piton-intensive) way to go for those who have both the *Climb/Scale Walls* skill and the *Rope Works* skill. Using this method, climbers need only make a skill check once every 200 feet (61 m). If they fail the roll, they fall. But, if they make their *Rope Works* skill check, then their safety line and piton will hold, and the character will only take 1D4 points of damage as he slams into the rock face at the end of this line. If the Rope Works skill check "fails," then the piton and line were not se-

cured properly and the character takes a long (and perhaps fatal) fall.

Other alternatives to pitons are attaching a single *line of knotted rope* or a *rope ladder* to a piton and letting other climbers use that to scale. Such measures will add +10% to the climbers' Climb/Scale Walls rolls, and they will have to make skill checks every 50 feet (15.3 m). If they fall, though, they will have nothing to stop them.

Sometimes climbers will attach **safety lines** to each other to stop falling comrades as well. This is a little risky, since if the secured climbers can not stop their falling fellow, the entire group might plunge. When any member of a joined team falls, the other team members must roll to *strike* on a D20, only in this case, a 10 or higher "hits" and the climber who makes the roll is able to *hang on* while their fellow gets his footing back on the rock face. If any one of the climbers misses the roll, then he too falls off, and the other climbers who have not yet fallen must make another roll to hang on, this time at -2 to strike. This -2 effect is cumulative for every climber who falls. Usually, if one other climber falls, eventually the entire group does, too. Climbers are only able to hang on during these tests of strength if the falling character(s) are not too heavy for any one of the safe climbers to *lift*. A Gnome trying to hang on to his plummeting Troll comrade might as well jump off and save himself the effort of trying to delay the inevitable.

Magic and safety lines. Magic can be used to save oneself from a slip and fall, but the spell caster must act quickly. For example, the *Float in Air* and *Fly as the Eagle* cast upon the fallen individual will stop him from falling and make pulling him back up easy, as if pulling a balloon. Likewise, any spell that reduces weight *(Reduce Self to Six Inches* and *Weightlessness* immediately come to mind) will make the task of pulling fallen characters back up to safety, easy and greatly diminish the chance that the weight of the fallen character(s) will pull the rest of the group off the cliff facing or over a ledge. Likewise, *Telekinesis* and *Levitation* (magical or psionic) can be useful in climbing and rescuing people. *Size of the Behemoth* and *Superhuman Strength* may also be useful in turning oneself into a human "anchor" by which to hold on and prevent the rest of the team from falling to their deaths (and taking the spell caster with them), and equally helpful in pulling up a fallen and dangling climber. And these are just some spells to save the day, other Wizard and Elemental spells, as well as psionic powers, may be equally handy.

True daredevils can try to scale vertical faces entirely on their own. Indeed, rock climbers in the real world and in Palladium Fantasy do it all the time. However, anybody trying this is really taking a chance with his life. Without any safety measures holding him to the face, one slip means the climber will take a fall. Still, there are undoubtedly those who will want to try to do this. Most rock climbers take their time going up and study every option they have before moving an inch. For this reason, rock climbers have to make their Climb/Scale Walls roll only once every 25 feet (7.6 m) and get a +10% bonus to their skill rolls. Again, magic and/or psionics may come in handy in a successful climb.

Crevasses

Crevasses are cracks in the ice underfoot that can range in size from a few centimeters across to gaping holes that could swallow entire houses. Crevasses are often hidden under a thin layer of snow, so it pays to be alert at all times. One false step and a climber might learn that the snow field ahead of him is actually a deadly trapdoor to a bottomless crevasse. Crevasses might also be out in the open, spanned by a natural bridge of snow/ice or by nothing more than air.

In the case of a snow bridge, climbers must be careful, since these too can collapse without warning, especially in the early afternoon when the snow is under the most direct exposure from the sun. If characters wish to probe for a hidden crevasse amid unbroken snow or to test if a snow bridge can support any weight, characters must make a successful *Wilderness Survival* or a *Detect Concealment & Traps* skill roll. If the roll is successful, the character knows if there is a dead fall ahead of him. If not, either he can not tell or (if the G.M. feels devious) he mistakenly thinks he knows if there is a dead fall or not ahead. This is when the character is most likely to waltz into trouble, so making multiple checks is not a bad idea.

In cases where crevasses are out in the open, the climber is faced with an entirely different task: Simply getting across. On many mountains, there are vast ice fields where ancient glaciers have terminated in what looks like a huge field of giant ice cubes. These ice pieces are strewn all about, creating a vast, uneven surface filled with multitudinous crevasses that can be up to hundreds of feet deep. Moreover, these crevasses might themselves be hundreds of feet wide, so the climber must use his head when getting across. Most will try to find the shortest crevasses in the field and span those, regardless of how circuitous a route that might necessitate to get through the ice field. Some climbers will bring specially made ladders that they can re-assemble on the spot and use as a primitive bridge. Others might fire heavy arrows or crossbow bolts with ropes attached to them to the far side of the crevasse, secure the terminal end of the line and swing hand over hand across the crevasse. Still others might try to leap if they are feeling daring. As always, flight and magic are welcome means to getting around such difficulties, but to those who have no access to such things, the hard way across becomes the only way.

Characters using a ladder or similar implement to cross a chasm can cross without any problems if they go *very slowly*. Moving at any rate faster than a snail's pace will subject the character to slipping and falling; roll against one's P.P. to see if they make it across. Likewise, traversing by rope requires a P.P. check as well as a P.S. check if the distance is longer than 100 feet (30.5 m) and if the climbers have a P.S. of 20 or less. Failing the P.S. check means the climber gets tired, loses his grip, and falls. If the G.M. has a flak for the dramatic, a failed P.S. check might mean the character only loses his grip with one hand, and might have as long as another minute (4 melees) for other characters to get out on the line and save him before the other hand goes. Again, *magic* and *psionics* may be helpful in crossing, climbing out of and surviving a fall into a crevasse or ravine.

If a character falls into a crevasse, he not only has to deal with standard falling damage (which might very well kill him) but also with the prospect of escaping the crevasse. Most cre-

vasses taper to a point, so those who fall in get wedged in at the bottom. Unless the character has great strength (22+) or Supernatural strength, he will be stuck fast and need somebody to come down and pull him out. Clever characters can always use magic, psionics, or even ordinary fire to try to melt the ice or chip away rock to get free. All such attempts are left to the ingenuity of the players and G.M. discretion as to their chances for success. In many cases, crevasse victims will suffer deep shock from their falling injuries and are in no shape to try some wacky stunt to free themselves. They just have no other option than to wait to be rescued.

Getting out of an ice cleft is one thing. Getting out of the crevasse is something else. Crevasse walls are vertical and slick. At least near the bottom, the crevasse might only be as wide as the person who fell in, so getting enough clearance to climb will be tough too. Unless the victim has special climbing abilities, he will need dedicated climbing tools (hand axes and spike-soled boots are best) to get moving. Even then, any Climb/Scale Walls skill roll for the first 20 feet (6.1 m) will be made at -30%. And, the climber will have to make two skill checks - once for every 10 feet (3 m) climbed. (Giant-sized climbers need make only one skill check for the 20 feet/6.1 m; Gnome-sized must make *three* skill checks.) For the next 20 feet (6.1 m), skill checks are made at -20%. The next 20 feet, skill checks are at -10. All subsequent skill checks are made at the normal skill ratio. Still, given how far the adventurer might have to go to get out of the crevasse, the likelihood of him slipping and falling back down is pretty good if he does not take some measures to prevent it (such as using pitons and lifelines.)

After reading all this, one might think "Gee, any character who falls into a crevasse is pretty much doomed." In the real world that is correct. That is why mountaineers take them so very seriously. Characters in a fantasy setting have magic and psionics to compensate, help and heal, so their odds are a bit better, provided they have such resources available to them. It might not be a very glorious death for an adventurer who has braved evil overlords and dragons only to die in a big ice hole, but that is the risk one takes when traversing the Northern Mountains. That crevasses are just about *everywhere* in the mountain chain is just one of the many things making it so dangerous to cross through this region. Taking this into account, it becomes a little more clear why so few people ever make it through the mountains, and why the creatures living on the other side of them stay there.

Snow Pits

In the Northern Mountains, snow pits are less common (they are all over the place in the snow-covered Northern Wilderness) than crevasses and far less deadly. A snow pit occurs when the top layer of snow becomes glazed or encrusted with ice, but shifting or melting snow under the glazed top forms a hole, depression, dip or valley hidden beneath the surface. When a traveler steps on the apparently solid surface, his weight plunges him through the thin crust and sends him (and those next to or tied/connected to him) falling into the opened space or pit below. Such drops are usually only 10 or 20 feet (3 or 6.1 m) deep, and do not cause serious falling damage.

Where snow pits are really dangerous is if a solo traveler falls into one or if a traveler's sled or other vehicle falls in. Since snow pits have soft, crumbly sides and bottoms, getting out of them is super-difficult. Most of the time, trying to climb out only makes a wall crumble. Vehicles stuck in a snow pit are lost unless additional travelers out of the pit can attach a rope to them and drag them out, but even then, this is a difficult and energy-consuming task.

In general, anybody stuck in a snow pit may try to use Climb/Scale Walls to get out, but with a -10% to -40% (1D4x10%) penalty, depending on the consistency of the snow. If the victim has been lowered a rope and is climbing out, success is virtually assured. If travelers are trying to pull out stuck sleds or other heavy cargo, they must marshal *three times* the required P.S. to lift the stuck cargo. This extra strength is needed to dislodge the object from its snow encasement.

The Big Chill: Facing Extreme Cold

Through a fluke of weather patterns, the Northern Mountains and the Land of the Damned do *not* suffer from the same killer winter weather (and temperature) that the neighboring Northern Hinterlands does. Some believe this is really because of the strange magicks that govern this region, but the fact remains that the so-called End of the World actually has fairly modest weather and almost non-existent seasonal variation, with an average daily temperature of 35 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit (1.7 to 16 degrees Celsius). As one ascends the Northern Mountains, this changes drastically. By the time one stands atop the chain's tallest mountains, the cold experienced there makes the winter chill of the Northern Wilderness seem like nothing. This is only exacerbated by the severe wind chill which makes the cold many times worse. Put these together, and it should come as little surprise that many of those who perish in the Northern Mountains have been flash-frozen on the spot, victims of the cold.

There are a series of factors that must be considered to prevent fatal exposure to the elements. *Frostbite* and *hypothermia* are the most common and notorious causes of injury and death, but what most people don't realize is that these are often brought on by *exhaustion* and *exposure*. Without adequate food or water one tires more quickly. The depletion of body sugar (energy), the decrease in body temperature (the onset of hypothermia), severe dehydration (poor circulation and stiffening muscles and joints), and psychological changes all contribute to the traveler's condition and can leave the victim weak and vulnerable to injury, disease, exposure and death.

Without adequate food, water, clothing and rest, an individual will succumb to the cold and wind - losing the ability to react against external forces and becoming a victim waiting to keel over. Having a sufficient food and water supply, proper clothing, suitable mode of transportation (snowshoes or skis are encouraged while traveling on foot), awareness of the current and coming weather conditions, and a good knowledge of the terrain are essential to surviving in a snow-covered, mountainous wilderness.

The base temperature for any given mountain in the region varies according to altitude, as follows:

Northern Mountain Lowlands (0,000 feet/m to 10,000 feet/3,048 m): Base temperature year round is 35 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit (1.7 to 16 degrees Celsius). Characters might need to dress moderately warmly, but the temperature offers little risk of exposure unless it dips to 40 and one is wearing no shirt. Snowfall is very rare at this level.

Northern Mountain Midlands (10,001 feet/3,048 m to 18,000 feet/5,486 m): Base temperature year round is 20 to 35 degrees Fahrenheit (-6.7 to 1.7 degrees Celsius). Characters should wear typical winter clothing. Failure to do so might result in frostbite and/or hypothermia after 1D4 hours of exposure. Characters with P.E. scores of 20 or higher can go twice as long before suffering ill effects from the cold.

Northern Mountain Highlands (18,001 feet/5,486 m to 25,000 feet/7,620 m): Base temperature year round is 0 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit (-17.8 to -6.7 degrees Celsius). If the characters are not bundled up for severe winter weather, they will suffer hypothermia and/or frostbite within 3D6 minutes, twice that for characters with P E. scores of 20 or higher. Prolonged exposure of more than 1D4 hours will likely result in the character's death.

The Death Zone (25,001+ feet/7,620+ m): Base temperature year round is 0 to -40 degrees Fahrenheit (-17.8 to -40 degrees Celsius). Characters not entirely covered in the warmest of clothing will *immediately* begin suffering the effects of frostbite and hypothermia. Prolonged exposure of more than one hour will likely result in the character's death. After just one minute (four melee rounds), exposed flesh will begin to freeze —1D6 damage per minute until the exposed flesh is covered again. If a hand is frozen like this, it becomes immobile, unable to grasp objects or perform any manual task. Unless one is wearing a blindfold with slits in it (the standard eye protection for mountaineers), one's eyes will freeze open and blindness will follow within minutes.

Even for characters properly dressed, survival at this temperature is possible for 1D4+1 days at most before the characters succumb to the cold. Most climbers have the sense not to stay this high for that long. Most often, people who fall prey to prolonged overexposure are the ones who are pinned down by a storm or whose descent path has been blocked somehow.

Not as Cold as it Feels: Wind Chill Factor

But wait, it gets worse! The terrible cold is just one factor to consider here. The other is what ends up killing most of those who succumb to the cold in the Northern Mountains. That's right, we're talking about...*wind chill.*

When the wind blows, it makes one feel much, much colder than they really are. That is because wind has a way of sucking the heat right off a person's body, instantly exacerbating the effects of the cold. Where one notices this the most is on mountains, where there is always intense wind and nowhere to hide from it. Those who wish to climb over the Northern Mountains had better be prepared for the wind chill, or it will kill them, plain and simple.

In the preceding section, we got an idea of what the temperatures get like, and what happens to the humanoid body at those temperatures. Now let's take what we know and apply it to the Wind Chill Chart, below.

Lowlands (0,000 feet/m to 10,000 feet/3,048 m): Average wind speed at any given time is 4 to 10 mph (6.4 to 16 km).

Midlands (10,001 feet/3,048 m to 18,000 feet/5,486 m): Average wind speed at any given time is 10 to 20 mph (16 to 32 km).

Highlands (18,001 feet/5,486 m to 25,000 feet/7,620 m): Average wind speed at any given time is 20 to 40 mph (32 to 64 km).

The Death Zone (25,001+ feet/7,620+ m): Average wind speed at any given time is 40 to 100 mph (64 to 160 km)!

Note: Winds higher than 40 mph (64 km) have little additional chilling effect.

So, what does all of this mean? To get a good grasp of what wind chill does to the mean temperature, take a look at the Wind Chill Chart below and compare the temperatures there with the effects described in the *Big Chill* section, above.

Wind Chill Chart

Wind	Temperature (F)												
(Mph)	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0	-5	-10	-15	-20	-25
5	32	27	22	16	11	6	0	-5	-10	-15	-21	-26	-31
10	22	16	10	3	-3	-9	-15	-22	-27	-34	-40	-46	-52
15	16	9	2	-5	-11	-18	-25	-31	-38	-45	-51	-58	-65
20	12	4	-3	-10	-17	-24	-31	-39	-46	-53	-60	-67	-74
25	8	1	-7	-15	-22	-29	-36	-44	-51	-59	-66	-74	-81
30	6	-2	-10	-18	-25	-33	-41	-49	-56	-64	-71	-79	-86
35	4	-4	-12	-20	-27	-35	-43	-52	-58	-67	-74	-82	-92
40	3	-5	-13	-21	-29	-37	-45	-53	-60	-69	-76	-84	-92

Silent Death: Hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when the temperature of the body core (brain, spinal cord, heart and lungs) of an individual has been reduced to 95 degrees Fahrenheit (35 degrees Celsius) or less by exposure to the environment. One of the greatest dangers of hypothermia is that it can occur in any season, with water greatly accelerating heat loss. Children and the elderly are particularly susceptible.

The following is a symptom table noting what is likely to occur as the body temperature of a hypothermia victim drops. These temperatures apply to most humanoids, such as *humans, Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, Orcs, Ogres* and so on, including *Coyles and Wolfen* (their fur only helps to a point).

Races especially suited for the cold, such as *Kankoran, Bearmen of the North, Danzi, Gigantes, Emerin, dragons, demons, Deevils* and others, can endure far lower body temperatures before they begin to suffer for it. Their resistance to the cold is several times that of other humanoids, so the G.M. is advised not to begin applying these negative modifiers until their body temperature gets down to 85.2 to 78.8 Fahrenheit (29.6-26 C). This would also apply to those who can magically or psionically make themselves "resistant" to cold. Of course, some creatures such as Algor Giants, Ice Dragons, certain Faerie Folk, many supernatural beings and others are *impervious to cold,* and do not suffer any penalties or threat of injury from it. However, unless stated otherwise, their movement is likely to be hampered by deep snow and ice the same as anyone else.

97.6 to 95.0 degrees Fahrenheit (36.4 to 35 degrees C): The individual feels chilled to the bone and shivers. The skin is cold to the touch and the lips have a purplish hue to them. This condition is not serious and can be quickly remedied by putting on a few layers of dry clothing and/or being wrapped in warm blankets. The body should be thoroughly dried before getting dressed to prevent frostbite when exposed to the cold. It typically takes 2D6+6 minutes before the person begins to feel completely warm and back to normal. Penalties: While suffering from this touch of hypothermia, the victim is -2 to initiative, -1 on all combat maneuvers and -5% on skill performance where a nimble and steady hand is required.

95.0 to 91.4 Fahrenheit (35 to 33 C): Intense to violent shivering, and the ability to perform complex tasks is clearly impaired. In addition, the individual feels fatigued, suffers from slowed reflexes, and the extremities (fingers, hands, toes, ears, nose) will feel numb and frozen. Coordination becomes poor. Speaking may also be difficult and the thought processes sluggish. If left in this condition, the character may black out, suffer from amnesia, and start to lose awareness/contact with the environment around him. Penalties: -20% to all skills, reduce Speed attribute by half, -1 melee attack, has no initiative, -2 on all combat rolls, and may need to make a roll with punch/fall/impact vs a 10 for every 100 feet (30 m) walked, or else the character will fall down. It takes an act of willpower to get back up (and a successful roll to save vs punch/roll/impact or maintain balance), and get back moving again. The character probably can not feel his hands or feet anymore. It typically takes 3D6x10 minutes of being wrapped in warm, dry blankets and exposure to heat (stove, fire, etc.) before the individual begins to feel completely warm and normal.

91.4 to 87.8 Fahrenheit (33-31 C): Shivering decreases, but in its place is muscle rigidity (hard to move limbs), erratic movement (brief spasms), the thinking process is dull and hazy, and the victim can not stand on his own two feet; must crawl on all fours. Hallucinations are common and the character loses contact with his surroundings and barely has any sense of his own body - has no sense of time, direction, self, or what's going on more than five feet (1.5 m) away from the front of his face.

Extremities are completely numb and nearly frozen. Penalties: -50% on the performance of skills, reduce the speed by 75% (can only crawl and lunge), no initiative, reduce all combat bonuses by half, reduce all attacks/actions per melee round by half, and can not maintain balance for more than 1D4 melee rounds and then only if standing still and ideally, braced against an object. It typically takes 4D4+4 hours of being wrapped in warm, dry blankets and exposure to heat (stove, fire, etc.) before the person begins to feel warm and back to normal. Note: Hallucinations are suspected to be the origins for many of the myths and legends concerning certain treasure troves, places (like cities of gold), monsters and visitation by gods.

87.8 to 85.2 Fahrenheit (31-29.6 C): Skin feels like ice, skin is blue, eyes glazed and dilated, muscles hard and rigid and hands are frozen claws, but no shivering. The character's senses are almost completely gone, skill performance is virtually nil (-85%), the character is irrational and drowsy. It takes every ounce of willpower to keep crawling along at a snail's pace. Pulse and respiration are slow. Penalties: -85% on the performance of skills, reduce speed by 90% (can barely crawl), no initiative, no combat bonuses, reduce melee actions/attacks per round to one. Cannot maintain balance for more than 1D4 seconds even when supported by a brace or others. Can not feel hands or extremities; it is impossible to even pick up or squeeze an object of a gun. It typically takes 4D6+18 hours of being wrapped in warm, dry blankets, exposure to heat (stove, fire, etc.), water and sleep before the person begins to feel warm and back to normal.

85.2 to 78.8 Fahrenheit (29.6-26 C): Nearly comatose! Cannot move and even reflexes do not function. Pulse is slow, erratic and difficult to find. The victim fades in and out of consciousness and does not respond to spoken words (may be delirious). The heart starts atrial fibrillation. Penalties: Skills and any physical action is impossible for at least 2D6+32 hours, at which point the character can move his fingers and toes, understand spoken words, speak in a hoarse whisper and has one melee action. It typically takes 6D6+72 hours of being wrapped in warm, dry blankets, exposure to heat (stove, fire, etc.), sleep, and being hand-fed food (ideally soup) and water before the character begins to feel strong and back to normal (half usual bonuses and melee actions). It can take a full week or two to get back to full health.

Below 78.8 Fahrenheit (26 C): Coma and death are imminent. Heart and respiratory failure, ventricular fibrillation, probable brain and lung hemorrhage, apparent death. Unconscious and will die if immediate medical attention is not administered. Roll vs coma/death. If the character can be resuscitated, it will take one week to get to the stage of having one melee action and being able to maintain consciousness for more than 10 minutes at a time. It will take 1D4+1 additional weeks to get back to full health.

Cold Water Kills

It has been estimated that half of all drowning victims actually die from the fatal effects of cold water, or hypothermia, and not from water filled lungs. Loss of body heat is one of the greatest hazards to survival when one falls overboard, is capsized, or jumps into water. Cold water robs the body of heat 25-30 times faster than air. Sudden immersion in cold water cools the skin and outer tissues very quickly. Within 10 or 15 minutes, the core body temperature begins to drop rapidly and the arms and legs become numb and completely useless. The victim may lose consciousness and drown before their core temperature drops low enough to cause death.

Game Note: In the case of our heroic player characters, one can assume the length of time he or she can survive in freezing water (or having been soaked and left wet in freezing temperatures) is 30 minutes +1 minute per P.E. point. Until this time elapses, the character basically suffers from phase two hypothermia (body temp reduced to 95.0 to 91.4 degrees). After that, they are in serious trouble.

Body Hot Spots: Areas of the body such as the head, neck, sides of the chest, armpits, and where there is little fat or muscle are major areas of heat loss from the warm chest cavity. The groin area is another "hot spot" and susceptible to the loss of heat because major blood vessels are near the surface of the skin.

If a character should suddenly find himself in the water, he should try not to panic; G.M.s may want to have the character make a save vs Insanity or Horror Factor; 13 or higher saves and any M.E. and save vs cold bonuses should be applied to determine whether or not the character panics. One should follow the procedure below to increase their survival time by minimizing body heat loss. This is the single most important thing the character can do.

Do not remove clothing. Instead, characters should tighten their clothing as much as possible, taking special care to cover their head. A layer of water trapped inside one's clothing will be slightly warmed by the body and help insulate it from the colder water, slowing the rate of body heat loss.

Devote all efforts to getting out of the water. Act quickly before the loss of full use of the hands and limbs. Climb onto a boat, raft, ice flow, or anything floating. Right a capsized boat and climb in. Most lifeboats will support a character even if they are full of water. If the character can not right a capsized boat, he should attempt to climb on top of the hull. The object is to get as much of one's body out of the water as possible.

Do not attempt to swim. Not unless it is to reach a nearby boat, another person, or a floating object that can be climbed upon. Unnecessary swimming pumps "out" warmed water between the body and the clothing, circulating new, cold water to take its place and contributes to rapid hypothermia and exhaustion. Likewise, unnecessary movement of the arms and legs pumps warm blood to your extremities, where it cools quickly, reducing survival time by as much as 50%!

First Aid For Hypothermia

Any character pulled from cold water or a frozen condition should be treated for hypothermia. Symptoms include intense shivering, loss of coordination, mental confusion, cold & blue (cyanotic) skin, especially around lips or fingers, weak pulse, irregular heartbeat and enlarged pupils, etc., as described earlier in this section.

Once shivering stops, the core body temperature begins to drop critically. The goal in treating hypothermia is to prevent further body cooling. Severe cases call for rewarming by trained medical personnel. Whenever possible, arrange to have the victim transported to a medical facility immediately. In the Hinterlands or any wilderness, that's probably a Psi-Healer, the clergy

or similar individual skilled in First Aid at the least and Holistic Medicine or magic at best. Of course, in most cases professional or magical medical treatment will not be available, forcing the character or his teammates to try their best at improvisation. The following isn't all medical knowledge and even characters without any type of medical skills (but common sense and general knowledge) can attempt to help a victim of hypothermia. Any character with First Aid, or better yet, the Holistic Medicine or Medical Doctor skill will know how to treat hypothermia. Basic procedures include the following:

Gently move the victim to warm shelter. Treat gently to prevent fibrillation of the heart and shock to the system.

Check breathing and heartbeat In cases of hypothermia one should check very closely for as long as two minutes at a time. Start CPR only if necessary.

Remove victim's wet clothing with a minimum of movement, cut them away if necessary. Lay the victim in a level, face up position with a blanket or other insulation beneath them.

Wrap victim in warm blankets, furs, sleeping bag or other warm covering. If there will be a long delay before the victim arrives at a medical facility or none is available, use the following rewarming techniques.

Apply heating pads or hot water bottles wrapped in a towel to prevent burning the skin, to the head, neck, chest, and groin.

Do not apply heat to arms and legs, and do NOT give the victim a hot bath. This forces blood out through the cold extremities and back to the heart, lungs and brain, which will further drop the core body temperature. This can cause "after drop" (i.e. the continued and worsening affects of hypothermia), which can be fatal!

Do not massage or rub the victim. Rough handling may cause cardiac arrest.

Apply warmth by direct body to body contact. Have someone lay next to the victim, ideally skin to skin. Wrap both in dry blankets.

If the person is alert enough, aid givers can give them hot drinks or soup. If they are unconscious or stuporous do not give them anything to drink. NEVER give alcoholic beverages because it will act to dehydrate the victim.

Save vs coma/death may be required.

Magic and psionic applications of such treatments as Healing Touch/Heal Wounds, Psychic Purification, Psychic Deaden Pain, Psychic Induced Sleep, Light Healing, Sustain, Sheltering Force, Cure Illness, Restore Limb, Restoration, Heal Self and others can help combat hypothermia, prevent frostbite, and heal and restore damaged extremities as well as dramatically increase the healing process (victim recovers in one quarter the normal time needed). Obviously, psychic powers like Impervious to Cold, Resist Fatigue, Summon Inner Strength, Bio-Regeneration, Psychic Body Field, and Pyrokinesis, or magic like Resist Cold, Impervious to Cold, Armor of Ithan, Invulnerability and others can help resist the cold and avoid injury in the first place.

Frostbite

Frostbite is a condition where the tissue of the body freezes. The most common affected areas are the hands, fingers, feet, toes, nose and ears where frostbite can happen in a matter of minutes in very cold, dry weather (like late January through March in the Hinterlands), or when stuck in freezing water. Symptoms include firm, cold, white patches on the skin, and affected area(s) become numb to the touch and the victim will feel a constant freezing pain. When warmed, these areas may become blotchy red, swollen, and painful (similar to the freezing pain but may actually feel as if the skin is on fire). Numbness imposes a -10% skill performance penalty and the character is -1 to parry and strike. The affected areas are painful and vulnerable to attack. If struck they may require the character to make a save vs pain (optional; 16 or higher to save; P.E. bonuses are applicable).

Advanced cases of frostbite occur when the pain subsides without the character doing anything to counter the cold. The appendage becomes completely numb and may actually feel warm. At this point things become serious as the skin begins to freeze and die! Skin and muscle tissue begins to die off, and as the affected area thaws, it will decompose and become infected, running the chance of poisoning the victim (killing them) unless appropriate medical attention is sought immediately.

Frostbite Damage: Since this is the actual freezing of tissue, the possibility of damage is very real. Minor cases are merely painful to the touch and may require the character to make a roll to save vs cold (14 or higher; P.E. bonuses and any bonuses to save vs cold are applicable). A failed roll means the affected area suffers 1D4 S.D.C. damage. Serious damage and a failed roll to save, means there is permanent cellular and nerve damage. In the most extreme cases the victim may actually lose extremities (typically amputated to prevent gangrenous infection): toes (reduce speed by 30%, -20 to all skills requiring balance), fingers (-10% to skill performance for every two fingers lost, and it takes 50% longer to perform properly), nose (reduce P.B. by 50%), or ears (reduce P.B. by 10%), sometimes even a hand, arm or leg may be lost (apply the appropriate penalties; use the Optional Damage Rules on page 20 of *The Palladium RPG®* as a guideline).

A successful save means the pain and a -15% skill penalty are only temporary (1D4+1 days), and no permanent cellular or nerve damage has occurred.

Treating Frostbite

In most cases, treating frostbite is as easy as placing the affected area in a warm area of the body like the armpits or in warm (never hot!) water that feels warm to an unaffected hand. Consult with a doctor or healer if the area does not recover after treatment. Putting the affected areas in hot water is very painful (2D6 S.D.C. damage and a save vs pain roll is required every time the character moves the appendage). Moreover, serious cases of frostbite may cause the skin to crack, causing bleeding, more pain and wounds vulnerable to infection and gangrene.

Note: Though alcohol may provide an initial warming sensation to a cold body, it can be very deceptive. Alcohol causes peripheral vessels, such as those in the skin, to dilate. Blood rushing through these vessels radiates heat away from the body, diverting warmth from vital organs and increasing the risk of hypothermia. Drinking can also interfere with good judgment needed to be cautious and survive in cold weather.

The previously mentioned magic and psychic treatments also apply to frostbite, and in most cases, a Healing Touch/Heal Wound will prevent permanent damage and infection.

Forever Hungry: The Need for Food and Drink

A proper diet is an essential ingredient in scaling the Northern Mountains. In the extreme cold and at high altitudes, climbers generally need to consume several times their normal food intake per day. In the Northern Mountain Lowlands, climbers do not need to eat any extra food. In the Northern Mountain Midlands, climbers need to eat *twice* their normal food intake per day. In the Northern Mountain Highlands, climbers need to eat *three* times their normal food intake per day. And in the Death Zone, climbers need to *eat five times* their normal food intake per day.

To put this in perspective, the average human requires 2,000 calories a day. By the time that person hits the Death Zone, his caloric intake, minimum, is a whopping 10,000 calories a day. Anything less than that and the climber will begin to starve.

Starvation

Starvation is never a pleasant thing, but even less so in the Northern Mountains.

During the initial stages of starvation, climbers will feel tired, light-headed and distracted. All skills are at -10%, Spd is reduced 10%, and all combat bonuses are down by -2.

After about 20 days, the character enters into a moderate phase of starvation. All skills are at -25%, and all combat bonuses are down by half or -4, whichever is greater. In addition, the character's P.S., P.P., P.E., Spd and S.D.C. are down by 25%.

After 40 days, the character enters into serious starvation. All skills are now at -50%, all combat bonuses are down by -8, and the character loses half of his melee attacks per round. In addition, the character's P.S., P.P., P.E., and Spd are down by 50%. The character will have lost at least a third of his body weight at this point, and Hit Points are down to *half*. The character's S.D.C. is gone.

After 60 days, the character enters into critical starvation. He can no longer perform any skills. His attributes are all at 3. Just moving requires all of the character's strength; combat of any sort is impossible. Even casting spells or using psionics can no longer be done because the character is delirious with hunger. The character will have lost half his body weight, which means he will appear extremely gaunt. Hit points are down by 80%. The character is on the verge of death.

After 80 days, the character dies. Even if a character is rescued right before death, it will take *twice* as long as he had been starving to nurse him back to health. Thus, a character who had been starving for 80 days will require another 160 to make a full recovery. But even when the character fully returns to his former health, unless he makes a save vs insanity (base roll of 12 plus any M.E. bonuses), he will forever be haunted by the sensation of hunger, and he will pathologically hoard food.

Encumbrance

So now we know why it is so important to make sure one gets enough to eat when assaulting the Northern Mountains. Where this really gets problematic is that it takes weeks to scale most tall mountains, and carrying enough food to make it all the way up and over can be difficult, if not impossible. Many successful travelers will have some magical means of feeding themselves — enchanted bags that conjure forth food, talismans that remove their need for food, etc. Those who try to haul enough vittles with them often run low prematurely, forcing them to hunt in an environment not conducive to hunting. These folks often must turn back or risk starvation and death on their summit assault.

Even if a climber has enough sustenance during a climb, it is common for many climbers to lose up to 40 lbs (18 kg) during the time it takes to scale just *one* of the major summits in the Northern Mountains. Merely lying still in the Highlands, for example, will result in weight loss because the body must work much harder to heat itself in the cold wind and to process oxygen in such thin air. After one comes down from a summit assault, it takes 1D4+1 weeks (half that time for characters with P.E. scores of 20 or higher) to recover from that kind of exertion, which is why so many climbers must find a place to shack up for a while after conquering a major mountain.

Thirst Kills

Just as climbers need extra food, they also need extra water. This is just as important as food. Most climbers enter the Northern Mountains unaware that they will face just as much danger from thirst as they would crossing a major desert like the

Baalgor Wastelands. Since climbers hyper-exert themselves so much, keeping properly **hydrated** is a key to mountaineering survival.

Most humans can go for weeks without food if they have to, but they can only last three or four days, tops, without water before they die. And that's just sitting still. Somebody who is particularly active **(i.e.,** running, fighting, performing heavy manual labor or climbing a mountain) can dehydrate him- or herself beyond the point of no return within a day.

For game purposes, under normal conditions, the average normal-sized **humanoid** (e.g., human, Elf, Dwarf) requires four quarts/liters of water a day to survive. In the Northern Mountains, however, people must exert themselves much more to cope with the cold and moving about in the vertical environment of the mountains. As a result, the average humanoid's water requirement per day doubles to *eight* quarts/liters a day. Small **humanoids** (such as Gnomes) need half that while giant-sized **humanoids** (such as Wolfen and Ogres) need double that. In addition, **humanoids,** monsters and animals native to the Northern Mountains require only half the daily amount of water than do outside creatures because they have acclimatized to the environment and their bodies are used to the level of stress that surviving in the Northern Mountains requires.

Now, remember how we said that it would be tough for climbers to bring enough food with them? You guessed it - hauling up enough water is a lot tougher since it weighs a leaden eight pounds (3.6 kg) per gallon. This is where wilderness survival really comes into play, since most mountaineers assaulting the Northern Mountains must at some point *find* water along their way. **In** the upper mountains, this is not so difficult, since there is plenty of snow and ice around. Climbers just have to remember to melt that snow before drinking it. Eating snow will actually dehydrate a person since their body must expend extra energy to melt the stuff. Sounds odd, but it's true.

Dehydrated characters have all combat bonuses and number of attacks per melee reduced by half. Sustained dehydration (for more than 24 hours) results in the character dropping to 75% of his or her total Hit Points. After 48 hours of sustained dehydration, characters drop to 50% of their normal total Hit Points. After 72 hours, characters drop to 25% total Hit Points. After 96 hours, if the characters do not get at least two quarts of water, they will fall into a coma. After that, unless the character receives at least two quarts of water in the next 24 hours, he or she will die.

To fully recover from dehydration, players must drink two extra quarts/liters of water for each day they have gone without drinking any. (They don't have to drink all that extra water at once, though. They need to drink it over the course of the next 24 hours. Drinking a gallon or two of water is more likely to blow out one's bladder than restore vitality!)

The End of Strength: Deadly Exhaustion

It takes months of intense training to reach the level of physical conditioning needed to climb a major summit of the Northern Mountains. But ultimately it is mental toughness that determines whether a climber reaches the top.

Even the fittest and most experienced high-altitude climbers will eventually peter out when scaling the tallest mountains. It usually happens somewhere in the Northern Mountain Highlands or the Death Zone, where the climber's every muscle is burning with pain from constant exertion, and the climber's every thought turns toward stopping, resting, or turning back. Under such strain, the climber must turn to his mental reserves and push himself to ignore his pain and to keep going. Often, climbers must set small goals for themselves - make the next ten steps, put one hand in front of the other, make the next rock outcropping, etc. This is how most make it to the top of their mountain. They stop thinking of it as a single huge task, and start thinking of it as a succession of tiny tasks. If they can do each one, why **can't** they do them all? Or so the thought goes.

A climber can keep ascending for as many days straight as he has P.E. points. Any combat or other strenuous activity during that time typically will shave a day off the character's climbing endurance per incident. After the character reaches his limit, he must rest for 1D4 days straight (half that time if the climber's P.E. is 20 or higher). Of course, climbers can avoid this by taking day-long rests every three or four days. Keeping to a schedule like that, a climber can keep ascending without much pause.

After the character recharges, during which time he must get enough to eat and drink, he can resume climbing. If the character goes beyond his limit, he will begin failing in strength. His skill performance is at -33%, and he will begin starving even if he is getting enough food to eat. At this point, the character's exhausted body is like a locomotive running by feeding its own floorboards into the furnace. It has to stop, rest, and take on more fuel if it is to continue in good shape.

But mental exhaustion comes into play, too. While ascending a mountain, the climber often has little else to turn his thoughts to aside from the myriad challenges facing him. Even when at rest, the climber must confront his hopes and fears, the isolation of being on the mountain, and even the boredom of doing the same thing day after day after day. Even when among other adventurers, the climber is usually off in his own little world, mentally alone and apart from everything that he knows and holds dear. He is in a strange, hostile and alien place, and he probably does not like it. He must endure this strain if he is to prevail, but the simple truth is that after a long enough time, the stresses of mountain climbing tire the mind and blunt one's attention to detail. In game terms, a climber can ascend a mountain for as many days straight as he has M.E. points. After that, if he does not rest for at least 4D6 hours (half that if he has an M.E. of 20 or higher), he will perform skills at -33%. He will also become less aware of himself and his surroundings. He will begin making errors in judgment and become a serious risk to himself and his fellow climbers. This can lead to all sorts of careless mistakes like leaving one's extremities exposed to the cold, failing to build a proper shelter to rest in, not using safety ropes, not eating or drinking enough, incorrectly plotting the right course to follow, and so on. Eventually, the climber will mentally shut down if he goes more than double his M.E. score in days of straight climbing. At that point, the character is likely to make a fatal mistake since his mind is shutting down.

Into Thin Air:
The Dangers of High Altitudes

Altitude is perhaps the biggest physical challenge facing those who attempt to climb in the rarefied air of the Northern Mountains' uppermost summits, especially those high enough to reach into the so-called "Death Zone." The thin air slows most mountaineers to a crawl, impairs their judgment, and, over time, poses a threat to their very lives. Creatures and humanoids who live in the Northern Mountains are immune to these effects since their bodies have adjusted to them over the course of a lifetime, but to outsiders, the changes brought on by entering the upper reaches of the Northern Mountains might very well prove fatal.

When climbers enter the Northern Mountain Highlands, their blood generally carries a third less oxygen than at lower altitudes. Their body never quite adjusts to the low-pressure air, and after 2D4 days, the climber will develop a persistent, chest-wracking cough. Every 1D4 days afterwards, the character's P.E. will reduce by one point. He also runs a 10% chance, +5% per every additional 1D4 days, of coming down with serious flu-like symptoms such as dizziness, intense headaches, vomiting, and extreme weakness. In this state, the character's skills are -20%.

In addition, at such high altitudes, the body has a more difficult time coping with wounds of any sort. Any damage the character has sustained will take 1D4 times longer than usual to heal. Magic and psionic healing are not so affected, however. For most climbers, magic and psionics are really the only way to stay healthy.

The closer the climbers get to the summit, the worse it gets. Once characters enter the Death Zone, they will face the most severe aspects of the high altitude. The low-pressure air makes the climbers feel like they have just one third of the oxygen at sea level. The body tries to compensate by hyperventilating - breathing four times faster than normal - but it still can't get enough oxygen, a condition known as *hypoxia*. The character's lungs sear with pain, but there is nothing to be done. There just isn't enough air to satisfy the climber's oxygen requirements. All he can do is suffer through it. By now, the oxygen-starved climber might even begin to hallucinate and take minutes to make a simple decision about tying a boot lace. Characters can stave off this effect for a number of days equal to their M.E. attribute, regardless if they are climbing or resting. After that, the character begins suffering from altitude sickness. The first phase is the mild hallucination and mental dizziness mentioned before. Skills are down by -20% and the character is -4 on initiative.

2D4 days later, more serious effects set in. Two of the most acute forms of high-altitude sickness are the accumulation of fluid in the lungs *(pulmonary edema)* and on the brain *(cerebral edema)*. Usually the result of ascending too quickly, pulmonary and cerebral edema can quickly progress to death. The only cure is a rapid descent to lower elevations, along with immediate medical treatment. In emergencies, an Air Warlock may reverse the effects of edema by casting a Breath of Life spell on the victim.

The best way to avoid all of the aforementioned high-altitude conditions and illnesses is through gradual acclimatization. This involves making periodic ascents of a few thousand feet and then retreating to lower elevations. Over a period of weeks, the body adapts. In game terms, characters must spend 1D4 weeks acclimatizing to new elevations each time they cross over from one zone to another (going from the Northern Mountain Lowlands to the Northern Mountain Midlands, for example). For this to work the best, parties should find a place where it will be safe for them to camp during that time. If a village or other kind of settlement can be found, that's ideal. Otherwise, the climbers are on their own, relying on their supplies, wilderness survival skills, and whatever planning they did before setting out on their expedition.

Weathering the Storm

Climbers dream of clear skies and friendly weather when they assault a summit, but in the Northern Mountains, such days are rare. Far more often, cloudy skies, bitterly cold weather, high winds and snow greet the intrepid climbers. Like so much else in the upper mountains, these circumstances can pose a grave threat to climbing parties. Unlike the other hardships of mountain climbing, bad weather is something climbers generally can do nothing to prevent or forestall. The best a climber can do to prepare is to educate himself on the various kinds of weather hazards he might encounter. He might not be able to prevent them from happening, but at least they won't take him entirely by surprise. In the critical moments between life and death, the well-educated mountaineer will form a plan and try to save himself. The ignorant mountaineer will wonder what the hell is going on and by the time he has an idea of how to save himself, it will be too late.

There are five principal forms of deadly weather climbers will encounter in the Northern Mountains. These are *Gale Winds, Shearstorms, Blizzards and Whiteouts,* and *Snow Blindness.*

Gale Winds

In the Highlands, and especially in the Death Zone, wind becomes a critical factor in determining whether or not a climber will make it to the summit. The effects of wind chill have already been chronicled, but the sheer impact of the wind has not. In the Northern Mountain Highlands, the average wind speed at any given time is 20 to 40 mph (32 to 64 km), with gusts of up to twice that speed. In the Death Zone the average wind speed at any given time is 40 to 100 mph (64 to 160 km), again with gusts of up to twice that amount. On rare occasions, intense windstorms will form, subjecting the upper mountains to sustained wind speeds of over 200 miles per hour (320 km) with gusts of over 250 miles per hour (400 km) per hour. Ending up on the receiving end of these winds is what kills many of the climbers who make it to the upper reaches of the Northern Mountains and never return to tell of it.

The big difference between steady wind and gusts is that gusts are short blasts of intense wind that one does not expect. They take their victims unaware, and have a better chance of throwing them for a loop. Sustained wind lacks this element of surprise. Both do the same damage, however. They throw the victim down or off his feet, stunning him, causing blinding dust storms and so on. Any one of these effects can be deadly to the mountain climber perched on a narrow ledge or when standing on the edge of a crevasse.

In game terms, **winds of 30-48 mph (48 to** 77 **km)** will slow a character's Spd by 30% if he is walking into the wind. The wind kicks up a great deal of snow, dust or other debris and causes a general **obscurement** of vision.

Winds from 50 to 70 **mph** (80 **to 112 km)** have the equivalent effect to a Wind Rush spell. The wind will knock down anybody who is not holding onto something (the cliff wall, a boulder, tree, etc.) or who fails to save versus losing his balance. For gusts, this save must be made only once. For sustained wind, this save must be made once every minute (four melees). The wind can also knock riders out of **their** saddles, blow small objects (things weighing up to 10 **lbs/4.5** kg) 20 to 120 feet (6 to 36 m) away, and create small dust storms. Anyone affected by the wind is helpless and unable to attack or move forward. It takes an additional melee round to recover and **1D8** melees to gather up all of the items that blew away. Slows a character's Spd by 50% if he is walking into the wind.

Winds from 80 to 100 mph (128 **to 160 km)** have the same effect except those thrown by the wind take 1D6 damage from the tumble. Medium-sized objects (10-40 **lbs/4.5-18** kg) will blow 20 to 120 feet (6 to 36 m) away; small objects will go twice as far. Slows a character's Spd by 80% if he is walking into the wind.

Winds from 100 to 150 mph (160 to 240 km) have the same effect except those thrown by the wind take 3D6 damage from the tumble. Large-sized objects (40 to 120 **lbs/18-54** kg) will blow 20 to 120 feet (6 to 36 m) away; medium objects will go twice as far and small objects will go four times as far. Walking into the wind is a crawl and impossible without using the cliff wall or rope line as a brace to pull along and hold onto.

Winds from 150 to 200 mph (240 to 320 km) have the same effect except those thrown by the wind take 6D6 damage from the tumble. Extra-large objects (120-250 **lbs/54-112** kg) will blow 20 to 120 feet (6 to 36 m) away; large objects will go twice as far, medium objects will go four times as far and small objects will go eight times as far. Travel in this wind or greater is impossible without getting swept away **and/or** bombarded with debris.

Winds from 200 to 250 mph (320 **to 400 km)** have the same effect except those thrown by the wind take **1D6x10** damage from the tumble. Huge objects (250-500 **lbs/112-225** kg) will blow 20 to 120 feet (6 to 36 m) away; extra-large objects will go twice as far, large objects will go four times as far, medium objects will go eight tunes as far and small objects will go sixteen times as far.

Winds in excess of 250 mph (400 km) are very rare, but they do sometimes occur. These so-called *Killer Winds* are every mountain climber's worst fear, for short of hiding in a cave, there is virtually no defense against this kind of onslaught. Winds this powerful have the same effect except those thrown by the wind take **2D6x10** damage from the tumble. Extra-huge objects (500-2,000 **lbs/225-900** kg) will blow 20 to 120 feet (6-36 m) away. Huge objects will blow 120 to 240 feet (36 to **73.2** m) away; extra-large objects will go twice as far, large objects will go four times as far, medium objects will go eight times as far and small objects will go sixteen times as far.

Shearstorms

These are a weather phenomenon unique to the Northern Mountains. They are essentially super gale-force windstorms that end up spinning into a tornado-like funnel. On their way down from the upper stratosphere to the **mountaintops,** these storms spin faster and faster, flattening out into a knife-edge wind. By the time they hit the mountains, these storms are like a sheet of pure kinetic force, thin enough to blast a single person out of a column of travelers and leave the others untouched. Those who get hit by these are usually blown right off the rock and into the sky, never to be seen again. But that is not the worst of it. Occasionally, a climber gets hit by a **shearstorm** but is too well secured to the rock face to be blown off. For these unfortunate souls, the shearstorm acts like a giant cleaver, amputating limbs, slicing through torsos, separating heads from **their** shoulders.

A light shearstorm strikes for 6D6 damage and knocks back its victim **1D4x10** yards/meters. A medium shearstorm strikes for **1D4x10** damage and knocks back its victim **2D4x10** yards/meters. A heavy shearstorm strikes for **1D6x10** damage and knocks back its victim 3D4xlO yards/meters. In all cases, if a shearstorm victim can not be blown away, then the damage he suffers *doubles*. Those who are blown off the rock face often are caught by subsequent winds and suspended in the air long enough to be carried far, far from their starting spot. Eventually, the winds die and the victim falls to his death. In very rare cases, however, shearstorm victims have been known to be blown off mountains and actually carried on the wind and set down *safely* on other mountaintops! This probably only occurs in one out of every thousand cases, but there are enough stories about it that whenever climbers get nailed by a shearstorm, they at least entertain the hope that maybe they will be another one of those

lucky ones who gets a really wild ride instead of a wind-borne death sentence.

Blizzards & Whiteouts

On the exposed face of a mountain, blizzards are about as fun to endure as an extended torture session with a demon collecting an overdue debt. The effects of blizzards are identical to those of the Air Elemental spell, Snow Storm.

In a blizzard, the temperature drops to at least 15 degrees below freezing (in the unlikely event that it is not that cold already). If there is no wind (also very unlikely), then 30 mph (48 km) winds kick up while snow and hail fills the sky. There is one foot (0.3 m) of accumulation every other melee round (30 seconds). Reduces Speed by half, and vision (including special vision enhancements) is limited to just 20 feet (6.1 m). The cold, wind and hail combine to inflict 10 points of damage every melee round. Such intense storms rarely last for longer than an hour, and much of the snow they drop blows off the mountain.

Periodically, super-storms hit the mountains, inflicting the same kinds of effects as listed above except they last for 4D6+6 hours. The snow accumulation from these is horrific, and anybody caught out in the open is doomed unless they have some kind of special ability to survive harsh wintry conditions. During these super-storms, *Whiteouts* often occur, in which there is so much blowing snow that one can not see more than a few inches in front of their face. Within 1D4x100 yards/meters of their starting point, travelers will become completely lost and unlikely to find their way back to shelter. Their misstep probably cost them their lives.

Snow Blindness

Another potentially dangerous condition in the wild is snow blindness. This is a temporary visual disturbance brought on by injury to inner eyelids and the surface of the cornea by exposure to reflected ultraviolet rays from the sun off of snow or another highly reflective surface like water or ice (can be considered a sunburn on the cornea).

The time which people are most susceptible to this condition is after a new snowfall, even when the sun's rays are partially obscured by light fog or mist. Furthermore, there is no warning to the onset of the condition until the symptoms begin to appear two to 12 (2D6) hours after exposure.

The victim will first experience an irritating, gritty feeling in the eyes. There may be severe pain in and over the eyes due to inner eyelid irritation. The eyes will feel hot and sticky, and tears will flow excessively. Sight will become blurred, objects appear to have a pinkish tinge, and the victim may develop extreme sensitivity to light.

While not completely blind, characters are -5 on initiative, -3 to parry and dodge (lose automatic dodge if they had it), and all other combat rolls are reduced by half. Characters who become sensitive to light (save vs cold -1 for every four hours exposed to the damaging conditions; one roll with any P.E. and cold bonuses added) are -3 to save vs attacks or conditions involving bright light and the character will need to save vs pain or be temporarily blinded for 2D6 melees (-2 melee actions/attacks, -9 on all combat rolls, and -60% on all skills that require sight). These hapless characters will need to wear slitted blindfolds or scarves during the day to protect their eyes. Otherwise they will be afflicted with a pulsing headache for as long as they are outside, plus an additional 1D4 hours after.

Thankfully, the major complications are only temporary and, aided by medical attention, will subside in one to five days depending on the severity and length of exposure. Victims suffer from headache and are -1 on initiative and -1 to strike, parry and dodge for 1D4 days after vision is restored.

THE GREAT RIFT

Splitting the Land of the Damned in two is a canyon so wide that one can stand on its lip and not see the other side (roughly 10 miles/16 km at its narrowest point), and so deep that at its furthest depths, the very fabric of the Megaverse weakens and tears, opening up doorways to other worlds and dimensions. This canyon is called the Great Rift, both in reference to the "Rifts" or inter-dimensional gateways that form in its bowels, and in reference to the physical rift in the earth that it creates.

At first, explorers thought the Great Rift was a huge natural cleft in the earth, but the controversial fragment of the Tristine Chronicles known as the *Aurora Tristinium* tells that the Great Rift was created to by the Gods of Light, and the Demon and Deevil hordes unleashed as both a punishment and as a means to divide and keep the Minions of Chaos too busy to engage in any large-scale escape attempts. It appears to have been a well conceived idea, for the Great Rift has worked exceedingly well in both capacities.

The Great Rift is said to be bottomless. That those who fall into its cavernous maw plummet into the abyss for all eternity unless they are plucked out by a comrade, swooped up by an infernal, or happens to land upon a rock ledge or outcropping along one of its walls. Where one might expect to see the bottom of the canyon floor, doorways to other worlds and dimensions open up. The largest and most stable of these admit endless legions of Demons and Deevils into the region, further making the Land of the Damned truly a region governed by evil monsters of every kind.

The Demons and Deevils brought with them the Minion War, an endless conflict between their two infernal societies that has turned the Great Rift into a slaughterhouse of nightmarish proportions. Nowhere else in the world is there such a level of sustained death and destruction.

There are portals to other hellish realms of uncommon and alien infernals too (like those listed in this book and the Winter Storm Ice Demon found in the *Northern Hinterlands sourcebook),* as well as to the four elemental planes, domain of dragons, alien worlds and locations elsewhere on the Palladium World (including The Citadel and the Devil's Mark). These, however, are not permanent portals, and appear only for a brief while (mere moments to a few hours) and disappear at random intervals. Finding one that leads to a particular desired realm is pure chance and a rarity.

To the north of the Great Rift lies the Bleakness and its capital, the dreaded Citadel. The armies of darkness occupying the Great Rift know that to take on The Citadel is an invitation to suicide, so they do not spread any farther north than the Great Rift's northern lip.

To the south, however, is a vast plain running the length of the Rift where Demon and Deevil armies meet and slaughter each other routinely. This strip of land, overrun by Demons, Deevils and who knows what else, is called the Blasted Lands, because it has been so ravaged by marauding creatures that nothing lives there anymore. It looks like a vast fire has scorched the landscape, stripping it of everything except for its thin, gritty soil and the rocks that jut out of it.

This is the battleground on which the infernal forces of the Great Rift wage endless war on each other. They fight for no reason other than an unreasoning hatred for each other, and an innate viciousness that compels them to inflict violence. No one side gains an upper hand for long as shifting coalitions, alliances and strategic gains shift as easily as sand dunes in a windstorm. The casualties from this war are frightful, but there seems to be a never-ending supply of reinforcements from the various gate points in the Great Rift. Until the dimensional gates deep within the Great Rift are somehow closed, the hordes of infernal creatures blighting this land will never cease. That being the case, anything or anybody caught in the middle of their insane bloodshed is torn to pieces as the combatants strive ever onward to their unattainable goal of total destruction of their enemies.

This is a land more or less divided into many little **fiefdoms,** each run by some kind of Infernal Lord or dark power. Acting as generals and dark nobility, these sinister individuals control the war efforts in their own particular spheres, reveling in the power they command and using it to inflict punishment upon their enemies and anyone foolish enough to cross them. Some of these fiefdoms actually have something approaching a perverted form of law and order while others are pure zones of anarchy where the strong survive and the meek are enslaved, tormented, slain and eaten. For the most part, mortals are nothing more than playthings and slaves, food and fodder. A distraction and amusement for greater (evil) powers. Meanwhile, those mortals with a fierce independence or incorruptible goodness and unusual level of power, be it magic, psionics, raw physical strength, combat expertise or indomitable spirit, are to be singled out and used as pawns against one's enemies, broken or eliminated before they can cause trouble.

Regardless of where one travels in the Great Rift and the Blasted Lands, one sees that this place exemplifies the bleak promise of the entire Land of the Damned - eternal hardship punctuated by dread, terror and the grinding toll of constant warfare. A land where good struggles against evil and evil preys upon everyone, including itself.

Evil from the abyss

At first glance, the Great Rift seems to be an enormous chasm in the Earth. A great divide wider and deeper than one would imagine possible. A gash that cuts the Land of the Damned in two. However, anybody visiting it soon learns that it is far, far more. The entire length of the Great Rift radiates with magic and evil that a practitioner or creature of magic can feel in his bones a mile (1.6 km) away, and a psychic can sense from fifty (80 km). Though it radiates with magic, no mage can tap its energies, for they are already claimed to fuel the anarchy and magic of the pit itself. The evil comes from the denizens of evil that emerge from the Great Rift and the links to their unholy domains.

The great gash is bottomless and fades to black. In the very depths of the chasm, the fabric of the **Megaverse** has grown weak, threadbare, and plagued by widespread inter-dimensional instability. Here, space, time and reality have no meaning and like the symbolic gash in the earth, the Great Rift slices through reality, linking this world with many others. The vast majority are realms that are home to powerful, evil beings and savage mortal **humanoids.** The most notable of these magic portals are large and permanent doorways to the sinister dimensions of Hades, home of **Demonkind,** and **Dyval,** home of the **Deevilkin.** But there are many other temporary and random doorways to other **realms** of darkness. Most open only for a short while. Only long enough to let loose some new hell spawned plague of monsters into the Land of the Damned. Alien hordes that pour forth into this world before the doorway closes again, fueling the ceaseless Minion War with a never-ending source of minions of evil.

The doorways to Hades and Dyval are the most stable in the Great Rift. Over the years, this has allowed enormous numbers of Demons and Deevils to establish footholds in the region surrounding the Great Rift, particularly in the south. Since Demons and Deevils have been locking horns since tune immemorial, those footholds in the Land of the Damned have simply become the distant headquarters for the newest battleground in the war between Hades and Dyval. A war as old as the battle between good and evil. A war in which the participants do not know why they fight each other, except that it is tradition and because each side has had an undying hatred for the other. A loathing that is almost instinctual. Since neither Demons nor Deevils have the power or numbers to annihilate one or the other, this conflict will probably never end, grinding on throughout the ages, destroying millions of infernal creatures and laying waste to whatever lands are the chosen battlefields for this perpetual nightmare.

What makes this theater of the war *different* from their other battlegrounds is the inclusion of other **infernals** (see the Minion Races) and mortal beings, sometimes entire races of creatures not of infernal nature. Any willing to choose a side and fight their **enemy** are accepted, put to arms and sent to battle. Like their Demon and Deevil masters, these creatures, whether human or monstrous, ugly or beautiful, are sinister and evil themselves. Malignant beings who relish murder and destruction and thrive on chaos and evil. Some do it because they seek some measure of power, even if it is only the momentary power of life and death on the battlefield. Others do it simply because they crave blood. None of these evil mortal and lesser infernal combatant races have the strength or organization to defy the Demons or Deevils even if they wanted to, but then most have no such inclination to do so, and enjoy their place among the supernatural hordes. Only those enslaved by the dark forces are not willing participants, and they wait for the opportunity to escape or for some new hero to bring salvation for at least a few of them.

The kindred evil that pour from the Great Rift also spill into the surrounding lands and great mountains. These are the renegades, traitors, fools and monsters who seek their own destiny away from the Minion War. Although they are in the vast minority, their numbers are great by human standards and represent gangs, clans and tribes of monsters and fiends that prey upon the weak and unsuspecting. The mountains and their protectors keep most (98%) from ever leaving the embrace of the Land of the Damned, but many adventurers from the outside world come with increasing frequency to the Realm of Monsters to be embraced by them. It is a turn of events much to the monsters' liking.

The Minion War

The Nature of the Conflict

To understand the nature of the Minion War, one must first understand the eternal antagonism between Hades and **Dyval.** Both infernal realms have made it their business to bring as many worlds as possible into their domain. For the most part, neither Demons nor Deevils take over other worlds outright. Rather, they send their infernal agents to corrupt and undermine people and society, weakening them and enslaving them to Demon or Deevil Lords. Failing that, they enjoy spreading misery and destruction upon mortal kind. Though the Megaverse is infinite, and one might think it possible for Demons and Deevils to carry out their separate campaigns of conquest *without* **bump**ing into each other, just the opposite has happened. On virtually every world where there is a Demon or Deevil presence, their infernal counterparts can be found *competing* for the same territory. Some demonologists believe this is because Demons and Deevils are eternal rivals and are constantly at war with one another, whether that war be competition for the hearts and minds of an entire world or open combat. These two demonic forces have been butting heads for so long that they dare not allow each other to settle on a world unopposed, for fear of allowing their hated rival to gain some kind of advantage. So, the two supernatural hordes chase one another about, foiling each **other's** plans and basically doing everything they can to thwart the other's dreams of conquest and power.

Before the Demon Lord *Modeus* began to gain influence in Hades, the nature of the conflict between demon and Deevil was one of low-level skirmishes and **backstabbing.** All-out war was never in the picture. It was not worth it to either side, particularly to the aristocracies of both worlds, who were loath to sacrifice any of their wealth or power in some stupid war that might very well destroy everything they had already gained. After all, why slaughter each other when that same energy could be used to take over other worlds? With this thought in mind, an uneasy peace of sorts existed between Hades and Dyval for eons. True, the two sides never really got along and continued to subvert each other's efforts, but they were not engaging in full-scale war.

Enter Modeus. He was a very ambitious general in Hades, filled with great aspirations, and even greater hatred. Modeus had been particularly obsessed with Dyval, which he hated with a nearly pathological intensity. He was jealous of the fact that on many worlds, Deevils were far more influential than demons. He hated that Deevils were so slothful and disorganized compared to the severe and regimented life of **demonkind.** And he was convinced that Dyval had grandiose plans for eventually invading Hades and destroying every last demon. This last part Modeus was especially obsessed with, and for eons, he had been working behind the scenes to make sure Dyval warriors never set foot in his infernal homeland. The solution to this potential problem, in his mind, was simple: Invade Dyval and destroy it before they could do the same to Hades.

Gaining the support of the current ruler of Hades, who hated Dyval nearly as much as Modeus, was the easy part. But as mentioned before, the other Demon Lords of Hades had been loath to participate in such a war for fear that it would bring ruin down upon them. As a result, Modeus had to spend thousands of years working behind the scenes to convince the other Demon Lords to donate their troops to the Hades war effort, with Modeus at their command.

Modeus would have his soldiers. Now he needed a battleground on which to test them. Before invading Dyval, Modeus thought it best to engage his hated enemies elsewhere first, both to test the readiness of his own forces and to test the resolve of the Deevils. He searched the Megaverse far and wide for the perfect place to wage a new kind of war against the forces of Dyval. Knowing about this, the Gods of Light gave him what he wanted most, a (controlled) battlefield on the Palladium World, within and around the Great Rift of the *Land of the Damned.*

Modeus, blinded by his own desires (as he and infernal kind so often are), saw no manipulation nor plan on the part of the Gods of Light, only opportunity. And he seized it. Modeus had long kept his eye on the Palladium World, as it was a world rich with magic power and ripe for conquest, but more importantly, it had a rich future, especially when the Old Ones were defeated, leaving the world open to be conquered. Of course, the Deevils also leaped at the opportunity, quickly worming their way into the power structure of every nation, kingdom and empire that would come to power. Modeus *hated* that, just as he had hated that the Old Ones had called upon both demon and Deevil to serve them from time to time. He had always contended that the Palladium World deserved to be the domain of Hades, and Hades alone. Defeating the Deevils here would be a perfect start to a campaign that Modeus hoped would ultimately spell

Dyval's doom. The end of the Chaos War and creation of the Great Rift in the Land of the Damned gave him the means and a pretext with which to mobilize his troops and lock horns with Dyval in bloody combat. The Deevils accepted the challenge and the two have been warring at the heart the Land of the Damned to this day.

The fighting, for all of its scope and intensity, has been a deadlock. No one faction on either side can ever seem to get enough momentum to tip the scales of the entire conflict in their favor. At least not for very long. Thus, the battle teeter totters back and forth. For a few days, weeks, or even years, one side gains a slight edge and claims triumphant domination of the Great Rift, but inevitably, a new battle, plot or treachery turns the tide and tips the balance of power back into a deadlock, or to the other side - at least for a little while. And so it has gone and so it goes. The fighting remains deadlocked. Demons and Deevils prove about equally effective in binding the so-called Minion Races to their service, so neither ever gains a lasting advantage, and for the foreseeable future, the Minion War is expected to grind on without end.

Who's Fighting Whom?

Large Factions on both sides rise and fall as the endless war continues. These self-governing armies are what passes for the "sides" of the war. At any given time, there are *six* Demon Factions and *six* Deevil Factions active in the Minion War. Whenever a seventh or eighth Faction arises on one side or another, something cataclysmic happens to destroy enough Factions to return the total number on any side to a mere six. Likewise, if one side loses a Faction or two, somehow, someway, enough new soldiers come through the Great Rift to pick up the slack within a short time (under a year; typically in a matter of days or weeks). Why each side can never field more or less than six Factions is something nobody can quite explain. It is as if some unseen force has decreed this to be a rule of warfare that none shall break, no matter how much they want or try to. Regardless of the cause, this phenomenon is one of the chief reasons why the Minion War has remained so deadlocked and so never-ending. The most bizarre thing about this effect, though, is that the Demons and Deevils fighting the Minion War either do not know of it or disregard it. For while there is evidence that the Minion War has somehow been made into a unending, unwinnable war (by the Gods of Light?), the forces of Hades and Dyval see things differently. They all remain convinced that they *can* win the war if they are only smart, strong and vicious enough. So it is that the Minion War is fueled by the lust for power, conquests, and retribution no matter how many perish in the process.

Each Faction is controlled by a *Faction Lord,* a Greater Demon or Deevil of unusual power and skill. These individuals are usually more powerful than others of their type, and they actually resemble minor Demon or Deevil Lords in the making. These figures generally act on their own accord, waging the war against other Factions and trying to come out on top. Both Modeus and Sahtalus, now the ultimate powers in their respective evil realms, have given up any direct involvement themselves ages ago. Thus, they leave it to their minions while they dwell on other things and other wars. As a result, they leave the Battle for the Great Rift to their Faction Lords and the infernal hordes and independent creatures who join them in battle. In fact, it is in the recruitment of outside forces - the Minions of Darkness (described earlier) as well as Harpies, Melech, Minotaurs, human and Elven sorcerers, and *any* the two sides can entice, corrupt or enslave to serve them - that is believed to have the chance for tipping the balance in the war. For they represent an "X" factor that does, indeed, give one side or the other a momentary edge from time to time. To many of these lesser creatures, the infernal beings offer the promise of great reward, glory, fame, wealth, and power. Others are tricked or enslaved to fight. Of course, Demons and Deevils are naturally devious and untrustworthy creatures, so any deal made with them is bound to be broken just as soon as it is convenient for the principal parties to do so. But even with that in mind, the Faction Lords are always in search of more troops, spies, assassins, sorcerers and another Faction or two they can temporarily ally with in order to put the slam on one of their enemy's Factions. This sort of thing happens all the time in the Minion War, with alliances lasting weeks, days, or even hours – just long enough for several Factions to destroy a common enemy and then promptly turn on one another. It is like a never-ending cycle of kill and be killed for Factions in this war, and their incessant alliance building has made it almost impossible to tell at any given time which Faction is fighting which. Many times, not even a Faction's own soldiers are sure who their new enemies and friends are. They must simply trust in their Faction Lords to lead the way, and they will follow into glory and death.

In the meantime, some of the busiest Minion Warriors are those acting as spies, diplomats, recruiters and double-agents, for their covert work often will make or break a Faction's alliance. And as any Faction knows, how their bonds with other Factions play out often spells the difference between life and death.

Forms of Combat

Though the Minion War has raged on for eons, and countless Factions have played their part in the carnage, the dynamics of the fighting have always boiled down to one of three basic types of action. These are *Blood Feuds, Faction Wars,* and *Mass Actions.*

Blood Feuds are the smallest actions and the most personal. They often are the result of a small group of warriors (usually less than 30) striking off on their own and carrying out some kind of attack upon the enemy without being ordered to do so. Most Blood Feuds are, predictably, meant to settle a personal grudge between both sides of the fight or with some smaller group (i.e. a platoon of Deevils seeks revenge against a particular platoon or leader of the Demons, etc.). Since the casualty rate in any battle among the Factions tends to be pretty high, any feud action is only going to perpetuate the vendettas and may spark larger conflicts. Let's say a small group of Demons naming themselves the ***Revilers*** is led by a warrior who has been wronged by the war chief of a Faction of Deevils calling itself the ***Gutpullers***. The Revilers launch an unauthorized attack upon a bunch of Gutpullers reported to be scouting around nearby. In the fighting, a few Revilers are slain but the entire squad of Gutpullers was wiped out. Both sides of the fight will claim a continued vendetta on the other as a result of the outcome of this battle. The Revilers might have won, but they lost a few soldiers doing it, and so the group's lust for revenge carries on with the deaths of those Reviler soldiers. Likewise, the Gutpullers will carry on their vendetta because an entire squad of theirs was wiped out. In the end, the Blood Feud between the groups continues on just as hot as it has ever been. The latest bloodshed has done nothing to end the conflict for either side.

This is the most common form of action in the Minion War. Though settling personal scores are the most prevalent reason for Blood Feuds, small groups of Faction warriors conduct similar raids on the enemy for other reasons, such as the hopes of looting treasure off the dead bodies, hoping to gain favor in the eyes of their Faction Lord, and just to raise a ruckus (Demons, Deevils and other monsters just *love* a good fight). Each Faction Lord knows that their soldiers are going to fight these personal wars all they can, if given half a chance. Rather than trying to halt this phenomenon, most Minion Lords and their lieutenants give silent consent to Blood Feuds and save their disciplinarian attitude for when they must gather their forces for larger actions.

Faction Wars. This is when an entire Faction (small army division within the entire war military operation) gathers for a single attack or campaign against a specifically determined enemy. Most often, these actions are one whole Faction against one other whole Faction on the opposing side. Sometimes, an overly ambitious Faction might take on two or more opponents at once, but those sorts of actions often blow up into the larger conflicts known as *Mass Actions* (described in the next section). Faction Wars are not quite as common as Blood Feuds, but they more than make up for it in the amount of death and destruction they produce. Faction Wars typically end with the devastation of either or both sides, leaving entire fields of dead Minions in their wake.

Faction Wars are most often launched because an ambitious Faction Lord has designs to destroy one of his enemies outright. He has grown tired of the endless raids and Blood Feuds and longs to settle the score once and for all in a single torrent of violence. Faction Wars usually begin with large raids into the enemy Faction's territory. These probing attacks are somewhat larger in scale than the typical Blood Feud, and they are meant to test the enemy's defenses, gain some battlefield intelligence, to overrun enemy positions and sometimes even incorporate prisoner Minions into their ranks.

If a Faction is lucky these probing attacks will take their enemy off **guard,** and open up a large breach in their defenses. In such cases, the Faction Lord gives the order for a full attack, and the defending Faction often collectively finds itself on Death's door within the next two or three days. More commonly, the probing attacks provide mixed results and are just a prelude to the heavier fighting to come. The two Factions might try to outmaneuver each other, but most Faction Lords lack the patience and tactical minds for such stuff. Instead, they like to run their entire forces into each other, where the press of battle chews up warriors on a massive scale, depleting each other's forces and eventually causing one side to collapse and flee. Mercy is unheard of in the Minion War, so when a losing side breaks and runs, the victors often give chase, slaying as many of their vanquished foes as possible as they are quitting the field. Precious few will get away, so those who are not Deevils or Demons often forsake their former Faction and end up pledging their allegiance to their conquerors (at least for the moment). Depending on the victorious Faction Lord's temperament, defeated soldiers *might* be allowed to surrender and join their ranks, or just killed in cold blood. While that might be repellent to those from outside the Land of the Damned, to the average Minion Warrior, there is nothing quite so satisfying as seeing an enemy soldier strung up and left for the birds. Good for morale, too.

In the wake of a Faction War, there usually stands a severely depleted victor and a ruined loser. The victor now is in danger, since it is in a weakened state and likely to be attacked by other, more opportunistic foes or other opposing Factions looking for revenge. For this reason, Faction Lords must waste no time gloating after their victory. They must heal wounds, recruit new soldiers, and plunder the loser's territory as fast as possible before other Factions move in and start trouble. Even an allied Faction *may* turn on a "friend" who is clearly weakened and could be dispatched easily if they hold a grudge against him or he has come to the end of his usefulness.

Mass **Actions.** These are the biggest battles anybody will see in the Minion War. They are Faction Wars in which multiple Factions band together and go to war against a common enemy, usually one or more Factions of the enemy in all-out war. Such targets may include a boastful winning enemy Faction that has gotten way too big for its britches, or a powerful coalition of Factions that threatens to upset the Minion War's balance of power (or who hope to upset the balance of power). Most Mass Actions entail the participation of two to five (1D4+1) Factions on a side, but there have been times when titanic Mass Actions involved the *entire* population and territory of the Great Rift. After each such event, several Factions will be destroyed outright, and the surviving armies reduced in strength by 60% to 80%, requiring both side to spend the next year or two rebuilding themselves. Unlike Faction Wars, in which prisoners are sometimes incorporated into the victorious forces, those who lose a "universal" Mass Action are usually killed outright. There have been cases in which huge numbers of prisoners were slaughtered mercilessly after the cessation of hostilities, with many of the victors playing cruel games of torture upon their fallen opponents. The rest are enslaved and tormented for the rest of their days, taken prisoner as livestock to be eaten or flee into the hills of the Great Rift where they will hide until a new Faction Lord appears to galvanize and build them into an army with a newly arrived horde of maniacs.

In any given year, there will be zero to three (1D4-1) Mass Actions in the Great Rift region. Periods of total war that involve *all* Factions and which may last decades, usually happen only once every few thousand years. The region is long overdue for one, and many warriors believe that before long, another universal Mass Action will begin.

Fields of Battle

The Great Rift region can be divided into three smaller areas, each of which has become a specific field of battle in the Minion War. When the Minion War first began, the aspects of the Great Rift's sub-regions simply made certain kinds of fighting (e.g., Blood Feuds, Faction Wars, Mass Actions) more sensible than others. Today, the Great Rift's sub-regions have become synonymous with different aspects of the Minion War, and to bring any different kind of hostilities to these areas is perhaps the only real breach of etiquette that is respected and enforced by the Minion War's participants.

There are three basic arenas for the Minion War: the *Abyss*, the *Canyon*, and the ***Blasted*** *Lands.*

The Abyss is the inner depths of the bottomless Great Rift, where the doorways to other dimensions are found. Here, the fighting is mainly to capture newcomer aliens and monsters that come through the doorways. Since most of these newcomers do not relish the thought of being instantly pressed into service, fighting often breaks out between the newcomer forces and the Faction armies bent on subjugating them. Which may, in turn, attract opposition forces that want the newcomers for themselves, resulting in a nightmarish free-for-all. Most often, the newcomers are defeated by Demon or Deevil forces and pressed into their service, but every once in a great while, the newcomers break free and set up their own power bases elsewhere in the Great Rift. These Independent or Third Party Factions rarely survive long enough to enjoy their autonomy, but they almost always put up a great fight before falling under the sword of the formally established Factions. In the Abyss, Factions tend to fight newcomers more than other Factions. Actually, there are even cases where enemy Factions might temporarily bury the hatchet so they can jointly subjugate a group or race of newcomers, and only when that task is done do the old Demon and Deevil Factions resume hostilities. It sounds odd (and it is), but that is how these infernal beings operate.

The Canyon. The lip and upper reaches of the Great Rift, stretching from where the Abyss ends at the mountains to their end at the sea in the **west,** is the second major staging ground for the Minion War. The upper Canyon and lip (the land on either side for a good 10 miles (16 km) is where the greatest number of Deevils, Demons and Minion Races are found entrenched, with Demons and their lackeys on one side and the Deevils and their host on the other. Newcomer Minions are also recruited and

brought here for training, indoctrination, etc. To enterprising Faction Lords, these large groups of newly arrived Minion Warriors are often too juicy a target to pass over. A well-planned ambush can eliminate an entire army of would-be warriors, thereby robbing an Enemy Faction of some much-needed manpower. Or, the enemy Faction troops running security on these Minions can be taken out, and the Minions themselves captured. This serves a double purpose: Robbing the enemy of fresh blood while adding some to one's own Faction. This second action is especially popular after major campaigns and battles have left Factions low on personnel. Snatching a battalion or two of new Minion Warriors is a great way for a Faction to recoup its lost strength, so running Canyon wars is always tactically worthwhile. If a Canyon attack goes wrong, though, all the Minions gathered at the spot might get a chance to make a break for it and live free from any Factional interference for a while. These free newcomers often try to survive in the Great Rift solo or in small groups or they form a Faction of their own or join some other Faction that they might enjoy being a part of.

The Canyon and Abyss can be the scene for some terrifying and bloody battles, but the **worst,** by far, occur in the Blasted Lands.

The Blasted Lands. These are the plains south of the Great Rift. This is also where the Minion War's most savage and large-scale fighting, such as Faction Wars and Mass Actions, will go down. Blood Feuds and raids happen here, too, but the Blasted Lands are suited for the kind of epic combat that most generals spend their lives dreaming about. The Blasted Lands are, far and away, the most active battlefield in the Minion War. Though there is plenty of action happening in the Abyss, the Canyon, and other parts of the Land of the Damned and the western side of the Northern Mountains, the fighting there is much more small scale and more for vendettas, recruiting and messing with the civilian population and outsiders. The "meat and potatoes" fighting takes place in the Blasted Lands, and for most Minion Warriors, this region is the only *real* battleground in the region. It is covered with ruined cities, strongholds, fortifications, craters, scorched earth and stretches of wild or exotic landscape that gives Factions plenty of opportunity to establish a fortified base camp and run military operations out of it. That the Factions stake their territorial claims in the Blasted Lands is one more reason for why so many Minion Warriors consider this field of battle to be the only true one in the Great Rift region. To the bulk of Minion Warriors in the Blasted Lands, this place is the be all and end all of the war.

Hades

The Minion War is fought between Hades and **Dyval,** two of the so-called *Heroic Realms.* Not that their inhabitants are heroic (they aren't), but the size of people and things in both realms are the same as they would be in the Palladium World. Hades, home of all **Demonkind,** is a warped reflection of the Palladium World that features hundreds of inter-dimensional gateways leading to other worlds in the universe. The doorway connecting Hades to the Great Rift is just one of them.

The geography of Hades and the Palladium World have each changed over the ages, but there are some startling similarities. In fact, it is rumored that the entire world of Hades was created by the Old Ones ages before they spawned the Palladium World. While there exists no historical record of this, that does not mean it is impossible. If they *did* craft Hades (perhaps as a way of ensuring that evil forces would still trouble the world long after the Old Ones were gone), it might explain the unusually large and long-lived dimensional doorway to it in the Great Rift.

The big difference between the Palladium World and its hellish twin is that the elements of fire and water have been reversed. Where the major ocean of the Palladium World is made of water, the "ocean" of Hades is a great sea of flames and molten rock. To find water on Hades, one needs to look at the places where one might find volcanoes on the Palladium World. Thus, the Mount **Nimro** region is, on Hades, a massive spring, and the only source of water of its kind on that world. Since water eventually finds its way to the ocean, some of the most spectacular scenes on Hades are those places where the water comes in contact with the flaming lava.

Another significant difference between the two worlds is the way that the Hades land mass has been separated into two continents; a northern one ruled by the Gargoyles and their kin and a southern one where the Demon Lords hold sway. A third subcontinent, where the Western Empire would be, is a refuge for annoying demons not wanted anywhere else. This place has become a sort of game preserve for the dozens of Demon races that have been defeated in Hades' continual civil wars but not fully exterminated. This subcontinent is populated with **Hades'** losers, which is why so few of them are given the go-ahead to lead conquests to other worlds. Still, many of the people on the subcontinent are the last of their kind and desperate to make some name for themselves, even if they must lead a suicide charge on a distant world Hades wishes to control.

In terms of climate, Hades is blast furnace hot just about everywhere but the middle of some of the volcanic water lakes. The real variety comes in the form of humidity. Since the water is constantly being turned into steam by contact with the fiery oceans, some areas are like a **sulfurous** steam bath, while others are relatively dry and clear. Since that is what most Demons prefer, it should come as no surprise that the southern continent, ruled by the Demon Lords, is the driest of the three land masses.

In general, the Demons of Hades, under the command of the Demon Lords, are a foul, malicious lot who live to torment mortal beings. They delight in making others suffer and engage in torture, murder and any foul deed that will bring about suffering or chaos. More powerful demons are incredibly powerful and deadly. They are typically more intelligent, conniving and treacherous than their lesser brethren. They typically use lesser Demons as their minions, and humans, Elves and other mortals for their pawns in elaborate games of corruption, deception and treachery. For stats on the basic types of Demons, refer to the back of **The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®, 2nd Edition** rule book (Demons start on page **313,** Deevils on page 326). For more information on the Demon "Lords of Hades," please refer to the **Dragons and Gods®** sourcebook.

There are four basic types of Demon: ***Sub-Demons***, *Lesser Demons, Greater Demons,* and the top of the heap, the dreaded *Demon Lords ofHades.*

Sub-Demons (Gargoyles)

There are five known types of Sub-Demon: *Gargoylites, **Gurgoylites**, Gargoyles, Gargoyle Mages,* and *Gargoyle Lords.*

Above even the Gargoyle Lords are the *Gargoyle Leaders of Hades,* who are the Gargoyles' supreme leaders. They consist of *High Lord Erloc, King of the Gargoyles, Lady Leeves, Queen of the Gargoyles* and *Powmer the Arch-Mage.* All of these fall under the general heading of "Gargoyles," a sub-class of Demons. Some scholars believe they are the result of genetic mutations in the Demons' evolution. Others believe they are an entire race of creatures who were once conquered and incorporated into the forces of Hades. Unlike their Demon kin, Gargoyles are less intelligent and much less adept in their use of magic. However, what they lack in intellect they more than make up for in physical strength and stamina. These mammoth winged (and wingless) monstrosities are devastating and merciless in combat.

Gargoyles are considered to be inferior by "true" Demons and are continually harassed and persecuted by them. Consequently, Gargoyles despise their more powerful kin, and dream of the day when they can (successfully) revolt and wrest the rule of Hades from them. They have already tried a number of times, but the forces of Hades always manage to crush the uprisings.

Gargoyles are vile creatures with little regard for life other than their own kind. They delight in torturing, terrifying and slaughtering other creatures, feeding on their blood and organs. Humans, Elves, Dwarves and Wolfen are among the Gargoyles' favorite targets in the Palladium World. They are frequently worshiped by Kobolds, Orcs, Goblins and Hob-Goblins, so they tend to avoid causing trouble for them, but will attack them without hesitation if angered. Gargoyles usually avoid the larger and more dangerous Giant races. Attracted to, and often seduced by, power, magic and great gems, the loyalty of Gargoyles is easily bought, but these treacherous and cruel creatures make unstable and murderous allies. They are frequently the pawns of "true" Demons, Deevils, gods and alien intelligences throughout the Megaverse.

In the scope of the Minion War, Gargoyles are used as expendable foot soldiers, sent on suicide missions by the Greater Demons who control them. Technically, by the rules of the Demon hierarchy, any Lesser Demon can boss around any Gargoyle, even a Gargoyle Mage or Lord. Naturally, the Gargoyles resent this, and as a result, they have begun to rebel in huge numbers in the Minion War. Entire armies of Gargoyles have now formed and refuse to acknowledge any Demon authority other than their own. Oddly enough, while these Gargoyle armies are mutinous (an offense punishable by death from any Lesser, Greater or Demon Lord), they are also far more motivated than the majority of Demons in the Great Rift. They are organized, driven and efficient. They are also willing to take the war to the Deevils, and they do it well. Most Deevils are more apprehensive about fighting Gargoyle armies than "true" Demon armies. The Gargoyles would probably turn the tide of the war, were it not for three things. One, most of the Gargoyles sent to the Minion War have been slain in suicidal charges sent by their superiors against fortified Deevil positions in attacks that could not possibly succeed. Two, many of the Gargoyles who have mutinied have been tracked down by true Demons and slain for it. And three, thanks to the troubles with the Gargoyles, the Demon Lords have stopped sending them into the Great Rift, while all other kinds of Demons are going through unabated.

At present, there are less than 50,000 Gargoyles operating in the Great Rift region, and as they continue to fight and take casualties, their numbers steadily decline. Most Gargoyles have abandoned straight out warfare in favor of guerrilla tactics so they can keep fighting the Deevils with less risk of taking casualties themselves, and so they can stay hidden from other Demon forces. Those still allied to the Demon Army live in the upper canyon part of the Great Rift. Renegades can be found throughout the Land of the Damned, but particularly in the Lowlands and Midlands of the western mountains. Gargoyles and Harpies hate each other and frequently clash.

Note: For full descriptions and statistics for all Gargoyles, including the dreaded Gargoyle Lords of Hades, please refer to The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition, pages 313-315.

Lesser Demons

All Lesser Demons are supernatural beings dedicated to evil. They love nothing more than to inflict pain and suffering on all living creatures. Most are the murderous minions of Summoners, Greater Demons, Demon Lords, evil gods and alien intelligences. All have supernatural strength and understand all languages. Most are illiterate.

Lesser Demons are the classic incompetent and cruel underling. While each of these creatures is vicious and dangerous, they are too scatterbrained, too selfish, or too caught up in being evil to serve as effective soldiers. Individually, they work well, and there are always the 10% or so who serve brilliantly. But for the most part, Lesser Demons become more and more impossible to lead the more they gather together. That the Demon Lords routinely send battle groups of one Greater Demon leading 1,000 Lesser Demons into the Great Rift to fight the Minion War is a recipe for disaster. Most of the time, the Greater Demon, as powerful and compelling as it may be, ends up losing control of its forces and either slaughters them, leaves them behind, or goes down in flames with them.

Another problem with Lesser Demons is their 50/50 split between wanting to suck up to their superiors and wanting to gratify their own base urges. Those who kiss up end up losing any ability to take the initiative, unwilling to take any action without having some kind of approval from their master first. They do this in the hopes that if they impress their leader, the Greater Demon will give them special treatment and possible promotion in the Demon hierarchy. For Lesser Demons living under the heel of the Greater ones, anything that elevates their rank in the slightest is something to pursue. Most of the time, though, Greater Demons have not the time or inclination to coddle their Lessers, and they pay no attention to their underlings' attempts to impress them. Most of the time, Greater Demons simply abandon their troops and fight the Minion War on their own. So what happens is entire groups of Lesser Demons stand around with no direction or supervision and get into all kinds of trouble (fighting, robbing and harassing the enemy on their own, causing trouble among groups in their own Demon hordes, drink and debauch, mess with the civilian population and outsiders, raid other villages, tribes and kingdoms of monsters in the Land of the Damned, and a whole lot more). Most can not conceive of elevating their rank or they just do not care. They spend their lives in hot pursuit of whatever makes them feel good, which typically consists of raping, pillaging, plundering, and making mortals' lives miserable. For these villains, the utter chaos of the Minion War is a paradise. Whether they follow their orders to the letter or are abandoned by their commanding officers, entire

groups of Lesser Demons go off on their own, doing whatever they like to whomever they like. Half the time, when Deevil forces encounter their Demon adversaries, they are merely rabble groups rampaging across the territory, unable or unwilling to give a spirited defense. It is through the Lessers' gross lack of discipline that the Deevil forces have been able to fare as well as they have in the Minion War. In the end, this becomes a big reason for why the Demon Armies work at such a lower rate of efficiency than they really should.

There are ten types of Lesser Demons of Hades: *Alu, Aquatics, Banshee, Couril, Ghouls/Nasu, Labassu, Lasae, Mares, Shedim,* and *Succubus/Incubus*. **Note:** For full descriptions and statistics for all Lesser Demons, please refer to **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition,** pages 315-321.

Greater Demons

These are the lieutenants and sub-commanders of the forces of Hades. Greater Demons possess considerably more power, self-discipline and authority than their Lesser brethren. As a result, they enjoy a great deal of comfort at their subordinates' expense. According to the hierarchy of Hades, any Greater Demon can pretty much do whatever it likes to any Lesser Demon. Most of the time this takes the form of bossing Lessers around and "hazing" the daylights out of them for fun. Occasionally, especially vicious Greater Demons will torture and even devour Lesser Demons just because they can. So it is that the life of the Lesser Demon is terrifying at worst and uncomfortable at best, thanks to their relationship with their Greaters.

In general, there is only one Greater Demon for every 1,000 Lesser Demons. The Demon Lords of Hades like to take advantage of these convenient numbers and form battle groups of 1,000 Lesser Demons led by a single Greater Demon. These are the basic battle groups sent to other worlds and dimensions, and they form the vast majority of the fighting forces battling in the Minion War. Greater Demons do not like commanding Lesser troops, though. For one thing, Lessers tend to be argumentative, foolhardy, insubordinate and generally poor soldiers. They are difficult to marshal into a cohesive unit, and they have real difficulty following orders at all. As a result, any large-scale mission that Greater Demons try to undertake has a great chance of failure. A far more likely recipe for success is for the Greater leader to take his most trusted 4-6 Lesser lieutenants and take on the mission (whatever it may be) in a commando fashion, leaving the remainder of the Lesser troops to fight the war in their own way. The Demon Lords are of a mixed mind on this. Some feel it is a gross waste of underlings, to simply leave the majority of them on their own, where they engage in all manner of chaos unlikely to produce any battlefield victories. Other Lords feel that so long as the Greater Demons accomplish their missions and put some hurt on the enemy, then if 70%+ of their underlings get left behind, so be it.

As the Minion War heats up, though, more and more Greater Demons are being sent to the Great Rift and Blasted Lands with a handful of underlings and complete authority to wage the war however they see fit. These "hunter groups" are far more efficient and produce some big-time results. This has caused intense rivalry among all Greater Demons, as they find themselves vying for such a coveted position. In some cases, Greaters will attack and kill their rivals to better their chances for solo or small group duty. The Demon Lords, amazingly, approve of this. They feel if a Greater is too slow or dull to prevent his own death at the hands of a comrade, what good will he be on the battlefield? In the Minion War, this has backfired a little, though, since Demon armies have begun attacking each other as their Greater leaders seek to undermine or destroy their rival commanders. As has so often plagued Demon rule, civil war among their ranks cripples their larger efforts, and as a result, the Demonic armies, which outnumber their Deevil opponents three to one, are stalemated in a conflict they should have already won.

There are seven types of Greater Demon: *Baal-Rog, Demon Locust, Gallu (Demon Bull), Jinn, Magots, Night Owls,* and *Rakshasa.* Note: For full descriptions and statistics for all Greater Demon types, please refer to **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition,** pages 321-325.

The Demon Lords of Hades

And finally, there are the eighteen Demon Lords of Hades: *Modeus, Lord ofHades, Andras, Marquis ofHades, Rabdos the Strangler, Kubera-Loe, Mictla the Devourer, Succor-Bemoth, Charun, Abdul-Ra, Belphegor,* the *Four Demon Beetles, Mantus, Mania, Murmur, Mormo,* and *Abrasax.* These lords of darkness are vicious, greedy, backstabbing, gluttonous, and embody just about every manifestation of evil imaginable. Though they are no more or less sinister than their arch-rivals, the Deevil Lords, the Demon Lords are far more disorganized and backbiting, and as such, they lead a chaotic, nearly anarchistic existence marked by constant squabbles, skirmishes and betrayals. Where the Deevil Lords largely just *plan* these sorts of things, the Demon Lords either lack the patience or the restraint to not put such urges into action.

Modeus, Lord of Hades, symbol of darkness, is the harsh and brutal ruler of Hades. He is the most brilliant Demon Lord to control Hades in 10,000 years. An excellent administrator, a clever planner, a good tactician, and able to exhibit all the cunning, guile and treachery needed to keep his position. Arrogant and in the full height of his power, he had spent ages planning for ways of dealing with his bitter enemies, the Deevil Lords, and started the Minion War long before he usurped the throne of Hades. Now that he's in charge he believes that he finally has the consensus with the other Demon Lords to start preparations for war on a trans-dimensional scale. The Minion War for all of its terrible scope and carnage, is really just a skirmish compared to what kind of conflagration would result if the full weight of Hades and Dyval went to war with each other. Invading each others' realms, the death toll would range in the millions and cause such a titanic sustained release of P.P.E. that the very nature of both those dimensions might come undone.

Meanwhile, Modeus continues to survey the war's progress in the Land of the Damned and uses it as a reason to get the Demon Lords to commit more and more of their time and energy into girding all of Hades for war against Dyval. Other Demon Lords might balk at pushing this agenda so aggressively, for fear that it would inspire other Lords to conspiracy and usurpation. Modeus has no such fears, however. Part of his great confidence stems from his incredible ability to play off the other Demon Lords against each other, so they are so busy fighting among themselves that they can not build the coalition necessary to unseat Modeus. The other part of Modeus' confidence comes from the very reason why his enemies would have to

band together to defeat him: Modeus has personal control over all *Demon Locusts,* the most powerful of the Greater Demons. From his fortified palace deep in the heart of Demon Locust country, Modeus can look out at the Demon Locusts in all their millions, knowing they will obey his every command, and feel secure in the knowledge that none can oppose him.

Andras, Marquis of Hades, is the symbol of strength, fear and hate. Sitting at the right hand of Modeus, Andras is in the position of trusted second in command of all Hades. In his personal region of Hades, on the extreme eastern end of the southern continent, Andras commands the heartland of Baal-Rogs, the massive shock troops of Hades. However, Andras is also the snake in Modeus' belly, for he is scheming with *Set, Lord of the Gods of Darkness,* and with secret allies among the other Demon Lords to usurp the throne. Andras is waiting for his turn at the top seat, for his chance to command all of Hades. As he sees it, the folly of expanding the war with the Deevil Lords is exactly the catalyst that is needed for the destruction of Modeus. Riding his monstrous black wolf and brandishing his ebony rune sword as he reviews his troops, he fills Modeus with confidence. All the while, his efforts to betray and destroy his superior come ever closer to fruition.

Rabdos the Strangler is the symbol of treachery and the Demon goddess of assassins. Having no domain of her own, she lives with Modeus, occupying a place in the shadow of his fortified palace. She spends much of her time traveling, both in Hades, and also on the Palladium World. Whereas most of the Demon Lords lust after followers, Rabdos has found that small cults dedicated to her keep springing up all over the Palladium World. She also has worshipers among the Gargoyles, a fact that she likes to keep concealed from Modeus. (And well that she does, too, since she could very well use her influence among the Gargoyles to engage in civil war and carve out a realm of her own in Hades, if not take over the entire world.) Rabdos is the personal assassin of Modeus, as well as for Hades in general. She has stayed away from the fighting in the Minion War, but Modeus is considering sending her to eliminate the chief Deevil warlords in the Great Rift and tip the war's momentum in Hades' favor. Rabdos is a passionate woman who indulges in many pleasures, including those of a sexual (and often twisted) nature. She enjoys torturing as much as she enjoys love making, and often combines the two. She is deadly, unpredictable, and very insane.

Kubera-Loe is the symbol of wealth and envy, and patron of thieves. Kubera-Loe is clever, cunning, tricky and deadly. Interestingly, he has managed to keep himself out of all of the various plots being hatched around Hades. Then again, he has always used others as his pawns, so he may be particularly sensitive to playing the role himself. His estate on Hades is small and austere. From Kubera-Loe's point of view, that makes it easier to defend. Inside, locked away from prying eyes, are the vast treasures that Kubera-Loe has stolen over the years. Not only from mortals on the Palladium World, but also from his fellow Demon Lords. Obviously, he takes great pains to make sure his thievery is never discovered. Were it so, his life would come to a quick end, but he would probably command his forces to take many of his attackers with him. In the course of such a bloodbath, things would probably spiral out of control and ignite full-blown civil war across Hades that would only end with the deaths of several Demon Lords and the utter ruin of their domains.

Mictla the Devourer is the symbol of gluttony and greed. It is well known throughout Hades that she is a busy Lord, constantly devouring any living thing she can catch. She often plays with her food, enjoying the sensations that the victims cause when they find they can't pull themselves off her adhesive tongue. She also likes the way they try to escape when they find themselves in her mouth, or how they struggle and scramble and try so desperately not to fall down her open throat. Mictla's territory is the entire underground of Hades, caverns half-filled with a nasty mucus-like substance. There are trap doors overhead of these caverns so that food might drop in from above, get stuck in the slime and await eventual consumption by the Devourer. Mictla especially enjoys eating hapless Lesser Demons, and does so to such an extent that in some places known as Mictla's favorite hunting grounds, Lessers will not tread the earth. Frustrating in the extreme to this glutton, Mictla has even taken to traveling to other worlds in search for easy food sources. As such, she sometimes visits the killing fields of the Minion War so she might prey upon the vast legions there.

Succor-Bemoth is the symbol of jealousy, Lord of the Magots. Succor-Bemoth's domain is on the third continent of Hades, the place of banishment for the worst of the wild and uncontrollable Demons. From his fortified compound he watches herds of Magots rampage across the landscape and enjoys the spectacle of other maddened Demons racing around and ripping away at each other. It was Succor-Bemoth who first discovered that Greater Demons could be substituted for the loss of bodily manifestation associated with the more impressive deific powers. Since that time, Succor-Bemoth has experimented (with those under his domain, but also covertly on prisoners captured from the Minion War), and he has shared this knowledge with the other Demon Lords, but he is still considered a dangerous outcast.

Charun the Cruel is the symbol of ambition and obsession. The only one of the Demon Lords to base himself in the northern continent of Hades, the home of the Gargoyles. Charun has been subverting the Gargoyle masses, preparing them for the time when they will rise up, cast off Modeus' authority, and attempt (once more) to wrest control of Hades for themselves, exacting terrible vengeance on all of those "true" Demons who have victimized the ranks of the Gargoyle for so very long. Another major component of Charun's plot has been to gain as many significant minions as possible. Currently, he commands the vast majority of the Alu and the Lasae. Even better, he has recently been approached by the leaders of the Jinn, who have heard rumors that their people are being sacrificed in order to invoke deific powers for the Demon Lords, and he has promised them protection, if they will join his rebellion (by the way, Charun is one of those who has sacrificed Jinn for his power). One of the rumors that Charun has attempted to stop, but which keeps popping up, is that he is the bastard son of *Sahtalus, the Supreme Lord of Dyval*.He denies that vehemently, but as his various Demon Lord rivals keep bringing up, there *is* a certain family resemblance...

Abdul-Ra is the symbol of deception and cunning, but he is best known for his involvement in a very strange affair. While he was a captive on Dyval some years ago, Rhada, a Deevil Lord, fell in love with him. At the time, looking at an imprisonment that would be either boring or hideously painful, it seemed best to return her affections as enthusiastically as possible. It

must have worked, because **Rhada** freed him, and then became imprisoned herself by the Deevil Lords for her treason. All of this has been confusing for **Abdul-Ra**. He is not sure if he is in love or not. Certainly the Lady Rhada was beautiful and desirable and pleasant company. He *might* love her. Still, it is obvious that the situation has some advantages. First, as long as she is in love with him, and believes that he reciprocates, she will be turned against the rest of the Deevil Lords (a good thing, since it split their ranks). Second, Rhada is a powerful opponent who would make an even more powerful ally. When he thinks of that, it occurs to Abdul-Ra that it might be that he *does* love the Deevil goddess. If he were to try to reach her, or if any other Demon Lord were to enter **Dyval,** discovery would be inevitable. Fortunately, ***Ammit*** *of the Pantheon of Taut,* an old friend, has agreed to be a go-between. There have been no messages communicated as yet, but it is getting easier and easier for Ammit to travel to **Rhada's** prison, since her minions, the ***Fenry***, are cooperating. Meanwhile, on the plains of the Minion War, the unlikely romance between Abdul-Ra and Rhada has taken an odd turn of its own. Though Rhada languishes in prison, a considerable number of Deevils who once followed her are still loyal to their imprisoned lord, and they still fight on her behalf. In the Minion War, this has taken the form of secretly teaming up with those Demons who fight for **Abdul-Ra,** and acting as a joint army. Abdul-Ra is more than happy to accept this unlikely help, and uses **Rhada's** troops as cannon fodder.

Belphegor of the Sulfur Pits is the symbol of lust and rules over one of the vast underground chambers of Hades, a place filled with horrible chemicals and reeking of sulfur. Belphegor delights in ripping apart living creatures and devouring them. Other than that little pleasure, and occasional conversations with Mictla the **Devourer** (they have much in common), he stays out of the tangled affairs of the other Demon Lords, and tries to create as much havoc as possible among **mortals. In** this regard, Belphegor has been known to visit the Minion War and raise a little hell there (no pun intended).

The Four Demon Beetles are ***Phoe*** *the Fire Beetle,* ***Kra*** *the Stone Beetle, Ti the Fear Beetle,* and *Dra of the Green Mold.* These four beetles are identical in appearance, but each wields a different transformational attack, all with the intent of creating trouble and despair. Not only do the Four Demon Beetles torment the denizens of Hades, but they are always eager to find new worlds, and new life forms, upon which they can inflict their mayhem. This is why the Beetles repeatedly make forays into the Great Rift where they conduct bloody raids against *everything* fighting in the Minion War. Leaving behind a huge swath of death and destruction before they return to Hades, the efforts of the Four Demon Beetles do nothing to change the momentum of the Minion War because both Demons and Deevils alike are victimized.

Mantus, King of the Dead, is Hades' symbol of darkness and lord of the Mares. A forlorn figure, it seems that Mantus is nearing the end of his time. He thinks constantly of the past, and of the glorious days when he ruled as if he were a shining angel, winging his way across the realm of the dead. When he is not thinking about the past, he has to face the gloom of the present in which his very wife sleeps with a hated enemy. The future is no less foreboding, when his enemies come to strip him of his power, ridicule him, and put an end to him. For some reason, Mantus just does not have the energy to carry on. It is as if all the various battles, both among the Demon Lords and the murder of the Minion War, have finally worn him down. He only hopes he can find the energy to struggle, if only a little bit, when the knife is finally put to his throat. With regards to the Minion War, Mantus simply does not have the energy to spare towards this conflict any longer. He certainly can not bring himself to enter the fray himself for any reason, nor can he support Modeus' desires to widen the conflict and plunge Hades into a total war against Dyval. **Mantus'** apathy on this matter is infectious, and other Demon Lords are beginning to feel the same way Mantus does - why bother destroying Dyval? It's just too much work, right? For this, Modeus sees the aging Lord as a serious obstacle to his own plans, who eventually must be eliminated for it. The Lord of Hades is just waiting for the right time, when Mantus will not struggle against his fate, and when the other Demon Lords will not lift a finger to stop it. For the present, a few of **Mantus'** loyal Mare minions can see what Modeus is planing and are trying their best to rally support for their Lord. A few have even gone to the Great Rift to see if they can enlist the aid of any of the Deevil Lords, who might view this situation as an opportunity to further destabilize Hades and its Lords.

Mania, Queen of the Dead, is the symbol of immortality and the wife of Mantus. She is also the person most intent on making Mantus miserable, and she will be very disappointed if he does not die by her own hand. Mania has become **Charun's** mistress, and is his main partner in the plot that he is busily constructing to overthrow Modeus. (Because of Mania's participation, this plot also includes the overthrow of Mantus, too.) However, she lives with neither her husband nor with her lover, but in her very own city, the sprawling metropolis of *Allvice,* home to the Succubus and the Incubus. Throughout the city, Mania has opened up several inter-dimensional portals to the Palladium World, mostly to the decaying cities of the Western Empire so that her citizens can freely travel and **find** prey and playthings, and so that "guests" may be brought back to Hades as entertainment. Lately, though, Mania's life has been disrupted by **Modeus'** command to drastically increase the numbers of Succubus and Incubus to serve in the Minion War. The role of such creatures in a field of open battle is questionable at best, but Mania knows the real reason behind the order. It is to undercut her power base, her citizenry. For this, Mania is afraid that Modeus is on to her plotting (he is) and wonders exactly how much he knows about Charun's deal-making (not **much...yet).**

Murmur is the symbol of desire and betrayal, as well as the unlikely patron of music and musicians. His kingdom in Hades is remote from any others, far off at the western end of the southern continent. Amid a wasted land that extends for over a hundred miles, occupied mostly by **Couril,** Murmur has built his austere tower. Oddly enough, the reason for his seclusion is his sincere love for music. He wanted to live in a place where no outside commotion would interfere with his concerts, instruments, or his own attempts at playing.

Minstrels of the Palladium World are sometimes approached by Murmur's agents, and offered vast sums to come "play for our lord, who lives in a lonely tower, not far from here, where you might receive free food and lodging for as long as you make music." While those minstrels who agree will find that food and lodging are indeed free, many of the other aspects of Murmur's

home are most distressing (it's hard to sleep when a dozen or more Banshees are floating around your bed). Those that escape the tower find themselves wandering in Hades, and are lucky if it is only Couril who find them. Willing to do anything to return home, most of Murmur's guests will trade off their pay in exchange for being allowed back to the Palladium World.

While Murmur thinks of himself as fair and reasonable, it is mostly because no one will disagree with him directly. His fellow Demon Lords all find him to be untrustworthy, in that he will "remember" whatever he likes perfectly, and will insist that the memories of others may be faulty. A powerful and merciless warrior, especially when mounted on his great black horse, *Ramses,* he is also a power-crazed dictator who continually succumbs to greed.

Mormo, Lord of the Ghouls, more than any Demon Lord, is likely to be found anywhere on the Palladium World. When seen in his carriage, or at a public affair, he will have the most beautiful of courtesans (Succubi) at his side, and at least two of his many attendants will be carrying his black raven pets. He associates with the nobility of the Western Empire, taking pleasure in being one of the elite among the most brutal of cliques. Known by the name *Mormo Quison,* he has a reputation for spending money lavishly, demonstrating tricks of personal agility, conducting truly disgusting orgies (often featuring human sacrifice), for the rumors of his cannibalism (true!), and for occasionally ruining obnoxious young nobles. In Hades, Mormo's realm is scattered across several southern islands, all populated almost exclusively by his Ghouls and Nasu, as well as a number of human, Orc and Troll servants. His primary palace contains three dimensional portals, each leading to a different location on the Palladium World. Cruel and treacherous, with a great lust for power, Mormo is smart enough to recognize his limitations. Everywhere he goes, he is sure to plant Ghouls among the local cemeteries and crypts.

Abrasax the Insatiable is the symbol of gluttony. Abrasax is the ruler of a region of Hades in which most of the populace are *Shedim,* who are highly organized and industrious, and who are constantly laboring to construct even larger edifices to Abrasax. They also supply him with the endless amounts of food and sacrifices that he demands. Abrasax has also organized over a million Shedim into military units, equipped with weapons and siege equipment of all kinds. Abrasax does this in anticipation of the huge civil war he *knows* is liable to grip all of Hades before long. Until then, he routinely sends large units into the Great Rift, where they function as some of the few highly organized and integrated Demon Armies that are fighting the Minion War. Abrasax's legions, known collectively as the *Gloating Terror,* strike fear into the hearts of even the most hardened Deevil veterans. Much of the reason for this is because these Demon Armies are loyal to their Lord and are eager to please him. As such, they remain focused even when far from Hades.

With the other Demon Lords, at every public gathering, and whenever in the presence of Modeus, Abrasax rails on about *Kirgi the Rat God.* According to Abrasax, it is Kirgi's new pantheon, consisting of various rebel Deevils, that is the primary threat to the power of Hades, and of the Demon Lords, especially Abrasax. Though Abrasax genuinely hates Kirgi and believes "that damned rat," as he calls him, to be a real threat to Hades, the Insatiable One's railings are really just a diversion. By immersing himself in the affairs of Kirgi, the other Demon Lords tend to discount Abrasax as a threat in the ongoing political turmoil that is gripping Hades. This is just the way Abrasax likes it. For while he raises his mighty Shedim army, none of the other Demon Lords are willing to interfere, and as a result, when the civil war does break out, it will be Abrasax who will be more ready than anyone to enter the war.

Note: For full descriptions and statistics for the Demon Lords of Hades, please refer to the **Dragons and Gods sourcebook,** pages 202-220.

Infernal Strife

The infighting and internal divisions among the Demons fighting the Minion War are but a pale reflection of the political realities throughout the realm of Hades.

Hades is a land of intense evil and internal strife. Demons, in general, exist to undo the acts of goodness wrought by others by spreading misery and mayhem wherever they can, by sowing dissent among good people, and by corrupting the righteous into doing evil. Demons, like their Deevil counterparts, are excellent at their jobs. Too excellent, really. For while over half of Hades' total population is off on missions of misery on other worlds, those staying behind inevitably turn on each other. The end result is that Hades is constantly wracked with power struggles, anarchy, and full-blown civil war.

On a small scale, there are literally hundreds of varying factions, alliances, power blocs and powerful individuals who all contribute to the patchwork anarchy that is political life in Hades. On a wider scale, however, the turmoil plaguing the realm of the Demons boils down to three sides: the Gargoyle rebellions of the northern continent, the infighting among the Demon Lords of the southern continent, and the growing uncontrollability of the exiled Demons living on the isolated western continent.

The Gargoyle Rebellions. The northern continent of Hades is an extremely balkanized patchwork of fiefdoms ruled by the Gargoyle Lords, a fractious lot of 99 assorted Gargoyle kings, mages and warlords, each of whom commands his little slice of Hades and an army to represent it. These Gargoyle Lords are busy fighting each other most of the time, which defeats the larger aim of *all* Gargoyles: the overthrow of the Demon Lords of Hades! Demons have never considered Gargoyles a "true" species of Demon, and as such, they treat them like second-class citizens, the lowest of the low. For eons, Gargoyles have suffered an endless series of degradations from all other Demons; according to the Demonic Laws of Hierarchy, *any* "true" Demon has full command over *any* Gargoyle, regardless of their rank. So it is that a lowly Couril may issue commands to a Gargoyle Lord and expect them to be honored. The Gargoyles detest this, but the Demon Lords will never change their laws or acknowledge Gargoyles as one of their own. This leaves Gargoyles with only one option: rebellion.

For the most part, the rest of Hades brushes off any threat of a Gargoyle uprising for two reasons. One, they do not happen that often, Two, when they do, they always follow the same pattern. A noteworthy Gargoyle rises up, unites a bunch of his kin, and goes on the warpath. The motivated Gargoyle army, using the element of surprise, scores a few easy victories against whatever Demon forces they encounter, but after a while, the Demon

Lords take the rebellion seriously, mount a huge army, and crush it. Then for a hundred years or so, the Demon Lords systematically abuse, torture and murder the Gargoyles on their own land as punishment for daring to oppose Demonic rule. After that, it may be as long as a thousand years until the next rebellion. This is the way the Gargoyle Rebellions have gone since time immemorial, and some feel that one side should just wipe out the other and prevent any future such wars. Others believe that this strife is a good form of training; it weeds out the weak and ensures that the strong are properly trained before they set out in the Megaverse to start trouble.

What most of the Demon Lords do not know is that the Gargoyles participating in the Minion War do so in the hopes of becoming superior guerrilla warriors. The idea is that when they return to Hades and rebel again, they can use small-unit tactics, ambushes and other unconventional warfare techniques to offset the crushing numerical superiority their foes possess.

Attack of the Southern Lords. On the southern continent of Hades is where the vast majority of the Demon Lords maintain their sinister courts. Though Charun the Cruel rules in the northern continent, and though there are immense Demon hordes there besides the Gargoyles, the *real* power of the Demonic community is in the southern lands. There do Murmur, Kubera-Loe, Abrasax, Abdul-Ra, Mantus, Mania, Belphegor, Andras, Mormo, and Modeus rule with iron fists. But more importantly, this is also where they constantly plot and maneuver against each other. Every Demon Lord secretly covets the absolute power Modeus possesses, and they long to overthrow their lord to gain that power. Modeus, not unaware of this, expertly pits his Lords against one another so they are, like the Gargoyles to the north, too busy fighting amongst themselves to team up and depose Modeus. The end result is a never-ending, and always-shifting conflict in which the various Demon Lords skirmish and plot against one another. Assassinations, spying, betrayal, and small-scale military conflicts are the standard course of action as the Demon Lords constantly intrude upon each other's territory and try to thwart one another's plans.

The Minion War on the Palladium World is just the latest outlet for all of this antagonism. Modeus, who has long desired to increase Hades' dominion throughout the Megaverse, seeks other worlds to conquer. He also wishes to form a unified Demonic army to launch an all-out attack upon Dyval that will wipe out the Deevils entirely. Before he can do any of this, though, he has to overcome an obstacle he built himself: The constant hostility between the various Demon Lords. How can he get them to work together for the betterment of Hades when it is Modeus himself who has so expertly managed to keep them at each other's throats? The answer is a policy of military patronage. Modeus has decreed that every Demon Lord shall surrender to Modeus' control exactly one-half of their total military strength to a combined army that represents all of Hades. Technically, this is supposed to stand for ideas and policies that all the Demon Lords agree upon, but since they really don't agree on much of anything, the joint army is an extension of Modeus' will, which suits Modeus just fine.

Modeus hoped that by fielding this new, unified army in the Minion War, it would give the forces of Hades the kind of experience and motivation they would need to fight the Deevils head-on. The effort has been nothing short of a disaster. The lower-level leadership among Demonic forces falls apart when put to the test, and desertion and insubordination run rampant. the effectiveness of the Demonic armies is just terrible, and it seems that the more Demons gather in strength, the fewer of them actually do anything. So, as Modeus has put the largest Demon armies to field in Hades' history, they have brought home only reports of dismal failure and calls for reinforcements. The other Demon Lords are furious. They are sending their best and brightest troops to a war that is clearly deadlocked and accomplishing nothing but killing off Demonic troops! As far as the Demon Lords see it, something must change. They have entreated Modeus to do something, but the arrogant Supreme Lord of Hades refuses to change his policies. He somehow thinks that someday the Deevil resistance will crack, and the Demonic forces will pour forward and destroy them, winning the Minion War. Facing this kind of stubborn attitude, the other Demon Lords have begun to come together on a new point of business: Getting rid of Modeus and calling off (or greatly reducing the level of violence in) the Minion War.

Though talk of this is spreading among the Demon Lords like wildfire, the grim reality is that many of them feel that (at least in part) Hades needs the Minion War. Demons must be constantly occupied or else they will prey on each other. If Hades had no other worlds to ravage, then Hades itself would become pure anarchy. Besides, all demons feel a burning rivalry with the Deevils of Dyval. Specifically, Demons are jealous of the fact that although demons outnumber Deevils at least three to one, Dyval has effectively conquered (to some degree) *many* worlds. At best, Hades can lay claim to parts of the Palladium World, and a handful of others among the Heroic Realms. To the Demon Lords, this is an intolerable state of affairs. They wish to prove their superiority by beating the Deevils at their own game, and the Minion War is as good as anything to do that. That is why, when Demon troops are dying by the thousands, the Demon Lords still keep sending more into the fray. Though they might one day depose Modeus for getting them into this mess, the undeniable truth is that the Minion War is the kind of conflict the Demon Lords live for, whether they care to admit it or not.

The Wrath of the Forgotten. On the western continent of Hades lives the Demon Lord Succor-Bemoth, a castaway creature who rules over not only the Magots, but a vast collection of the worst and most uncontrollable Demons Hades has to offer. Prone to great rampages and unable to bow to any authority, these feral Demons were rounded up over the eons and "pacified." Those who could not be exterminated were corralled and sent to the western continent, where they live on what amounts to a cross between a prison and a game preserve. There are millions upon millions of these so-called "Forgotten," and for the most part, they stay on their island home, not trying to escape or make trouble with the rest of Hades. The question is, for how much longer will this remain so?

The problem is Succor-Bemoth, who took control of the island a while back in one of the more bizarre feats of political maneuvering Hades has seen. Possessing a sizable realm in the southern continent, Succor-Bemoth unexpectedly abdicated and gave it all up for rulership of the entire western continent, a land none of the other Demon Lords wanted anyway. He established his domain there, and using his forces of Magots to keep the

Forgotten from overrunning his home, **Succor-Bemoth** began to catalog the hundreds of different kinds of Demons living there. He also began experimenting on them, running cruel tests on his subjects and conducting all manner of perverse breeding programs in an effort to increase the **Forgotten's** intelligence and willingness to take orders. **Succor-Bemoth's** crowning achievement so far, though, has been the engineering of a dozen entirely new Demonic races, the result of endless crossbreeding among the Forgotten. These new races are incredibly powerful and savage, and it is the worried opinion of the other Demon Lords that if Succor-Bemoth is not stopped, he will one day unleash a force of destruction that will sweep across all of Hades, bringing death and ruin in its wake.

More than a few Demon Lords have sent their agents to try to disrupt Succor-Bemoth's twisted experiments, but all have failed. All they have managed to do is reveal that Succor-Bemoth is working on a **"secret'** project that will make all of his others pale in comparison. It seems that he is creating a Demonic creature of such power that it could very well destroy all of Hades, as well as many other worlds across the **Megaverse!** Succor-Bemoth, it appears, is not afraid to perish at the hands of his own creations, if it means building something remarkable. Remarkable, indeed! Should the rumors of his secret project be as bad as some think, it might require the concerted military efforts of all of the other Demon Lords to invade the western continent and destroy not only the Forgotten, but Succor-Bemoth and his minions as well. Such a campaign would take incredible effort, and would most likely require that the Demons break off from the Minion War in order to wage the greatest civil conflict of Hades' history. Modeus will have nothing of it, of course, saying repeatedly that Succor-Bemoth is an idiot incapable of producing anything but a few maudlin freaks and misfit creatures. To the Demon Lords who believe Succor-Bemoth is up to something dangerous, **Modeus'** attitude is one more reason to depose him. Of course, any attempt to overthrow Modeus will touch off a rampant civil war of its own, making it impossible for many years for any concerted attack on the western continent. Only those crafty enough to depose Modeus and cement their own rule for generations stand a chance of preventing the Wrath of the Forgotten from shaking Hades to its very foundation.

On Demon Worship

Throughout the ages, evil **humanoids** in the Palladium World have worshiped Demons of all kinds, but especially the Demon Lords. Though this causes great consternation among the various churches and righteous governments of the world, the evil influence of Demon worship is actually far, far less in reality than it has been perceived to be. This is due to a number of factors, including regular purges and persecution of worshipers, competition from Deevil worship, and competition from other gods. Demon worship has also been hurt by a huge falling out between the *Witches,* who form a major gateway for Demons to enter the world of mortals (by using Demons as their familiars), and *Priests ofDarkness,* who despise and resent all Witches for their (from the Priests' point of view) "easy road to power." This bickering has severed an already mortally wounded religion. In all probability, Demon worship will continue to be obscure and poorly organized for years to come.

Those Priests of Darkness who have devoted themselves to Demon worship are few and far between, and are generally found only in the most remote locations. As might be expected, there are still major Demon worship cults in the Western Empire, but no other nation has a serious Demon worship underground. Fragmented and without any good way of attracting followers, the Demon Lords, at least lately, seem to be putting most of their efforts into allying themselves with other gods in the hope that they can become part of a pantheon where there is at least a chance of a large following.

Over thousands of years, there have been many attempts by various Demon Lords to start up religions on the Palladium World. None have been spectacularly successful (especially compared to what the Deevil Lords have managed to accomplish from time to time), but there is still a legacy of demon worship in many parts of the world. Small cults still exist, dedicated to one or another of the Demon Lords, and even a handful that continue to worship long-departed Gargoyle Lords (it has been 50,000 years since the Gargoyles attempted to convert human followers). One can still find old temples, artifacts, and various mystical scraps of parchment relating to Demons, all of which contain their own hazards and are best left alone.

Demon Hunters and experts in Demon lore believe that a major impetus for the Demon involvement in the Minion War is to establish a large physical foothold in the Palladium World and use that to spread their **influence**. If the Demons can not gain power by converting others to worship their ilk as dark gods, then perhaps they will just try their hand at conquering the Palladium World outright, and enforcing their will on all living beings as their subjects. That is the theory, anyway. It is entirely possible that the large Demon contingent in the Palladium World is merely the result of the large doorway connecting Hades to the Great Rift. And where there is a door, **Demonkind** will go through it to cause trouble.

Dyval

Dyval is also one of the so-called *Heroic Realms,* a collection of interconnected worlds (including the Palladium World) that are all virtually identical in environment. It is also the second world responsible for the *Minion War* that has turned the Great Rift into one of the Palladium World's worst war zones. Dyval maintains permanent gateways to the Palladium World as well as a dozen other Heroic Realms, and the Deevils of **Dyval** have made major inroads into the power structures of the civilizations on each world.

As for Dyval, it is a world consisting of a single island continent that is itself covered by dense, wild forest and many small oceans and large lakes. The world is the home to the Deevils, a race of inter-dimensional monsters and devious humanoids who exist only to plot the demise of the forces of light. Though there are relatively few recognized species of **Deevilkin,** much of Dyval remains an unexplored wilderness, and it is believed that there are still *dozens* of Deevilkin species and other creatures living undiscovered and feral. Were the Deevilkin a more industrious race, they might have undertaken a campaign to explore their home continent and catalog every kind of Deevil living on it. However, the Deevils are actually a little slothful, and the various minions already incorporated into the **Deevilkin's** ranks

seem to be sufficient for the Deevil Lords' taste. As for them, the Deevil Lords, they each command a vast citadel somewhere in **Dyval.** From these fortresses of solitude, the Lords govern their considerable domains of the continent, where they live lives of sinister decadence, command vast armies of Deevil minions, and plot to undermine the forces of goodness on other worlds...and the existing power structure of their very own.

Though **Dyval** is not quite so wracked by the threat of civil war as Hades is, the climate there is pretty tense. None of the Deevil Lords really trust each other, and so they are on constant alert against possible betrayals or invasion. This is the way it has always been, and this is the way it will always be.

The only change in this situation is the advent of the Minion War and Hades' clear desires to launch a full-out invasion of Dyval and the extermination of all **Deevilkin.** Deevil spies have learned that the Lords of Hades have already put their plans for war into motion. This is the Minion War, the Demons' dress rehearsal for the onslaught they wish to exact upon Dyval and everyone that lives in it.

The Deevil Lords would just as soon dismiss this Demon ploy as they have so often before, but there is something about the Demons' large-scale incursion into the Great Rift that is troubling. Many of the Deevil Lords think that maybe, just maybe, the Demon Lords are serious this time and have put into motion a plan that might actually threaten Dyval. It certainly is enough to motivate **Sahtalus,** the Supreme Lord Dyval, to deploy large Deevil armies into the Great Rift and meet the Demon forces there head-on, as a buffer of sorts. Sahtalus believes that if the armies of Dyval can defeat the Demons on the battlefields of the Minion War, it will discourage them from invading Dyval and prove just which of them are the other's better. If the Deevils **lose,** then they might be in for far greater trouble than any of them ever bargained for. Thus, for the Deevilkin, the Minion War is a conflict with far higher stakes than might be initially apparent.

For stats on the basic types of Deevils, refer to the back of **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition** rule book. For more information on the Deevil Lords of Dyval, please refer to the **Dragons and Gods® sourcebook.**

There are three basic types of Deevil: *Lesser Deevils, Greater Deevils,* and the lords of Dyval, the infamous *Deevil Lords.*

Lesser Deevils

The foot soldiers of Dyval, the Lesser Deevils, occupy the lowest rung of the Deevilkin social hierarchy. Though these infernal neophytes have no real power to command, they generally are treated better by their superiors than their equivalents in Demon society. The Greater Deevils and Deevil Lords, while hardly **gentle-hearted,** know that mistreating one's minions will only lead to bad morale and eventual desertion or rebellion. But the biggest incentive to treat minions decently is more slothful: constantly harassing one's inferiors is a lot of work! Most upper-level Deevils would rather just let their minions do their thing with minimal interference and merely expect total obedience when the **Lessers** are called to duty. The **Lessers** abide by this because they know to do otherwise invites their destruction. Deevil rebellions are put down with special harshness, so the Lessers mind their manners and tend to follow orders to the letter.

There are seven primary types of Lesser Deevil: *Deevils, **Devilkins**, Dire Harpies, **Fenry**, Fiends, **Gorgons**,* and *__Imps__*. **Note:** For full descriptions and statistics for all Lesser Deevils, please refer to the **Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition,** pages 326-330.

Greater Deevils

The lieutenants of the Deevilkin are both the commanders of the Lessers and the custodians of the order imposed by their Deevil Lords. Though the Deevil Lords are on constant watch against each other, they seem to lack the desire to keep so close an eye on their lowliest of minions. This they delegate almost entirely to the hordes of Greater Deevils. The Greater Deevils have an incredible degree of power and leeway to interpret their Lords' wishes and orders. This sometimes leads to certain **Greaters** instituting extreme and terrifying policies and procedures that include every degradation and atrocity, including genocide, mass sexual abuse, and a cornucopia of mental and physical torture. The really insidious thing is that very few Greater Deevils ever go off the deep end like this simply because they love being brutal; they usually are taking their **Lord's** wishes to a wildly extreme extension. A Deevil Lord's hatred of sloth, for example, might lead overzealous Greaters to murder any Lesser who is *ever* seen to not be engaged in some kind of industry, for example. Only when the worst Greater Deevils commit the most egregious crimes do their Deevil Lords get involved, and remove the offending Greater from power by murdering him or sending him to a distant world where his brand of mayhem might be put to a better use. Other than that, Greater Deevils are typically expected to enforce their Lord's will in some way and typically allowed the means to do it however they see fit.

There are only five basic types of Greater Deevil: *Arch Fiends, Beasts, Horrors, Serpents,* and *Wraiths.* Note: For full descriptions and statistics for all Greater Deevil types, please refer to **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition,** pages 331-333.

Deevil Lords

There are seven Deevil Lords: *Sahtalus, the Supreme Lord Dyval, **Hel**, Lady Dyval, **Mephisto** the Deceiver, **Nickodeamis**, Leviathan, Rhada,* and *__Diabolus__*. By their minions and lieutenants, these rulers of Dyval are utterly unquestioned. Dyval does not simmer with rebellion the way that Hades does, and the Deevil Lords who command this realm do so somewhat complacently. They have forgotten whatever it might have been like to have to work at keeping one's lackeys in line, putting down rebellions, and preventing **overambitious** lieutenants from trying to usurp a Lord's position for itself. Each of the seven Deevil Lords lives in incredible luxury and often alone. Their citadels might be full of soldiers and bodyguards, but the Lords themselves are famous for holding no audiences and spending several months at a time without contacting any other beings except for other Deevil Lords (and then, only directly; they *never* send messages via intermediaries). As a result, the Deevil Lords are often referred to by their servants as the *Lords of Solitude.*

Sahtalus, the Supreme Lord Dyval, is to his worshipers the symbol of temptation, lust and betrayal. This is fine by Sahtalus and may have represented what he used to be, before he became the Supreme Lord Dyval. Ever since he usurped control of

Dyval from the ancient and horrible Dee'vag, he has little time anymore for temptation and lust (always time for betrayal, however).

As the ruler of the realm of Dyval, Sahtalus is constantly busy, constantly organizing things, constantly looking in on other worlds where the Deevils have an interest. Most of all, he is constantly busy watching his back and making sure that one of the other Deevil Lords isn't about to put him out of a job. The infighting among the Deevil Lords is not quite as vicious and internecine as it is among the Demon Lords, but the Deevil Lords are hardly one big, happy family. While Sahtalus has a great ally in his wife, *Hel, Lady Dyval,* he feels all of the other Deevil Lords must be kept in line by force. Though Sahtalus faces a far greater overt threat from the Demon Lords than from betrayal within his own ranks, he still is so concerned about possible treachery that he counts all of the Deevil Lords among his enemies. Publicly, he treats them as friends and allies, but in reality he sees them all as the next possible ruler of Dyval should he fall under the knife.

Sahtalus appears as a very handsome aristocratic nobleman with black hair and beard, red skin, sparkling dark eyes, tall and standing erect on legs that end in cloven feet. Of course, this is but one appearance among many, and it is said that Sahtalus may not exist at all, but that Sahtalus is but a *nom d'mauvais* of a craftier Deevil.

Hel, Lady Dyval, was once a goddess of the Pantheon of the Northern Gods, and the daughter of the great trickster god *Loknar*. Now Hel is the wife of Sahtalus and the Lady of Dyval. She is considered by her worshipers to be the symbol of darkness. Influenced at an early age by her mother, the giantess *Angrboda*, Hel has always known her place among the Northern Gods would be uncomfortable. There were too many prophecies of her tragic doom, and too many of the bards of Odguard were composing epic ballads describing her as a pawn and a victim of the fates. Seeing that Sahtalus, Lord of Dyval, lusted after her, she decided that marriage to him would sever her former destiny and allow her to carve out a new life for herself. Also, she enjoys the freedom and pleasure of all the evil duties that she is expected to execute as a Deevil Lord. While she has higher ambitions than simply to be the wife of the ruler of Dyval, she is biding her time and learning everything she can about the inner workings of the Deevil realm. Even though she is married to Sahtalus and shares part of his home, she spends most of her time in her own citadel, a place fitted for her comforts and surrounded by thick forests.

Hel can always count on her husband Sahtalus, if only because she is the one person in all of Dyval unlikely to stab him in the back. Having forsaken Odguard and her former Pantheon of the Northern Gods, she is distrusted by most of her relatives and the Gods of Light. She knows that her place in Dyval has brought on resentment from all the other Deevil Lords, so she takes the precaution of regarding them all as potential enemies. She is aware that the Northern Gods consider her a dangerous traitor, but she also knows that her father Loknar will do everything in his considerable power to defend and protect her from their wrath. That said, any actions Hel takes part in against the Gods of Light or mortal champions of good (which is inevitable), could also get her into trouble.

Mephisto the Deceiver is the symbol for illusions and deception. He has been secretly plotting to take the seat of power from Sahtalus and waits patiently for the right moment to make his move, all the while gathering more and more of the Deevil races to his side. In terms of his personality, Mephisto suffers from delusions of grandeur and has a serious case of megalomania. He considers mortals to be toys and pawns to be used for his gain or amusement. His citadel is more of a prison than a palace since he has taken the job of imprisoning, interrogating and torturing all of the Demon captives that have been taken in Dyval's long conflict with Hades (particularly the Minion War). Also in his cells are a number of humans (Mephisto hates them and likes to have a few around to torment), bound Lesser Elementals, and even some "thing" that is rumored to be a captive angel. All throughout the citadel are the Deevil Serpents, his personal servants and jailers.

Nickodeamis is the symbol of corruption. He likes to play the fool and to pretend that all he cares about are pretty things, but in reality, Nickodeamis is a shrewd manipulator and has been preparing to eliminate Sahtalus ever since Hel entered Dyval. His citadel, overlooking a beautiful lake and surrounded by lush forests, is crammed with millions of odd possessions and treasures consisting of gems, jewelry and huge amounts of coins (he is particularly fond of Old Kingdom dragon coins and has hundreds of them in perfect condition). His trove also consists of hundreds of magic items, runic devices, artifacts, and bizarre trophies from a hundred different worlds, all of which are carefully tended to by a horde of Imps.

Leviathan is the mistress of the Dire Harpies, and is the symbol of revenge. She is thoroughly and completely unpleasant, a goddess warrior as powerful as she is cruel. Despite her ugly inner nature, outwardly Leviathan is quite beautiful. The problem is, she constantly compares herself to other ravishing figures such as Hel and Rhada, and finds herself lacking. As a result, she hates both figures, as well as anybody else she believes is more beautiful than her. In her citadel, an ugly monolith of red stone that sits out in the rocky barrens of Dyval's least attractive real estate, Leviathan likes to surround herself with her favorite minions: the Deevil Gorgons, Dire Harpies and ordinary Harpies taking the place of songbirds. Everyday she takes a different walk through her maze-like citadel, trying to lose the Deevil Beast bodyguards (the lap dogs of Sahtalus) assigned to her and plots another way of getting her revenge on him and everybody else on her lengthy list of enemies. Nobody is really sure why Leviathan burns with hatred for Sahtalus, or what wrong he has perpetrated on her to merit any kind of revenge. Perhaps the best explanation is that Leviathan pretty much hates *everybody* and seeks to avenge herself upon them for reasons known only to her.

Rhada is an outcast among the other Deevil Lords for having done two unforgivable things. First, she has fallen in love. Among the Deevilkin, it is hard to believe that one of their own would do something so foolish, so stupid, so ... *human*. Why, the very idea of it is ludicrous! Second, and more importantly, is the object of her desires. Not only has Rhada fallen in love, but she has done so with the "Demon" Lord *Abdul-Ra*, a development that shakes the Deevil Lords to their very marrow. No Deevil Lord can understand how this could have come to pass, but in reality, it's all very simple. Long ago, Rhada and Ab-

dul-Ra hated each other and fought in countless bloody battles. Then, some centuries ago, Rhada managed a coup; she captured the Lord Abdul-Ra and imprisoned him in her Citadel. At the time the Deevil Lords were jubilant since it seemed that the power of the Demon Lords was finally, fatally cracked, and that it would only be a matter of time before they could dominate (or at least corrupt) all of Hades. After gathering their armies and preparing for another major assault, they went to Rhada's citadel so they might have all the pleasure of interrogating the prisoner. But Abdul-Ra was gone. Rhada's story of the escape was proven false by her Beast bodyguards, and through arcane means, they discovered what *really* happened. When the Deevil Lords learned that Rhada let him go because she loved him, they decided she must be imprisoned until they could decide what to do about the situation.

That was two hundred years ago. Always held in mystical chains (created by Diabolus in one of his more level-headed moments) and constantly monitored by at least one Deevil Lord at all times, there seems no way for Rhada to escape. She is still bound, still monitored, and there is still no consensus among the Deevil Lords as to what should be done with her. Until then, she is a prisoner in her own citadel which is filled with Mephisto's Demon Serpents to watch over her. Meanwhile, in the woods outside Rhada's fortress prison, her faithful minions, the Fenry, howl in despair over their mistress's plight. A cadre of them have been sent to fight in the Minion War, and as they soldier on, they are trying to establish contact with the forces of Abdul-Ra in the hope that maybe he will help break his incarcerated admirer from her bondage. So far, none of Abdul-Ra's soldiers seem to have helped out, but just recently, a force of over a dozen Demons were slain in the vicinity of Rhada's prison, and it is believed they *might* have been reconnoitering the place for a jailbreak.

Diabolus is a twisted, hunchbacked troll. He is most definitely insane, enjoying the company of dead things above all others. He is also extremely cruel, unpredictable, and dangerous. However, he is not as insane as others sometimes think. In his moments of lucidity, he takes careful note of how the realm of the Lords of Dyval is arranged, and he thinks that he might be able to reorganize things more to his liking. He also thinks about Rhada, and what it might take to make her love him, instead of that Demon Lord, Abdul-Ra! Living in a vast citadel, half underwater and half covered in strange fungi, attended by dozens of Horrors, he is surrounded by the results of his various experiments, all of which are still living, even if they are not quite complete in terms of the body parts they need.

The Horrors are Diabolus' henchmen, servants and keepers. They work continually at trying to maintain his citadel (there are mysterious underwater creatures who are literally digging out the foundations and threatening to collapse the structure), making repairs, removing the more annoying mutations and unwanted dead (Diabolus has an entire dungeon level filled with corpses and skeletons of dead creatures, mortal and superhuman) and generally trying to keep it suitable for company. Note: While a dozen Beasts, on the instructions of Sahtalus, are supposed to be keeping an eye on Diabolus, they frequently lose all trace of him as he wanders around the water-filled corridors of his maze-like citadel, and occasionally pops into other dimensions. It is rumored that Diabolus routinely travels to the Palladium World to escape his surveillance and as a result, is often sighted getting involved in the Minion War, both as a soldier and as a devious patron who gets outsiders involved in the conflict for fun and profit.

Note: For full descriptions and statistics for all Deevil Lords of Dyval, please refer to the Dragons and Gods® sourcebook, pages 191-202.

On Deevil Worship

Offering power without any niggling rules about behaving or obeying the law, cults of Deevil worship are found everywhere on the Palladium World, and outnumber cults of Demon worship by at least eight or nine to one.

If it were not for the abuse of the Deevils themselves, Deevil worship could have been a major religious and political force in the Palladium World instead of just a widespread scattering of disjointed cults. Since the Deevil Lords receive so much power from the inhabitants of Dyval, and from their other domains, there seems to be no need to "conserve" any followers they gain. Also, since Sahtalus well remembers using the power of the Palladium World to gain his own seat of power, he may himself be sabotaging the religion there. The greatest piece of evidence toward this is the fact that, despite the hideous terror and damage the Deevil Cult of Dee'vag wrought upon the Western Empire in ages past, there is *virtually no historical record of it anywhere in the Palladium World!* Not even the Library of Bletherad has a single reference toward the event, outside of an excerpt from the Tristine Chronicles. There is not even a body of folklore or legend about the event. This all points to perhaps a magic spell of some sort that wiped clean the collective memory of the Palladium World as to the onslaught Deevil cults once inflicted upon the world. If this were indeed the case, only Sahtalus knows the truth of it. It is an interesting theory, other Deevil Lords point out, because had Sahtalus wiped the world's memory, it would better position Deevil cults to take power in the world more insidiously. Gone are the days of taking over entire kingdoms and installing reigns of terror. For eons now, Deevil cults work from the shadows, pulling the strings of power everywhere as kings, warlords, mages, and other people of power secretly devote their life's energies to the forces of Dyval. This is how Sahtalus chooses to conquer worlds. The best effort to thwart the spread of Deevil kind under these circumstances is to stop people from devoting themselves to it, but just by dangling power and advantage to those who want it is a powerful enticement, often stronger than any crusader army or wrathful god.

Frankly, the very success of Deevilkin corruption is the prime reason for the antagonism between Hades and Dyval. The Demons of Hades resent how Dyval has been able to virtually conquer numerous worlds without having to lift a finger in open combat. From the Demonic point of view, all the Deevils have to do is just *wait* for people to come worship them! For the forces of Hades, who feel like they must physically dominate and conquer those who would bow to them, this lackadaisical approach is simply infuriating. Even more so because it appears to work better than the Demonic way of doing things. Already prone to rage and jealousy, the forces of Hades can not bear such an affront, and as a result, they are collectively obsessed with beating Dyval at its own game - attracting worshipers and taking over as many worlds as possible - and if possible, to destroy the realm of Deevils once and for all.

Meanwhile, Deevil worship continues apace on the Palladium World as a powerful yet secret religion that has more influence in the realm of politics, economics and warfare than most people would hope. Other worlds have their own forms of Deevil worship and on at least two blighted worlds, the worship of **Dyval** has become the major religion and official faith of most mortal royals.

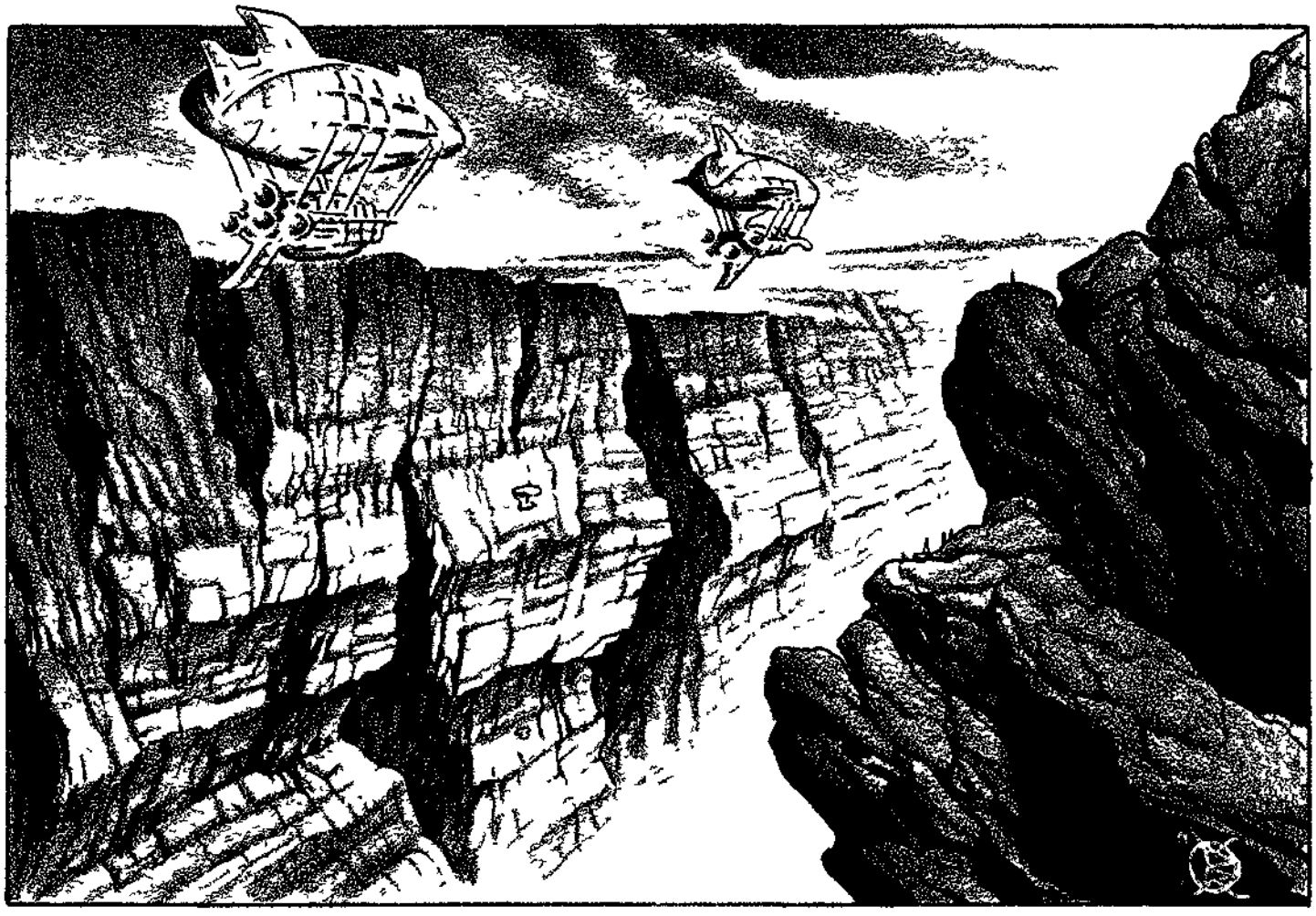
Currently, there is no unified religious **organization** and no church hierarchy with any authority on the Palladium World. Each Priest of Darkness attempts to create his own circle of worshipers with ambitions of establishing a temple. Most keep their worship secret and recruit followers very carefully. Once indoctrinated into Deevil worship, its devotees are forbidden, upon pain of torture, from praying to any other gods, even Gods of Darkness. Although there are small numbers of Deevil worshipers in many human communities, only in certain ruined cities of the Western Empire are there any temples with more than a couple of hundred followers. Kobolds, Goblins, **Hob-Goblins, Orcs** and many other so-called "monster races" are often converted to Deevil worship, however, ironically, often by human priests.

The Abyss

This is the deepest part of the Great Rift, where numerous inter-dimensional instabilities have opened up doorways to many different alien worlds and dimensions. The Abyss is the smallest battleground of the Great Rift region, largely because the wild magical energy that surges along the Abyss makes the area impossible to permanently inhabit. Minion armies only enter the zone for short durations so they might ambush newcomer aliens as they enter this world through one of the Great **Rift's** many dimensional doorways.

The surging magic here is like a hundred small ley lines all cut loose from each other. They arc along the Abyss like long bolts of magical lightning, flying by in the blink of an eye. The topography of the Abyss is like that of an impossible large and deep "V" shaped ravine with massive rock outcroppings, boulders and ledges jutting out from the walls on both sides. It is so deep that the bottom is cloaked in darkness. Indeed, it has no bottom. Instead the lowest reaches are simply a black abyss that goes on forever. Those who fall and are not rescued by spectacular means (swooped up by fliers or magic, or telekinesis, etc.) or do not land on a ledge, are doomed to fall forever, or at least until death claims them from starvation. Items dropped into the Abyss are likely to be lost forever or fall into a dimensional portal and appear on some distant world.

The nature of the Abyss does not make for many spacious places for mass combat or people to live Nor is it an inviting place; for those in the Abyss, it seems like it is always night, and it is always uncomfortably cold. However, those fighting here will find an array of ledges, giant jutting boulders, crevasses, caves, nooks and crannies providing an infinite variety of ambush sites and parapets ideal for small bands and ambush. As a result, most of the fighting takes place along the walls and in the air, right at the site of a dimensional doorway, either to shanghai



the newcomers who come through it or to guard the portal until it closes, or for some other nefarious reason.

The largest and most stable portals are therefore the hottest war zones in the Abyss. Some, like the portals to Hades and Dyval, tend to have contingents of soldiers stationed there at all times, braving the dangers of rogue bolts, so they might organize reinforcements who come through the doorway and send them to various Factions within the Minion War. Others, like the many portals that open up for just a few minutes or hours and then close up again, become targets of opportunity to those forces in the Abyss who are able to respond to them. These short-lived portals have admitted a ton of unique newcomers to the Great Rift who fit into no other species. A good number of these individuals have actually become Faction Lords themselves, regardless of their lack of any Factional affiliation to help them.

The inter-dimensional doorways in the Abyss appear as vertical rippling masses of blue ley line energy. Twin beams of magical energy come up from the walls of the canyon and form into a vertically aligned iris shape. This shape crackles and hums with energy, and it is said that sometimes, the voices of far-flung individuals lost in the universe can be heard crying for help though the portal. Through this iris, one might see the vista of an alien world or dimension, and as long as this door remains open, creatures from those worlds might come through into the Palladium World, magically appearing on the many rock outcroppings, ledges and very faces of the ravine-like walls of the Great Rift. Other times newcomers magically appear on the lip of the Great Rift where they are even easier prey if spotted by the Demon and Deevil Factions. Strangely, the Rifts of the Abyss are not two-way, so people from this world can not use them to jaunt all over the Megaverse. They are basically one-way portals from other parts of the Megaverse to this single world.

The primary gateways of the Abyss lead to the twin dimensions of Hades and Dyval, respective homes to Demonkind and the Deevilkin, the chief antagonists in the Minion War. There is always at any given time, a large and stable gateway to both of those dimensions within the Great Rift. Most of the time, there will be 1D4 additional gateways leading to each infernal dimension, but these are fairly unstable doorways and are prone to collapsing or disappearing at any instant, so they are not considered trustworthy for transporting large numbers of troops and supplies to this world.

In addition to the major gateways to Hades and Dyval, there are at any given time, up to 20 other inter-dimensional gateways somewhere in the Abyss. Most of these open doors to the home dimensions of the various Minions of Darkness and other brutish and wicked races, both infernal and mortal. But periodically, a door opens up to a new dimension, one through which just a few creatures might travel before the gateway closes up again.

Note: The G.M. is free to decide where such "rogue gateways" might lead to. They could connect this world with virtually any other place in the Megaverse. While the G.M. is encouraged to determine for himself where the "rogue gates" of the Great Rift might lead, for convenience's sake a table of random worlds and dimensions is provided below. A bunch of these, if so desired, *could* connect the G.M.'s Palladium Fantasy campaign with the game worlds of other Palladium **role-playing games, such as Rifts®, Wormwood™, Heroes Unlimited™, Nightbane®, Beyond the Supernatural™ and** so on. If this is something you are comfortable with, then dive in and have fun bringing these disparate worlds of adventure together. However, these worlds are NOT included in the table below. If cross-genre gaming is *not* your cup of tea, don't do it no matter what. Truth be told, while many a monster crawls out from these momentary rips in space and time, very few people go in them for any reason. Moreover, the nature of the Land of the Damned and reason for the existence of the Great Rift are such that mostly evil and violent monsters are attracted to these portals. Thus, few are the random doorways that connect to places that are not demonic, chaotic and wracked with evil.

Random Worlds and Dimensions of the Abyss

Note: Below is a list of random dimensions the Rifts of the Abyss may lead to, with clues as to what creatures may come from them. Some of these portals are unlikely to have anything emerge from them, however, and instead describe what the characters would find if they somehow were to reach these dimensions.

01%: The *Heroic Realm ofHades,* a warped reflection of the Palladium World and the realm of demons. Where lakes, rivers and oceans exist on the Palladium World, eternal fires exist on Hades, making it an unbearably hot place suitable only for the infernal demons who inhabit it.

02%: The *Heroic Realm ofDyval,* a world covered by forest and small lakes, and also the realm of Deevils. Each of the major Deevil Lords maintains a citadel here and controls a vast domain. Most of Dyval remains wild and unexplored, however, filled with Deevils of every sort including dozens of Deevil races and creatures never seen on the Palladium World.

03%: The *Heroic Realm of Xor,*a freakish world populated by endless hordes of Demon-like creatures who are also known as the *Xor.* These warrior humanoids are a monstrous cross between a reptile and insect, possessing incredible strength, natural fighting skills, and one in every 100 has great magic or psionic ability. They are said to be led by a council of twelve Warrior Queens, who have factionalized Xor society into one of constant civil war. The only time they forge peace is to conquer another world.

04%: *The Heroic Realm of Thesher.* This world closely resembles that of Palladium Fantasy except some terrible plague

has wiped out 99% of the inhabitants. Only the most powerful of all the people, monsters and animals have survived, and now they are locked in a final war for the destiny of the entire world.

05%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Regnum,*** a majestic realm where magic is at its height and the land is ruled by a dozen empires who have not warred upon each other in over 10,000 years. Yet, there brews discontent in this garden of paradise, and many fear a great destruction is soon to befall the entire realm.

06%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Golthos,*** a dark and brooding realm of eternal twilight where the purple sky is laced with black clouds and what little light filters through to the land has a sickly, sepia tint to it. Many of the kingdoms here dwell amid the ruins of a once great empire than spanned the entire world but was destroyed by forces unknown to anybody.

07%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Jeretlan,*** a realm of young kingdoms and empires where dozens of **humanoid** races compete for living space in a world where magic runs wild. The ley lines here whip across the land like hungry serpents, and where the lines join, terrible storms of destructive force result, scouring the land of all life.

08%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Skorrdia,*** an ocean world where the only land is that of a vast and world-spanning archipelago. Each major island is home to a different kingdom, many of which have formed confederate empires spanning thousands of islands. Threatening the world is the insidious advance of the ***Schismata,*** an army of religious fanatics devoted to a terrible and mysterious pantheon that seeks nothing less than to convert the world to its faith. Those who resist are to be destroyed.

09%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Scarundar,*** home dimension of the *Advocates.* A vastly civilized world where enormous cities stretch on to the horizon in every direction.

10%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Kogalla,*** home dimension of the ***Buragh.*** A world of plains and virtually no build up, but possessing a huge and ancient stone highway system built by some other race than the Buragh. Still, the Buragh worship these roads and for them, their control is the chief medium of political power.

11%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Blackheart,*** home dimension of the ***Contemplators.*** A world of **cities,** yes, but more importantly, of vast graveyards, where the accumulated dead of all Contemplator history are collected. Here, Contemplators **ritually** gather to pay homage to the fallen and to dwell on their own mortality.

12%: The *Heroic Realm of Vraj,* home dimension of the *Faceless.* A **world of** such blinding sunlight that it renders all visitors to it blind. The Faceless are strangely immune to this form of **overlighting,** but not to blinding effects on the Palladium World.

13%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Gordia,*** home dimension of the ***Gordians.*** A world of incredible vegetation and animal herds. With such vast food supplies, it is easy to see why these **humanoids** become so grossly overweight.

14%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Horgun,*** home dimension of the *Horga,* where there is no color blue at all. Anything blue that enters into the world either turns into a shade of red or yellow. The entire realm looks like it is being viewed through some weird kind of polarizing filter.

15%: The *Heroic Realm of Sledgetter,* home dimension of the *Kaadj.* On this strange world are all manner of strange phenomena, such as a day each month in which gravity diminishes and everything floats off the ground by about 10 feet (3 m).

16%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Mirios,*** home dimension of the *Kokossans.* A world of such intense electrical storms that the air often crackles with electricity and bolts of lightning are known to spontaneously burst forth. Most settlements are built underground to avoid the deadly electrical disturbances of the surface.

17%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Ramsee,*** home dimension of the *Lashers.* A heavily forested world where all trees grow in a strangely **gridlike** fashion, always evenly spaced out, as if placed down according to some huge mechanical design.

18%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Neklizen,*** home dimension of the *Rabblers.* A bubbling world of massive mud and slime pits. What **high,** dry land there is lies *covered* by **Rabbler** establishments, and is savagely fought over as the prized real estate it is.

19%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Belstrom,*** home dimension of the ***Skreed.*** A swampy world with seven different varieties of water, none of which really mix with each other. Each has special medicinal or toxic properties, separate colors, and they all mix like oil and vinegar.

20%: The home dimension of the ***Soulhunters.*** A dark world of eternal night and endless cold. Though this is one of the Heroic **Realms,** its true name and location remain a closely guarded secret among the Soulhunters. This is information they would *never* give away willingly.

21%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Cho'ganog,*** home dimension of the *Ur-Tosk.* A world so thick with virulent disease that any open wound becomes a certain invitation to infection, debilitation, misery and death.

22%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Quidgan,*** home dimension of the ***Wraithmongers.*** A rocky, mountainous wasteworld reportedly devoid of vegetation.

23%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Quoria,*** home dimension of the ***Quorians,*** a race of ogre-like warriors currently marooned in the *Baalgor Wastelands.*

24%: The *Heroic Realm of* ***Sheseth,*** home dimension of the *Gosai,* another warrior race in the Baalgor Wastelands; they are the **Quorians'** sworn enemy.

25%: A dimension of **Dragonkind!** It is said that all Dragons ultimately hail form the same alien dimension. Others disagree, saying the different types of Dragons each come from a separate dimension. The only way to tell is to somehow reach this world and gain some intelligence on the matter.

26%: The realm of ***Taunton,*** a world populated exclusively by **Minotaurs.** This world would make it seem that the Old Ones either initially recruited their Minotaur minions from this world, or in creating the Minotaurs, they modeled them after the inhabitants of Taunton.

27%: The realm **of** ***Arachne,*** a world populated by enormous spiders, insects and other arthropods. Though these creatures have no industry or technology, they do have a very complex society and set of cultures. It is just that most **humanoids** from this world lack the means of understanding the **Arachneids** and their way **of** life.

28%: The realm **of** ***Juka West,*** just one world in a set of four (***Juka North, Juka South, Juka East*** and ***Juka West)*** that is about one third the size of the Palladium continent yet possesses twice the total population. The entire world is a vast medieval city

powered by magic and psionics, and is on the verge of total collapse.

29%: The realm of *Borghele*, a once lush world that has suffered for the last thousand years under the spell of a massive ice age. The culprit is thought to be a nation of evil Warlocks who live in a stronghold on the world's northernmost land mass.

30%: *Sonduvol*, an enormous ocean world with a single circular continent. Every year, the shoreline recedes a little more as the ocean continually rises. Those on land either are working on finding other land in this world, or in fighting wars over the remaining (and ever-dwindling) land that is left. Already, huge flotillas of vessels are scouring the world on their endless journey for more land. Many of these ships lash together to form "super-ships" the size of a small town.

31%: The realm of *Prodige*, a fantasy world not unlike the Palladium Fantasy world, except that everyone and everything is about as perfect as can be. There is no sadness, no hardship, no longing for much of anything. But more and more, Prodige's best and brightest can be seen jaunting through the many dimensions in search for something. Something that is missing from their land and from their collective memory. Something that is the key to their very souls...

32%: The realm of *Karanai*, another fantasy, medieval world very similar to the Palladium Fantasy world except all of the races have been replaced with intelligent, bipedal talking animals! For fans of After the Bomb® RPG, this is a fine chance to port over to the Palladium World. Otherwise they will be very Wolfen-like.

33%: The realm of *Thone*, a fantasy world in which all magic, psionics, and the feats of warriors and other adventurers inflict Mega-Damage in an otherwise S.D.C. world. Needless to say, combat tends to be very lethal and very fast here, and it also tends to cause quite a bit of collateral damage.

34%: The realm of *JyhrdiMaximus*, a paranoid world where fanatical crusaders and demon slayers seek to crush the forces of darkness. Only those "forces" includes any creatures who wield or accept magic, even if they profess to be good. Characters from the Palladium World will be seen as invaders, scouts for an invading world, spies, monsters or demons come to conquer, corrupt or otherwise undermine their civilization.

35%: The realm of *Manaa*, a fantasy world in which primitive "steampunk" technology has evolved using a form of Wizardry that can only be placed into machines, allowing for a medieval or renaissance world governed by crude Techno-Wizardry as its sole science and technology. Crude techno-magical firearms are the weapons of choice here and strange machines and primitive vehicles are used to create magical (spell-like) effects. Here all other forms of magic are unknown and frightening to ordinary people, for only demons and monsters wield such "dark" and unknown magicks.

36%: The realm of *Galtoa*, a world so ravaged by terrible storms that no civilization has ever thrived there. To bad, too, since Galtoa has some of the richest gold, silver and diamond deposits of any known world. Those who could mine them somehow and bring those riches back to this world could reap a fortune unimagined by even the wealthiest of kings and emperors.

37%: The *Realm of Shadow*, the world of eternal darkness where the *Shadow Beasts, Shadow Stalkers* and Shadow Magic are native. Mages who travel to this world, it is said, may learn the greatest secrets of Shadow Magic (and the other dark arts practiced here) if they bring a suitable gift for the dreaded Shadow Kings who rule this place. But it too is a land of chaos, treachery and savage demonic creatures of which the famed Shadow Beast and its cousin, the Shadow Stalker, are but two.

38%: The realm of *Aka*, a fantasy world much like this one except there are none of the Great Races (Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes, Wolfen, humans). It is all monsters and monstrous humanoids like Goblins, Hob-Goblins, Kobolds, Orcs, Ogres and Trolls. Not surprisingly, this is a world of utter barbarity and anarchy. The cities of this world, if one could call them that, are nothing more than miserable collections of buildings that have been built, smashed and rebuilt so many times that even the greatest kings and emperors live in ramshackle shanties.

39%: The realm of *Tigeria*, a fantasy world like this one except time works very differently there. For every day that passes in Tigeria, an entire year passes in this world. The end result is that people from this world who go to Tigeria will move incredibly fast compared to the natives. Some inter-dimensional travelers fear that unscrupulous explorers might come here at night and go on robbery sprees and leave before the Tigerians can ever hope to catch them.

40%: A realm known simply as *Wasteworld*, an endless medieval junk pile. The detritus from a thousand civilizations can be found here, deposited from across the Megaverse by who knows who. Worms of Taut and other predator creatures and scavengers dwell here.

41%: The realm of *Faltide*, a huge ocean world in which aquatic humanoids have crafted beautiful underwater bubble cities where either they or surface dwellers can live in comfort. The Bubble Wars of yesteryear have finally come to a close, thank the Gods. Or have they?

42%: The realm of *Necropholus*, a world of eternal twilight, dark evils and endless death. Here, Necromancers of every kind practice their sinister arts to enslave the innocent. It is said that in addition to Banshees, Ghouls, and other carrion eaters, there are other foul creatures. Creatures from this dimension that have populated the region of the Land of the Damned known as the *Eternal Torment.*

43%: The realm of *Quinner*, a place of total chivalry and empires living in their highest age. As a fantasy world, this place is a paradise where righteousness and lawfulness have triumphed and evil no longer exists in the world. Until it comes in from another dimension, that is...

44%: The realm of *Grom*, a bizarre place populated by freakish monstrosities of every kind. These people are all very civilized and proper, wearing formal attire wherever they go. They all have such terrible physical abnormalities that on the Palladium Fantasy world, they would have a Horror Factor of at least 15. Exactly what kind of deformities the Gromians sport is left to the G.M.'s discretion. Basically make these guys as gross as possible without terribly sickening the players.

45%: The realm of *Velos*, where ceaseless winds have scoured the entire world's surface to a flat, barren plain. There is life here, uniquely evolved to live under such harsh conditions. Many creatures are flat like a stingray but with claws to hook into the ground. Or, they are so gargantuan they can stand up to the winds. Evil Wizards and Summoners have long looked to-

ward **Velos** in the hopes of importing these super-huge beasts to this world as invincible war steeds. Some scholars say that the ***Earthshakers*** of the Baalgor Wastelands originated from Velos, but other scholars can produce a mountain of evidence to the contrary.

46%: Somewhere in the *Land of the Damned:* the Northern Mountains, isolated on one of the region's many lonely stone faces, either in the Highlands or the Death Zone.

47%: Somewhere in the *Land of the Damned:* the Eternal Torment, in the vicinity of the of the **Necropoli,** the **region's** vast cities of the dead.

48%: Somewhere in the *Land of the Damned:* the Darkest Heart, an endless forest that is many, many more times larger on the inside than on the outside, and **filled** with all manner of feral, beastly **humanoids.**

49%: Somewhere in the *Land of the Damned:* the Broken Horn, somewhere amid the last great Minotaur nations.

50%: Somewhere in the *Land of the Damned:* the Bleakness. Somewhere in the vicinity of the fortress of ultimate evil, The Citadel.

51%: Somewhere in the *Northern Hinterlands,* either in the Shadow Coast **of Bizantium,** the Horde Lands, the barbarian region of **Kiridin,** near the Palladium of Desires, or near the **Summoner** haven known as the Vault of Destiny.

52%: Somewhere in the *Island Kingdom of Bizantium,* undoubtedly on a noble family's parcel of land.

53%: Somewhere in the ***Wolfen*** *Empire* north of the Disputed Lands and west of the more developed Tribal Lands that dominate the coastal areas of the **Algorian** Sea.

54%: Somewhere in the *Western Empire,* in the midst of one of the many, many great cities and towns that cover the Empire of Sin's landscape.

55%: Somewhere on the island *of Phi,* amid the vast gardens and plazas, where magic works in patterns and psionic energy surges like the waves of the sea.

56%: Somewhere on the island **of *Lopan,*** near any one of the many Proving Grounds where athletes train and compete endlessly for the Olympics and the many tournaments that lead up to them.

57%: Somewhere in the *Eastern Territory,* south of the Disputed Lands. Anywhere in the region's vast rural or unexplored territories, where settlers fight endless skirmishes with the bandits and monster threats there.

58%: Somewhere in the *Old Kingdom Lowlands,* amid the dozens of ruined cities that once constituted the heart of the **Dwarven** Empire but now are home only to endless armies of brigands, bandits and barbarians.

59%: Somewhere in the *Old Kingdom Mountains,* along any of that region's many stretches of virtually uninhabited territory, perhaps within the domain of a barbarian **chieftain.**

60%: Somewhere in the *Baalgor Wastelands,* within three day's march of the geographic center of the region, where the Golden City of Baalgor once stood before its untimely destruction.

61%: Somewhere in the *Mount* ***Nimro*** region, in the shadow of either Mount Nimro or Mount **Nimrod.** Rumor has it a pile of rune weapons lies in the heart of one of these **volcanoes...**

62%: Somewhere in the ***Yin-Sloth*** *Jungles,* deep in the middle of that wild and uncivilized land, where undiscovered creatures roam in strength and wild humanoids practice unknown and dangerous forms of magic.

63%: Somewhere in the *Timiro Kingdom,* in lands heavily settled by slave labor and oppressive human overlords, who nervously wonder when and how their country might erupt into a great big race war.

64%: Somewhere on the *Isle of the Cyclops,* in the rural areas surrounding the Great Walled City of Clypss.

65%: Somewhere in the *Land of the South-Winds,* in between the coastal pirate fiefdoms and the inner realms of the corrupt nobility and the power blocs of the dozens of cults in the area.

66%: Somewhere in the ***Floenry*** *Islands,* always in sight of any one of the archipelago's many Sea Serpent breeding and feeding grounds.

67%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm identical to the world of **Palladium Fantasy** in every way except the alignment of every person, monster and animal is reversed.

68%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm **identical** to the world of **Palladium Fantasy** in every way except the Western Empire was destroyed during its last bid to take over the world. Needless to say, history has progressed quite differently since then.

69%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm identical to the world of **Palladium Fantasy** in which the Elves won the Elf-Dwarf War by exterminating the Dwarves. This realm periodically swaps places with one in which the Dwarves won the war by wiping out the Elves.

70%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm identical to the world of **Palladium Fantasy** in which humanity never rose from its barbarous state, and to this day it is a savage race considered to be more animal than humanoid by the other Great Races, who use it as slave stock.

71%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm identical to the world of **Palladium Fantasy** in which the Wolfen have conquered every other nation and have ushered the world into a glorious Golden Age of discovery, building and progress.

72%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm identical to the world of **Palladium Fantasy** in which a massive slave uprising has laid waste to the Timiro Kingdom. As that once proud kingdom lies in ruins, a super-nation of monstrous humanoids has taken over the Old Kingdom and threatens to destroy every other major civilization on the planet.

73%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm identical to the world of **Palladium Fantasy** in which a cabal of dark priests have taken over the Land **of** the **South-Winds** and have turned the entire country into an evil, totalitarian theocracy. Already they are conducting pogroms to exterminate all followers of competing faiths. At night, the sky glows red from all of the cremation fires.

74%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm identical to the world of **Palladium Fantasy** in which the Yin-Sloth Jungles have been so terribly deforested by magical means that the whole region is turning into a desert wasteland, and the many creatures living in the region are either going extinct or mutating into something terrible so they might live.

75%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm identical to the world of **Palladium Fantasy** in which the Eastern Territory has discovered a means of mass producing rune weapons and is using them to exert its will across the world

76%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm identical to the world **of Palladium Fantasy** in which the Isle of the Cyclops has been overthrown and the secrets of making lightning weaponry are commonly known to all alchemists. They are now standard issue for every major army in the world.

77%: Alternate **Palladium Fantasy** world! A realm identical to the world **of Palladium Fantasy** in which the Old Kingdom's many barbarian tribes have been unified by a single super-warrior who is leading his forces successfully in a three-front war against the Western Empire, the Eastern Territory, and the Timiro Kingdom.

78%: Endless Jungle! The gate opens to an unexplored world covered in hyper-dense jungle like the deepest heart of the Yin-Sloth Jungles. This is a hostile environment in which the inhabitants are under constant assault from dangerous flora and fauna. Just walking through the dense vegetation will be difficult, and there may even be carnivorous plants about. The monsters and animals in the region might range from civilizations of sinister humanoids to microbes that infect a character without his knowing it. Disease and heat exhaustion are two other circumstances to consider.

79%: Vertical World! The gate opens to an unexplored world that consists of nothing other than tall, jagged mountains like what might be found in the Northern Mountains or the Old Kingdom Mountains. Here, mountaineering knowledge is essential for survival, as this world typifies the worst circumstances that a harsh mountain environment might offer a climber.

80%: The Big Dry! The gate opens to an unexplored world that consists of an endless desert. The area immediately outside the gate is a sea of tall, shifting sand dunes that will be extremely difficult to traverse on foot. (The shifting sands will require a supreme physical effort to cross.) Beyond the immediate region, there might be other kinds of desert, such as stony desert, rocky desert, and dry scrublands. Without a large and steady supply of water, the character is done for. He had better get some shelter from the sun, too. Somewhere there are plants and animals and humanoids to encounter; finding these things might be the key to survival.

81%: Deep Freeze! The gate opens to an unexplored world that consists of an endless arctic wasteland, like the Great Northern Wilderness in the middle of its worst winter. The entire area is covered in snow ranging from knee-deep to drifts over 10 feet (3 m) tall. Everything is frozen in this subzero environment, and if there are any plant or animals to be found, they will have developed interesting ways of battling the cold. Veterans of the Great Northern Wilderness will know what to do here for survival, but they will be surprised at the intensity of the cold.

82%: Veldt! The gate opens up to an unexplored world of endless savannah. Here, the tall grasslands cover a gently rolling landscape that is occasionally broken up by large patches of ground moss and rock outcroppings from which fast-moving predators survey the scene. The six foot (1.8 m) tall grass is hardly safe, either. Camouflaged hunters stalk the tall grass looking for their next meal.

83%: Forest! The gate opens to an unexplored world of endless forest, like the heart of the Great Northern Wilderness. In many places, the trees are so tall they practically disappear into the sky when viewed from the ground. They range from 10 feet (3 m) to 30 feet (10 m) in diameter, and their upper branches net together to provide a shade-giving canopy for the ground below, where only plants that can live with minimal sunlight will thrive. Whatever civilization is in this place will either have adapted to treetop life and constructed ingenious arboreal dwellings or they will have become strong warriors and build fortresses on the ground to protect their interests.

84%: Airless World! The gate leads to an unknown world in which there is no atmosphere whatsoever. The landscape is gray and rocky, like the moon. The gravity of this world is normal, however.

85%: Shattered World! The gate leads to an alien dimension where the world that once existed there has been so thoroughly devastated that is has broken up into a vast archipelago of island-like chunks of earth floating by themselves in a black, space-like void. These chunks of world have gravity and atmosphere, but if characters fly high enough or leap hard enough, they can leave the chunk they are riding on and float through space to land on another one.

86%: Automaton World! The gate leads to an unexplored magical world where the alchemists and mages who once ran things built a race of clockwork Golems that resemble primitive magic-operated robots. Somehow, the Builders either died out or were overthrown by their creations, because the world is now only occupied by millions of these clockwork people. They seem to be happy and productive, living with free will and showing emotions. They have built an impressive world for themselves, utilizing their great strength, endurance and durability to build an endless variety of titanic monuments and other such feats of engineering.

87%: The gate leads to a curious pocket dimension that looks and feels like it is on the inside of a glass or crystal sphere that is 100 feet (30.5 m) in diameter. If the guests concentrate hard enough, they can view any part of this crystal sphere and scrye into any part of any world of their choosing. This is the perfect spy realm, obviously built by an ancient magic force that knew a thing or two about keeping tabs on other people.

88%: The gate leads to a world in which there is no gravity. The only land masses to speak of are enormous "trees" that consist of a mile (1.6 km) long trunk and a huge branch assembly on both ends. These trees spin on their own, so there is normal gravity at the ends, but the closer one gets to the middle of the trunk, the less gravity there is. Elsewhere in this world are huge clouds of dust and smoke that are like atmospheric nebulae; in these hide bizarre flying predators that are the scourge of this world and the reason for the collapse of all of its civilizations.

89%: The gate leads to an alien world that is at the very end of its existence. The sun shines dimly in the eternally night sky. There is scarcely any air left to breathe. There are virtually no plants left, nor are there many animals, either. It is as if the natural resources of this world were never capable of renewing themselves, and now, after many years, the inhabitants have grown weak and sickly, as if all life here is slowly starving to death over the generations. The only thing keeping life going is the incredible magic energy of this world, which surges at close

to double the strength of magic in the world of Palladium Fantasy.

90%: Deific Realm! The gate opens to the homeland of a god or pantheon of the G.M.'s choice. Naturally, the deities living here might not appreciate a mere mortal crashing the party. Those who do not will probably eject the intruder forcibly. But then again, certain gods might admire the spunk of a mortal who made it to a **deific** realm and reward him for it.

91%: The gate opens to a world of endless night. The ground is covered in jagged volcanic rock, as if the ground opened itself up to a torrent of lava so great that it covered the world. Psychic impressions show there was once incredible amounts of life here. Whatever transformed this world must have killed it.

92%: Paradise! The gate leads to a world similar to that of Palladium Fantasy, except it is several times larger. There are no areas of hostile wilderness or desolation. Everywhere there is abundant food, water and shelter. The **humanoids** who live here all get along and there has never been any war in the 10,000+ years of recorded history here. Magic is strong and there is an effect to the world that makes mortals age at only one-third their normal rate.

93%: The gate leads to a world where most people and places would consider the characters to be freaks, monsters or aberrations. For in their world there said to be no magic nor monsters nor demons. Only there are, but they lurk in the shadows of civilization and their existence is denied by the population and covered up by its leaders. There *are* explorers and investigators in this world who have come to understand, accept and expect the **unexplainable,** and who secretly explore the realms of magic and the supernatural. Some call upon or willingly serve dark forces while others secretly fight them. Both factions will be most interested in any visitors from another world. Especially ones knowing magic. However, they will either try to recruit them for their own cause (good or evil) or destroy them as rivals or **aberrations.These** people are the characters' best hope for fitting into this world, adventuring in it, and eventually going home from it.

94-96%: *The Realm of Hades* again, for it dominates the forces of the Great Rift.

97-99%: *The Realm of Dyval* again, for it also dominates the forces of the Great Rift.

00%: Null Universe! The gate leads to a realm of total nothingness. Any inhabitants float in the blackness, like they are in space, except they can breathe. There are no **stars,** no planets, no gravity, nothing. Unless the characters can jump dimensions on their own power, they will spend the rest of their lives (i.e., until they die of thirst or starvation) drifting through this terrible dead end **of** a world.

The Edge of the Great Rift

Every faction keeps a huge amount of fighters and materiel along the edge of the Great Rift, with the greatest numbers toward the center. Small and large armed forces are all found along this supernatural line of demarcation. Being out in the open like this begs for enemies to mount some kind of attack, so small-scale skirmishes are constant on both sides of the Great Rift. That means there are constant isolated pockets of violence along the Rift. Small combat groups, elite strike teams, spies and troublemakers routinely engage in missions of spying, assassination, sabotage, theft, retribution and commando-style raids. For those with aspirations of becoming any sort of hero (and we use that term loosely) in the Minion War, the edge of the Great Rift is probably the best place to do it. Here is where small-scale tactics and individual ingenuity get a rare opportunity to shine in a large war that otherwise grinds up soldiers at a ravenous pace. This means little to the majority of the Lesser minions here, but to the Greater Demons and Deevils, and the outside adventurers who **find** themselves involved in this endless **conflict,** the unusual circumstances of the canyon's edge seem tailor made for them.

Large boulders, **buttes,** light forest and small ravines provide the bulk of the cover along the edge. Everywhere is enemy territory here, and the slightest impropriety an invitation to fight.

Note: Although control of all positions along the Great Rift and Blasted Lands constantly changes hands, generally, the Demons populate and control the south side and the Deevils the north side.

Places of Note

The Grotto is a massive bowl-like depression about ten miles (16 km) in diameter, located two miles (3.2 km) from the center of the south wall of the Great Rift. It is one of the few places where sheep and other herd animals are known to congregate in the Blasted Lands. Thanks to the carpet of lush, dense ***bloodgrass***, herd animals can thrive in the Grotto like nowhere else in this region. Bloodgrass, so named for its scarlet color and the blood-like liquid that drips out of it when its blades are broken, is a highly nutritious and prolific plant that any grazing animal can live off of with ease. As a result, grazing animals often naturally gather in the Grotto in the tens of thousands, providing any Faction groups who camp here with a ready food supply.

Every year, the herds return for mating and to give birth, and every year, the Factions go to war over the Grotto both to control the food source and to train and drill their newly recruited troops. Thanks to its close proximity to the Abyss, the Grotto is a very convenient place for large numbers of raw recruits to be brought together. Fed on a steady diet of mutton, they grow strong and are forged by their leaders into the harsh kind of foot soldier needed to fight the Minion War. Most of the time, no Faction holds on to the Grotto for more than a single year. Whoever controls the region is subject to attacks and harassment from virtually every other Faction. As a result, the place becomes a real hotbed for solo agents and small strike teams who kill key personnel, contaminate or destroy the food and water supply, conduct other acts of terror, intimidation and sabotage, and so on.

Hunger Bluff. Hunger Bluff is located near the mountains. It is a large, flat-topped rock formation connected to the Great Rift's northern edge by a thin bridge of stone. As a result, the place is like a great big peninsula of rock stretching half way across the ravine. It is accessible only by teleportation, flight, or by walking across a stone bridge.

Stone Bridges. A number of skinny land bridges made by Earth Warlocks and magic stretch *halfto all the way* across the great divide like fragile ribs of stone. The half bridges either were abandoned before completion or have been half destroyed. Both Demons and Deevils routinely destroy any land bridge that connects their side of the Great Rift to that of their enemy. A tiny handful are allowed for the sake of their minions and to lure foolish outsiders and renegades into the open. Once halfway across the 10-15 mile (16 to 24 km) bridge, they are attacked by flying infernals and hurled over the edge. These are dangerous places, for most are only a scant 100-200 feet (30.5 to 61 m) wide and completely without cover, out in the open with the bottomless abyss gaping open below. Those who fall into the Great Rift away from its walls, have no hope of falling onto a stone shelf or outcropping, and have little chance of rescue unless they are tethered to a rope line. All others fall screaming into the icy blackness for eternity.

Flat Top Bluff is a huge peninsula of stone jutting out from the southern wall of the Great Rift. Only the peninsula is not flush with the level of the Blasted Lands but down inside the Great Rift, roughly 200 feet (61 m) below the surface. It creates a sizeable "shelf or plateau on one side of the canyon wall that extend out roughly 5000 feet (1524 m) and runs 14,000 feet (4267 m) along the wall. There is no thin land bridge to cross, but a sizeable shelf where troops have established a base. Although it changes ownership regularly, it is on the south side of the ravine, so it is typically in the hands of the Demons. Long ago, unknown stone smiths built a huge zigzagging stairway that winds up and down the wall of the Great Rift so that people could enter and exit Flat Top easily. There are also a latticework of rope ladders.

The Blasted Lands

The third and largest section of the Great Rift is not in the Rift itself but is a large stretch of land extending for about 50 miles (80 km) beyond the southern wall of the Great Rift. It stretches toward the eternal forest known as the **Darkest Heart** and the realm of the undead known as the **Eternal Torment.** This region of no-man's land is known as the *Blasted Lands,* and they run from the Northern Mountains in the east to the coastline of the Sea of Despair in the west. They are the scene of the largest, bloodiest and most savage fighting in the Minion War. Here, entire armies consisting of up to 100,000 soldiers apiece clash in internecine battles that often result in the mutual destruction of all participants. At any given time, there can be found huge fields of dead and dying, the bitter harvest of the endless conflict that consumes Demon, Deevil, Minion, and anybody else who gets caught in the middle.

Grave Disturbances

Psychics and mystics can automatically tell they are within 100 miles (160 km) of the Blasted Lands because they can sense the carnage and death and feel a tingle of ambient potential psychic energy (P.P.E.) surrounding them. As anybody versed in magic knows, a living creature releases a P.P.E. surge equal to twice its normal P.P.E. at the moment of its death. Though this tends to give psychics and mystics serious misgivings about entering the Blasted Lands, there is a benefit to this horrifying region of death. Due to the sheer number of creatures that routinely meet their doom in the Blasted Lands, and from a tiny amount of P.P.E. leaking out of the Great Rift, magic energy is far higher there than in any other part of the world. This gives most psychics and mages a deep sense *offoreboding,* since to them the Great Rift feels like a domain of death (which it is). Despite the grim nature of the place, this extra P.P.E floating about has a nice upside: All creatures that enter the Blasted Lands automatically draw on the energy. All characters mortal and infernal heal twice as quickly as normal and the range and duration of magic spells is 10% greater than normal. Furthermore, practitioners of magic can draw on the mystic energy as they would a ley line, drawing upon as much as 1D6+1 points of P.P.E. per melee round! While those who can tap this extra P.P.E. appreciate it (against the hostiles of the region, that extra energy has plenty of uses), there are those who find all the energy a bit troubling. Good-aligned individuals often feel this extra energy is tantamount to "blood money" since it came to them from a hideous war that is the antithesis of life itself. Such individuals often will not use this extra energy, expending their own P.P.E. reserves as far as their ordinary limit goes, and refusing to use the energy all around them.

There is, of course, a downside to drawing on the ambient P.P.E. - all Greater Demons and Deevils will sense it and know the general area where the magic energy is being tapped and used. Being what they are, and also being attuned with the energy field of the Blasted Lands, they only pay attention to sudden and intense use of the energy and when they stop to focus, can tell if the user is mortal or infernal and may go to investigate or send a few Lessers to check it out. This is how both sides often locate newcomers and outsiders for recruitment, enslavement, or a little fun.

Fields of Battle

The Blasted Lands are a patchwork quilt of territory so ravaged by war that the entire landscape has been rendered shattered and lifeless. It is as if a great firestorm has scourged the land, searing away any vegetation, leaving behind only mud and rock. No animals dare live here, having been killed or driven off long ago. Deep craters pockmark the land, a testament to the vastly destructive magicks used here on a daily basis. Clouds of smoke often obscure vision beyond a few hundred yards/meters, and the stench of burnt flesh, open wounds and other scents of death hang heavy in the air.

Most of the Blasted Lands so closely resemble each other that it is difficult to navigate without getting lost. Any Land Navigation roll is at -10% as one becomes bewildered by the scenes of carnage everywhere, and a landscape that offers few clues as to one's direction. The constantly overcast skies manage to hide what little sunlight shines through, and weird magnetic fields render useless any primitive compass (such as a needle through a cork floating on water). Most of all, there are few steady landmarks to go by, since almost everything has been destroyed. Only by paying close attention to local topography and

the occasional ruins travelers are likely to encounter will groups remain on the right path to where they are going. Even then, the hassle of avoiding the constant Faction skirmishes and battles around them will make navigation that much more difficult.

Eventually, anybody who travels long enough in the Blasted Lands learns that while most of the region has been abused into a homogenous, burnt-out war zone, there are still several noteworthy fields of battle where huge Faction armies slaughter each other. These battlefields are the best hope for using landmarks in one's journey across the region, but one must be cautious. Because there are so many Faction members near any given major battlefield, just getting to within a day or two's march of one increases the heroes' chances of detection by a Faction patrol substantially. Under such conditions, outside travelers would do best to move along before they find themselves captured and either sent to some anonymous torture cell or shanghaied to fight in the Minion War.

Each of the major battlegrounds initially earned its grim distinction because it once was the site of something many Factions wanted to possess or control. As time and the Minion War grind on, these battle sites are now just convenient places for large armies to wage war. For varying reasons, these sites provide a better environment for large-scale war than does the muddy, lumpy, hole-infested ground that covers the rest of the region. Nearly every one of these special battlegrounds has something about it that makes fighting there a little unique. Any Faction Lord knows these quirks like the back of their hand, though their lowly subordinates rarely do, causing confusion and disquiet among many a Faction army.

There are eight major battlegrounds left in the Minion War: The *Fortress City of Gulan*Kath, *Shatterstone Heights*, the *Cinders*, the *Blasted Sands*, the *Slaughteryard*, the *Sieve*, the *Endless Morrows*, and *Suicide Stand*. Most of these are either ruins from the earlier Chaos War, or are lands with special natural (or artificial) characteristics. There used to be thirteen major battlegrounds, but after a long enough time, the constant battle took their toll on five of the fields, turning them from something unique into just another miserable plot of land where soldiers kill and die anonymous deaths by the thousand. In time, the other eight major battlegrounds will suffer the same fate, just another eight victims in a war that has killed so many, destroyed so much.

The Fortress City of Gulan Kath

This massive citadel was built shortly after the fall of the Old Ones, on the south side of the Great Rift a hundred miles (160 km) from the sea. Over the years, the fortress city of Deevils has been besieged dozens of times in which the blood of untold thousands flooded the halls and streets of the battle-worn metropolis. Though Gulan Kath has never been successfully invaded, the repeated attacks and the effect of the elements have taken their toll on the place. In its prime, the city was impregnable, but now it is a security nightmare. The outermost security wall has a diameter of nearly 20 miles (32 km) and is broken through and crumbling in many places. To repel a concerted invasion, the city's Deevil defenders and minion allies must find a way to plug up every hole or an invader *will* find a way in. Being slothful and lazy, nobody volunteers to do this work so the problem remains. This makes Gulan Kath accessible to bold adventurers.

The interior of the city is even more problematic. Centuries of bombardment and magical assault have left the majority of the city in ruins. Grand palaces, keeps, residences, fortifications and other buildings have all been broken down to some degree. In many areas, entire districts of the city consist of nothing more than fields of rubble punctuated by the occasional burnt-out shell of a building. All of this desolation provides for excellent cover to soldiers. Enemies might use it to conceal their entry into town whereas defenders might use the wreckage to set up ambushes for any hostile troops who do manage to breach the outer wall. The wreckage and jumbled street layout of Gulan Kath naturally conspire to break up any army into dozens of smaller units, each forced to survive on their own, seeking out the enemy and engaging him at point-blank range. The casualty rate for battles in this city is frightfully high, typically running at 75% or higher, thanks to the extreme ease with which ambushes and traps may be laid throughout the city.

Despite such certainty of death, the Faction Lords still enjoy fighting here because it has become something of a legend and a prize yet to be won by Demons. As noted earlier, the city has *never* fallen to the demon hordes - a point of immense pride for Dyval, and a bitter pill for the Demons to swallow. Note: Half the city is populated by Minions of Darkness and mortals allied to the Deevils. There is also a prison, wet works/intelligence department, and large slave market and labor force kept here. If an outsider, spy or unfortunate mortal is captured by Deevil forces, there is a good chance they will be brought to Gulan Kath for interrogation and disposition.

Shatterstone Heights

This place appears to be the remains of a truly humongous fortification that was destroyed long ago (presumably during the Chaos War). All that are left are two interlocking sub-regions known as the *Foundation Columns* and the *Plains of Broken Stone*. The Foundation Columns are a large field of huge square columns made of a nearly indestructible black stone jutting up from the ground at heights ranging from five feet (1.5 m) to 300 feet (91.4 m). Each of these columns measures 250 feet (76.2 m) on a side and they are perfectly flat-topped. Each foundation column is separated on all sides by 250 feet (76.2 m) before there is another column. One could walk on the ground between these columns, but the ground here is covered with huge pieces of broken rock that look like they might once have been part of foundation columns but broke off and were sundered into smaller pieces. These fields of stone are very difficult to walk on because they present such an uneven surface. Anybody walking on these rock plains will move at a mere one-quarter their usual speed, and will be at -4 to dodge and -2 to strike and parry. If this were merely a travel hazard, it would be one thing, but this is a killing ground, and on more than one occasion, troops caught in the *Plains of Broken Stones* have been murdered by enemies perched atop the Foundation Columns, raining down terrible missile and magic fire. Those caught in the Plains of Broken Stones have no cover and no mobility and hence, no real chance of getting out alive.

For reasons lost to history, the Factions have a long-standing tradition of meeting here for battle, deploying all of their soldiers to the tops of the columns. From there, they trade missile or magical attacks or more commonly, they leap or fly across the void at each other in yet another insane display of mutual

hatred. Most of the combatants end up falling off their perches during the commotion, either dying from the fall or succumbing to the slow-motion madness enveloping combatants. Fighting this way, armies tend to destroy each other with no real winner or loser.

The best way to come out on top in the Shatterstone Heights is to lure one's enemy into the Plains of Broken Stones somehow and then launching an ambush from the Foundation Columns. Since Faction Lords tend to know the hazards of the Plains of Broken Stones, they will require some pretty good incentive to enter them. A common ploy for ambushing forces is to send a sacrificial unit to attack a nearby enemy force and then run into the Plains of Broken Stones. If these suicide squads have done their job right, they will have struck the enemy so hard (either causing massive damage or killing key personnel) that their pursuers will disregard the dangers of the Plains and will follow the fugitives into them. Once the enemy is brought in, the ambush can be sprung and a one-sided slaughter ensues. However, there have been plenty of times when these attacks don't work. Sometimes the suicide squads are too slow and get overwhelmed by their pursuers (they don't call them "suicide squads" for nothing). Sometimes the ambush forces are too disorganized or too small to inflict real damage on the enemy. And sometimes, a fluke happens and the ambushed soldiers rally themselves and dislodge the ambushers from their relatively safe positions atop the Foundation Columns! After all, this is war. Strange things can and do happen.

Small groups of soldiers, especially the special forces units comprised of powerful heroes, champions and other individuals, frequently patrol this region of rock and column. Traveling lightly and quickly, and often by air or teleportation, small squads can navigate the region with ease, detecting enemy groups hiding amid the rock and eliminating them. In this fashion, the Shatterstone Heights is far more active as a huge guerrilla warfare center than a meeting pace for giant armies. Here, small-scale warfare is the real order of the day, and at any given time, there might be over *two dozen* squads of four to six soldiers stalking the region, looking for enemies to kill.

The Cinders

This is the oldest region of the so-called "Blasted Lands," and it is the site of the very first fighting of the Minion War. This once was a grand old forest filled with millennia-old trees that were themselves both sentient and psychic. A wild variety of exotic and unknown creatures lived here and though the forest was in the dreaded Land of the Damned, it was, compared to the rest of the region, a veritable paradise. That all changed when the inter-dimensional gateways of the Abyss opened up. Once large numbers of Demons and Deevils began to run into each other, war was the immediate result, and this age-old forest the primary battleground. For over a century the forest was soaked with the blood of demonic soldiers as skirmishes, ambushes and small battles raged throughout the area. Then, during the *Battle of Ten Flames,* someone or something brought forth such a mighty magical conflagration that it not only destroyed every humanoid and animal in the area, but it scorched the forest itself. What had once been a dense, green, lush woodland was now a huge expanse of soot, charcoal and scorched tree trunks. The Cinders had been born.

Faction forces still constantly fight in this region, and since there is so little cover, the fields can accommodate huge armies fairly easily. Clashes of up to half a million soldiers happen here at least a few times a year, and the death and destruction of the place has been so great for so long that psychics have noticed that the very land now radiates evil, as if contaminated by the oceans of Demon and Deevil blood that have soaked into it.

The once-great Trees of Life that covered the area are all gone now, reduced to charred stumps. It is thought that these magnificent creatures are extinct, but explorers insist that a few actually are still just barely alive, and if they could be healed somehow, they might return to their former health. Of course, given the rate of warfare in the Cinders, any Tree of Life would just be destroyed again.

The Blasted Sands

This is a small and isolated desert of fine jet black sand occasionally broken up by large obsidian rock formations. Though deserts are often considered to be devoid of life, they really are vibrant and specialized ecosystems teeming with their own weird forms of life that have developed ingenious ways of surviving the harsh climate. That is not so with the Blasted Sands; this place really does fit the desert stereotype since it has absolutely no life growing or living within it whatsoever. The Blasted Sands' regional boundaries are roughly circular, which corroborates certain legends that the area was created in an instant by the use of a magical spell similar to the Circle of Absolute Elemental Power that created the Baalgor Wastelands. Only whatever magic got used here must have been more like a nuclear blast that incinerated everything and fused the soil into this odd kind of sand. Unfortunately, there is no history of this anywhere, and no clues within the sands to say how long ago this event might have occurred. Outsiders think it happened during the Chaos War, for if any parties in the Minion War had the magical powers to create a place such as the Blasted Sands, they would have certainly used it against their enemies. Given that there are no other deserts like this in the region, it is safe to assume that whatever caused this place to be was a one-time thing, and whoever was responsible probably either killed themselves in the blast or they were later killed by parties who wanted to punish the deed and make sure it never happens again.

The Blasted Sands are always warm to the touch, but not blistering hot like one might expect. They have a constant, unwavering temperature that actually is rather comfortable for most creatures. The fine, almost powdery crystals are difficult to walk through, however, and are a major stumbling block for any armies that want to operate in the area. Anybody walking in the Blasted Sands will be at only one-third speed and -3 to dodge. Moreover, they can only walk continuously for up to three times their P.E. attribute in minutes, after which they must stop and take a rest of 1D4x10 minutes.

There is absolutely no food or water in the Blasted Sands, which as a region is roughly 50 miles (80 km) in diameter. Anybody walking straight into the desert had better bring provisions with them or they might find themselves beyond the point of no return without anything to sustain themselves. Many times, Faction armies of varying sizes have tried to march through the desert only to die *en masse* there, their bodies swallowed up by the continually shifting sands. This is another thing that makes the region inhospitable - the constantly shifting topography.

While one can keep out blowing sand by wrapping their face with a cloth, the lack of consistent landmarks makes Land Navigation difficult (-30%) and contributes to parties getting lost and dying here.

With all of these drawbacks, one might think no Faction army would operate here. But periodically, retreating Faction forces will teleport their remaining soldiers into the heart of the Blasted Sands in the hopes that their enemies will not pursue them there. Invariably, the pursuers enter the desert, and if they survive long enough to find their quarry, the two sides go to war in the sand. When it is all over, the survivors try to make a desperate dash out of the Blasted Sands, but more often than not, everybody who survives the battle is too drained to make it, and so their bodies are claimed by the dunes, too.

The Slaughteryard

This is the largest of the Blasted Lands' primary battlefields, as evidenced by the fact that there are often multiple large-scale battles going on here at the same time, but have nothing to do with each other. The Slaughteryard comprises well over half of the Blasted Lands by itself and consists of a wide, mostly flat plain pockmarked by thousands of craters of varying sizes. Time and the elements have eroded these craters so they are now smooth-sided bowls in the earth, but make no mistake: they were initially created by a terrible form of destructive energy the likes of which have not yet seen action in the Minion War. Today, most of these craters serve as large foxholes for Faction soldiers, who gather inside them and wait for an opportune moment to strike their enemy (who is usually sitting in the next foxhole over). When the moment comes, one side storms out of its crater and jumps into their enemy's, fighting a savage hand to hand battle for supremacy and survival. During large wars, this action happens dozens of times each minute, and very little fighting is actually done on the surface land between the craters. These narrow avenues threading between the craters are considered the *Fool's Road*, since only a fool would walk around up there unprotected when there is a war going on.

Life is hardly better in the craters, though. Many of them are occupied by soldiers of one Faction or another, and those that are empty have been booby trapped with conventional traps or Diabolist wards to make whoever enters them very sorry that they did. Still other craters are simply uninhabitable. They have turned into deep lakes (sometimes home to aquatic monsters of some sort, but how did they get there?) or even gateways to other worlds! These gateway craters are often called "trapdoors," since those who enter simply fall through the crater floor into another world, never to be seen again in this one.

The Sieve

This is adjacent to the Slaughteryard and in some ways is its topographical inverse. It is a large field of rolling hillocks and plateaus separated by deep grooves in the earth. These grooves are actually large trenches worn down by generations of soldiers patrolling, fighting and dying here. In most places, the trenches are between 10 feet (3 m) and 20 feet (6.1 m) deep, and the hills that surround them are so steep that getting out of the trenches is really difficult. As a result of this odd topography, two kinds of warfare dominate the Sieve. The first is a kind of never-ending King of the Hill game in which enemy units get on top of a hillock so they might observe enemy troop movements and snipe at them. Since these hilltop troops are so exposed, they take inordinate amounts of enemy sniper and magical fire, as well as concerted charges by enemy ground troops to knock them off the hill and take it for themselves. Scaling these hills under combat conditions is very hard, however; taking any kind of hit (even a successful parry) requires that one scaling the hill make a Maintain Balance roll, or they will tumble down the hill and into the surrounding trenches. Those uphill must make similar Maintain Balance rolls, but at +4.

Meanwhile, a scene of incredible trench warfare takes place below the hills. Here, in the deep and wide lanes cut into the earth, entire armies charge through, trying to overwhelm whatever enemy groups they encounter. More often, though, opposing groups deadlock and engage in point-blank warfare under the most cramped conditions. In the trenches, groups as small as four or six soldiers can successfully hold back an army of thousands simply because the larger force has nowhere to go. Unless their own group surges forward, they have nowhere to go. When large trench battles occur, the dead pile up so high that the trenches themselves fill up and the soldiers pile onto surrounding hilltops or other branches of the vast trench network that honeycombs the region.

The Endless Morrows

This is a featureless plain near the western end of the Blasted Lands, going right up to the sheer cliff coastline that marks the end of the Land of the Damned and the beginning of the Sea of Despair. Huge armies patrol and clash in this region, but their efforts are confounded by the eternal fogs that enshroud everything and everyone here. The nature of these fogs remains unknown, but they seem to be magical in nature, for no means of magical eyesight or special vision powers can penetrate the murk. The absolute maximum anyone can see here is 30 feet (9.1 m). For small groups of soldiers, this is a good thing, since they can probably stick together. They can also strike at much larger forces (provided they can find them) and fade away before their victims know what hit them. For large armies, the fogs of the Morrows can be potentially catastrophic. First off, enormous groups of soldiers usually break up and split into many smaller groups after losing sight of the rest of their comrades. Confusion typically reigns when low-ranking troops are separated from their units, lost in the fog with no clue as to how to find their units or get out of the murk. While one can hear just fine in the Morrows (a prime way for people to locate each other here), large groups of soldiers make so much noise that hearing anything specific becomes tough for anybody without special hearing powers.

Battles in the Endless Morrows are chaotic affairs where groups generally charge at each other, engage in a wild, uncoordinated melee, and hope for the best. Most often, fighting here is internecine, with each side suffering similar losses unless their leaders are tactical geniuses, or they are employing some secret weapon that negates the disadvantages of the murk. In fact, the kinds of forces deployed in the Endless Morrows often speaks to the experience of their Faction Lord. Inexperienced Lords arrogantly assume their soldiers can master the difficulties of the murk and send entire armies to canvas the area, sweeping for enemies to destroy. Wiser, more experienced Lords know that the murk of the Morrows is not to be underestimated, so they send in smaller groups of elite soldiers to harass large enemy

forces and conduct lethal strike and fade guerrilla warfare. If small groups do their job right, they can get a large army so confused that many times it will begin attacking its own members! Once that begins, there is almost no way to end it, so the smaller force of soldiers retreats, satisfied that theirs is a job well done, while their chaotic and contused enemies slaughter themselves.

Another problem with the Endless Morrows are the sheer cliffs bordering the Sea of Despair. Somehow the crashing ocean surf can be heard as far as five miles (8 km) inland, making it almost impossible to determine how close one really is to the water. With the murkiness of the Morrows making it tough for anybody to see where they are going, as long as one hears the ocean, they are in grave danger of walking right off the edge of the cliffs. Small groups of soldiers like to use this dangerous factor as an advantage, luring larger forces into the area and getting them to charge towards the water, barreling right over the cliff and to their doom. This is best done by hitting the front units of a large army and then fleeing towards the west, hoping that the larger force will follow in hot pursuit. At that point, the runners try to run out of visual contact and then bank sharply to the right or left, hiding in silence as their pursuers thunder past, oblivious that they have been given the slip. At this point, things tend to take on a life of their own, and the stampeding army (of mostly dim-witted Lesser Minions) can't stop even if they wanted to. All that separates them from going over the cliffs are whatever leaders might be at the head of the pack, who face the nearly impossible task of halting a Demon or Deevil stampede. Often times, the leaders will realize what is happening and simply abandon their troops, figuring that the foot soldiers are already lost, so better to just save themselves.

Suicide Stand

This is a large plateau on the extreme eastern end of the Blasted Lands, abutting directly against the wall of stone that is the Northern Mountains. Suicide Stand is really a part of the Northern Mountains, but since it is the site of frequent battles of the Minion War, it has become a *de facto* part of the Blasted Lands. The plateau rises straight out of the ground by about 1,000 feet (305 m) and levels off to a semicircular flat top of nearly one mile (1.6 km) in radius. Scaling the plateau is not difficult, since the rock face is craggy and has plenty of hand- and footholds, and unless there are enemy troops up top, the only thing preventing one from making the climb is their own ability.

Suicide Stand has become so named because it is often the last stop for desperate Faction armies that have been largely defeated elsewhere in the Blasted Lands and are pursued by enemies looking to complete their destruction. With nowhere else to turn, the routed forces come to this plateau and begin climbing for their lives. Typically, a full one-third of the forces climbing the plateau never make it to the top because they slip and fall in their haste. Those who successfully ascend can rally and prepare for a final defense that will determine whether they all die glorious deaths or if they might actually live to fight another day.

Once an enemy force has formed up on Suicide Stand, those who wish to attack it are faced with a bit of problem. Climbing the plateau is hard enough, but doing it with enemy soldiers attacking from above is just impossible. However, since the plateau is so huge, its edge is too large for any army to secure. Somewhere, there are bound to be places where there are not enough defenders to hold the line against climbing attackers. For Faction Lords willing to accept horrific losses, launching a massed attack against Suicide Stand is a sure-fire way to defeat whatever enemies are left on the top of the plateau. Sure, attackers might lose over half their forces on the climb, but those who do make it to the top will face a defending force stretched thin in their attempts to secure the plateau's entire rock face. By the time attackers begin gathering on top of Suicide Stand, the defenders are done for. They usually lack the time or numbers to form a massed defense of their own, and even if they did, they would have to abandon defending the rock face, ensuring that the rest of the invaders would make it to the top unmolested. Then the defenders' only option is whether to fight to the death or to commit mass suicide. Lesser Demons and Deevils often will kill themselves rather than fight a battle they can not win. Meanwhile, their leaders, many of whom possess teleportation abilities, typically abandon the place, preferring to run away and live rather than to fight and die.

Nine times out of ten, Faction armies that flee to Suicide Stand are eventually destroyed by the enemy forces pursuing them. However, there is always that one time in ten when the defenders somehow find the skill and courage to repel their attackers and score an unlikely victory. When this happens, it makes news all across the Blasted Lands and is a major propaganda coup for the winning side. Those who command such a victory are sure of promotions and privileges from their Lords in reward for their battlefield prowess. It is this outside chance of success that promotes retreating armies to even consider going to Suicide Stand. Otherwise, only the most desperate would seek refuge in a place that is sure to become their final resting place.

A Deadly Dozen

There are a total of *twelve* Factions fighting the Minion War, six Demon Factions and six Deevil Factions. Though many of the so-called Minion Races or "Minions of Darkness" also fight in the Minion War, they do not form Factions of their own, but are members of the twelve. Independent Factions are not tolerated and Demons and Deevils will unite to destroy any such third party before it can become a true force to be reckoned with. As a result, most Minions abandon any dreams of glory or conquest they might have had and focus on the task of being a grunt in a larger war that is out of their hands. Seeking to belong to a larger group (the best bet for survival in the Minion War), Minions hire themselves out or volunteer their services to the first Faction that will have them.

Perhaps more important than the precise makeup of each faction are the *Faction Lords* who run them. These Faction Lords are supreme warriors who have distinguished themselves in battle and risen to their position of power on the corpses of their rivals. They enjoy almost total autonomy to fight the Minion War however they see fit, reporting directly to their Demon or Deevil Lord. Faction Lords are the very lifeblood of their Factions. Without their leaders, most Factions will dissolve into a chaotic

rabble as jealous underlings fight amongst themselves to grab the reins of power. Meanwhile, enemy Factions typically will take advantage of the unrest to attack, destroying or dispersing a fractious Faction with ease. All this makes Faction Lords really tempting targets to those who wish to destroy an entire Faction in a single blow and spare themselves the cost and trouble of all-out warfare. As a result, though Faction Lords are powerful, they also tend to be short-lived. With so many assassins, soldiers, and killers prowling the killing fields of the Minion War, the average life span for a Faction Lord is a mere 2D4 months. Lords who make it longer than that usually are extremely lucky, extremely powerful, have some dazzling tricks up their sleeves, enjoy the rarity of having trustworthy allies, or a combination of all of the above.

Most Faction Lords are merely powerful Greater Demons or Deevils or unusually strong **infernals,** creatures of magic or beings from another world or dimension. This means, sometimes a Faction Lord is a unique creature resembling none of the "standard" known Demons or Deevils. The very few scholars who have learned of this speculate that the wild variety of **sub-species** among Demons and Deevils is proof that both of those races are actually composite races that have incorporated entire species of evil creatures over time. The theory goes that there once was a prime Demon or Deevil race and as they conquered other worlds, they incorporated other evil races, eventually making them sub-species of themselves. Should the Minion War reach some kind of resolution some day, these scholars believe that many of the Minions of Darkness will become permanent additions to the ranks of Demon- and **Deevil-kind.**

There is a conflicting *theory* that both Demons and Deevils are, in all of their different forms, singular races with many different sub-races among them. The scholars who hold to this theory believe that the races work on a form of reincarnation in which Demons or Deevils serve out their time in one of the various forms of their race (e.g., Shedim, **Alu,** Banshee, etc.) and depending on how well they performed during their life (which can be many thousands of years), the Demon or Deevil will be upgraded or downgraded in body type when he returns to life. This decision is thought to be made by the creature's superior, which explains why, as one goes higher up in the hierarchy of both races, the number of individuals shrinks almost geometrically. The creatures in powerful positions among Demon- and Deevil-kind are loath to promote any underlings in such a way that might make them one day surpass their superiors. As a result, advancement slows to a crawl in the upper ranks of both races.

According to this second theory, though, those who somehow are promoted past the ranks of Greater Demon- or **Deevilhood** end up with a unique body type with unusual and special abilities, powers and appearance. These special Demon and Deevil Lords are the most notable of their **kind,** and they occupy the second-tier slot in their racial hierarchy. They are, for all intents and purposes, minor Demon or Deevil Lords who have only to grow and increase their power. Above them are only the topmost Lords of their order, who almost never provide any further reward or help to these junior Lords (who now are considered minor rivals). The junior Lords must now advance themselves if they wish to join the ranks of the top leadership of their race. While this is possible, they must do so very carefully, lest they invoke the jealously of their superiors, who will gladly kill a junior Lord rather than be threatened by one.

While scholars debate the veracity of this "theory," it is the only one so far that can explain why Demon and Deevil Lords almost always are unique monsters who do not seem to have evolved from or been patterned after the lower Demons and Deevils. As far as most Demon Hunters are concerned, this theory is as good as any. What really matters is that these creatures are at the top of the Minion War food chain, and that makes them prime targets for any Hunter looking to make a difference in this part of the world. As for unique Minion Lords, they are assumed to be either single members of Minion Races that have entered the Minion War in small numbers, or powerful individuals from other worlds or dimensions who have come to the Palladium World in search of dark fame, glory and power.

Each of the Faction Lords below maintains a fiefdom of sorts somewhere in the Blasted Lands. Their Factions each have some kind of stronghold, but the majority of the forces remain nomadic, always moving around in search of new opponents to fight. This, and the short life expectancy of any given Faction, makes it nearly impossible to map out any Faction's territorial boundary. Further muddying the waters are the intricate relationships each of these Factions have with each other. The twelve Factions are always making and breaking treaties, non-aggression pacts, coalitions, and alliances with each other. A Faction's dearest ally one day might become their most bitter enemy the next, and back to dear ally on the following day. There is just no way to accurately predict with any certainty who will be fighting who on any given day of the Minion War. The average truce or alliance between Factions lasts 3D4 weeks. That's it. Factions rarely hold longer than that because the Factions themselves get destroyed or something entices a Faction to break their arrangement and attack their former partner. When Factions are not destroying each other, they either are plotting to do so or have allied with their enemies for the time being so they don't have to worry about one enemy while dealing with another. The end result of all this is that at any given time, any one of the Twelve Factions could be at war with or allied to any other Faction. The only exception to this is that Demon and Deevil Factions are unlikely to ally with each other (their antagonism, after all, is the chief driving force behind the Minion War), but it is not impossible for the occasional alliance or secret pact to exist between Demon and Deevil. Since the Demon and Devil Factions war amongst themselves so much, many of these Factions often take the attitude of "an enemy of my enemy is a friend," and as such, can rationalize making temporary friends with "the other side." Alliances of this type are especially shaky, however, and rarely last for more than 1D4 days. But, in the hyper-turbulent conflict of the Minion War, sometimes that is all the time it takes to destroy an entire Faction or prevent a coalition of Factions from forming or scoring a critical victory.

G.M.s, feel free to take these Factions and throw them together however you see fit. If the Minion War works better for your campaign with every Faction out for themselves, go for it. If you would rather see a number of multi-Faction alliances **duking** it out, **that's** great too. In the Minion War, just about any configuration of diplomacy is possible, so don't hold back.

The six Demon Faction Lords include ***Highlord Kaldwin***, *Baron Veer, Lord* ***Mahder***, the *Mighty* ***Carabondra***, *Lord* ***Gruble***, and *Dame Lilissa.*

The six Deevil Faction Lords include *Lord Thrope, Prince Advogan, Duke Slurgish, Dame Yveldt, Lady Shade* and the *Bloodletter*.

Demon Faction Lords

Highlord Kaldwin

Highlord Kaldwin is a unique Demon appearing as a giant blue-skinned centaur with long, twisting horns sprouting from his high forehead. He has a mane of dark blue hair, completely black eyes, and a leering grin that most find distinctly unsettling. Kaldwin rules his forces with vicious abandon, clearly playing favorites to pit his lieutenants against each other, leaving them too distracted to overthrow him.

Kaldwin's Faction consists of nearly 100,000 troops, most of whom are raw recruits from Hades. This spells trouble for Kaldwin, whose abrasive and martinet attitude has earned him plenty of enemies among the other Factions and even from his own troops. He currently is considering abandoning his Faction altogether and living out the rest of his days in some human city in the Western Empire or something like that.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q.: 19, M.E.: 21, M.A.: 21, P.S.: 36 (supernatural), P.P.: 25, P.E.: 30, P.B.: 15, Spd: 120.

Hit Points: 190

S.D.C.: 150

Natural A.R.: 14

Horror Factor: 14

Height: Highlord Kaldwin is 10 feet (3 m) tall and 12 feet (3.6 m) long.

Weight: 1,250 lbs (562.5 kg).

Age: 999

P.P.E.: 86

I.S.P.: 300

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Concealment (71%), Detect Concealment and Traps (89%), Basic Mathematics (98%), Pick Locks (95%), Prowl (98%), Track Humanoids (85%), Literate in Elven, Dwarven, Wolfen, and all Human tongues (98%), Intelligence (71%), Sniper, Streetwise (61%), Use & Recognize Poison, Interrogation Techniques (70%), Military Etiquette (85%), and Recognize Weapon Quality (75%).

Equivalent Level of Experience: 9th level.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 300 feet (91.4 m), can see up to three miles (4.8 km) during normal daylight conditions, turn invisible at will, see the invisible, immune to poison and acid, bio-regenerates 4D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per melee round, can leap 100 feet (30.5 m) from a standing start and twice that from a running start, dimensional teleport (84%), magically knows all spoken languages.

Attacks Per Melee: Seven physical or psionic attacks per melee.

Damage: Restrained punch: 2D6. Full-strength punch: 6D6. Power punch (counts as two attacks) or kick with rear legs (counts as one attack, but opponent must be behind Kaldwin): 2D4xlO.

Bonuses: +4 on initiative. +8 to strike and parry. +10 to dodge. +4 to pull punch. +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +6 to save vs psionic attack, +7 to save vs insanity, +12 to save vs magic, +3 to all other saving throws and +30% to save vs coma/death.

Psionics: All Sensitive, Healing and Physical psionic abilities, plus the following Super Psionics: Bio-Manipulation (10), Catatonic Strike (40), Electrokinesis (varies), Hydrokinesis (varies), Induce Nightmare (15), Mental Illusion (20), Mind Block Auto-Defense (special), and Pyrokinesis (varies).

Magic: None.

Weapons: Highlord Kaldwin wields a variety of weapons, all of which he has plundered from the bodies of fallen adversaries. Oddly, none of them were Demons, Deevils or members of Minion Races. They were all meddlesome outsiders who sought adventure and glory by interfering in the Minion War. All they got for their troubles was an early grave.

Lightdimmer is Highlord Kaldwin's prized runic morning star. The weapon has all common runic abilities as well as all spell magic levels 1-3. The weapon inflicts 1D6x10 damage per strike, and on a critical hit, the victim must save vs magic or be stunned for 1D4 melee rounds. When stunned, the victim can only move or defend, all combat bonuses are cut in half, and the victim loses one attack/action per melee. Kaldwin refers to this as "ringing the bell," and often remarks jubilantly about it whenever it happens in combat. Kaldwin is a natural braggart, and loves to talk trash to his opponents, especially when he is beating them.

Dreamkiller is Kaldwin's magical short bow. This device is strung so tightly that only creatures with supernatural strength can even pull it, much less fire the thing. The extraordinary velocity at which arrows are fired from this magically indestructible device inflicts a whopping 5D6 damage per hit, and has a range of 4000 feet (1219 m). With his extraordinary eyesight to guide him, Dreamkiller is lethal in Highlord Kaldwin's hands, striking down an opponent before the individual knows where the attack is coming from.

Headsplitter and **Heartcutter** are Kaldwin's twin hand axes. Each inflicts 4D6 damage per strike, but they can be used as paired weapons and return when thrown. Both are magically indestructible and enable their user to Read Aura at will. Throwing range is 200 feet (61 m).

Armor: Highlord Kaldwin wears a suit of magical plate mail (A.R. 18, S.D.C. 450) that was just recently acquired. The armor does not regenerate S.D.C., but since it is so durable, it will be a while before Kaldwin begins to worry about it falling apart on him.

Magic Items: Highlord Kaldwin wears a set of magical horseshoes that enable him to run silently (+20% to Prowl) and to move across water, quicksand, mud, and other surfaces that could normally not support his weight. For the purposes of running across such surfaces, his horseshoes make him as if light as a feather.

Other Equipment: Kaldwin owns an ancient key ring with 99 ornate keys, all carved from pure silver or jade. He does not know what the keys unlock.

Baron Veer

Baron Veer is a unique Demon. He appears as a large and well-muscled humanoid, almost what a Goblin might look like if they were transformed from their sniveling little selves into a powerhouse of superhuman strength and fortitude. Baron Veer has dark purple skin and a mane of wild, wiry hair. His eyes are saucer-like and unblinking and his mouth bristles with huge fangs. Veer often is in a crouching position, as if he is a feral creature ready to spring at a moment's notice.

Veer's Faction consists of nearly a quarter-million troops, and is growing larger by the week. Veer is marshaling his forces for a single, massed attack upon one of the weaker Factions so he might drive it from the Great Rift and add its defeated Faction leader's skull to his collection.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q.: 19, M.E.: 20, M.A.: 21, P.S.: 45 (supernatural), P.P.: 22, P.E.: 23, P.B.: 8, Spd: 44.

Hit Points: 99

S.D.C.: 111

Natural A.R.: 13

Horror Factor: 13

Height: Six feet (1.8 m).

Weight: 225 lbs (101 kg).

Age: 1,234

P.P.E.: 222

I.S.P.: 111

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Basic Mathematics (88%), Prowl (90%, Wilderness Survival (76%), Swim (85%), Track Humanoids (88%), Intelligence (65%), and Interrogation Techniques (78%).

Equivalent Level of Experience: 8th level.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 200 feet (61 m), keen day vision, track by smell (66%), and superior hearing (can not be surprised).

Adhesion: Insect-like sticky pads on Baron Veer's hands and feet enable him to climb and scale walls effortlessly (98%), as well as maintain his grip on just about anything without fail (+6 to save against accidentally dropping objects or having them knocked from his hands; +5 to maintain balance). Using these adhesive pads, he can move up walls and across ceilings at full speed, even on smooth or slick surfaces. Veer uses this ability all the time to stage ambushes on his victims.

Natural Combat Ability: Baron Veer possesses an inborn knack for killing and as such, excels at melee combat. He may use *any* melee weapon and receive a bonus of +3 to strike and parry. He also has the equivalent of W.P. Paired Weapons (all). In addition, he can naturally parry and dodge incoming missile attacks without the usual -10 penalty.

Rage: Baron Veer is constantly teetering on the edge of a Mindless Aggression attack. During combat, he will be fine for the first 1D4 melee rounds, but after that, he will snap and go postal. In his enraged state, he is immune to Horror Factor, feels no pain, and will fight until he is dead. He has no sense of self-preservation and will not break off combat even when it is going against him. He also has no ability to distinguish between friend or foe, so he will lash out at everybody within eyeshot equally. (His troops know to give their lord *plenty* of room when going into battle.)

Attacks Per Melee: Nine physical attacks per melee!

Damage: Restrained punch or kick: 2D6. Full-strength punch or kick: 1D6x10. Power punch or kick: 2D6xlO (counts as two attacks). Leap attack (uses all attacks for the melee round): 3D6xlO!

Bonuses: +5 on initiative, +8 to strike, parry and dodge. +5 to pull punch. +5 to roll with punch/fall/impact. +8 to save vs poison and magic. +3 to save vs psionic attack, insanity and illusion. +16% to save vs coma/death. +2 to all other saves.

Psionics: None.

Magic: None. Baron Veer is one of the very few Demon Lords to have no magic ability whatsoever. He gets by entirely on his physical abilities, though many believe this will only get him so far. Eventually he will encounter a foe with serious magic ability who will make mincemeat of this warrior.

Weapons: Baron Veer fought *without* weapons for his entire career before encountering a powerful (but juvenile) dragon last year. Apparently the dragon grossly overestimated its own powers and entered the Minion War expecting all sides to cease fighting and pay homage to him. Baron Veer promptly engaged the dragon and slew it within minutes, finishing the creature off by gouging its eyes out and thrusting his fingers into its brain. Veer's soldiers set to butchering the creature and within a day they had the entire body carved up and sent to various parts of the Blasted Lands to announce Baron Veer's victory.

Dragon Bone War Clubs: As for Veer, he kept both forearms' bones from the dragon, using them as a pair of war clubs. In Veer's hands, the weapons each add another 3D6 points of damage to his standard punching damage. They are effectively indestructible, and he uses them as Paired

Weapons all the time, bludgeoning his enemies to pulp before they ever know what hit them. Veer has become quite attached to his war clubs (which have taken on a slight orange tinge from all the blood that has soaked into them) and will stop at nothing to retrieve them if lost or stolen. Likewise, if Veer is slain, those who loot his war clubs will be marked as the ones who killed Baron Veer, and Demons who were once friends of the departed Baron will immediately attack those who bear his prized possessions. Likewise, Veer's numerous enemies (Demon and Deevil alike) will heap praise upon anybody sighted with the clubs, since any enemy of their enemy is considered a friend (at least for the moment).

Armor: None. Baron Veer goes into combat virtually naked, wearing just a ragged loincloth.

Magic Items: None.

Other Equipment: None.

Lord Mahder

This *Baal-Rog* has been a "rising star" in Hades for quite some time. Specializing in creating all sorts of havoc on the Palladium World, Mahder was promoted to Faction commander and sent to the Minion War to prove his worth as a large-scale commander. He has no training or skills for this kind of job, so he has no clue if he will succeed or not. Mahder is very close to just abandoning the 75,000 or so troops he has and fighting this Minion War himself, his own way. Otherwise, he will just leave to go somewhere else in the world, doing things on his terms.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q.: 18, M.E.: 18, M.A.: 20, P.S.: 39 (supernatural), P.P.: 21, P.E.: 40, P.B.: 8, Spd: 60 (running); 120 (flying).

Hit Points: 160.

S.D.C.: 80

Natural A.R.: 14

Horror Factor: 14

Height: 12 feet (3.6 m).

Weight: 2,000 lbs (900 kg).

Age: 4,444

P.P.E.: 400

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Basic and Advanced Math (92%), Literate in Elven, Dwarven and Gobblely (98%), Forgery (45%), Intelligence (88%), Track Humans (50%), Wilderness Survival (70%), Land Navigation (80%), Swim (60%), Climb (80%/70%), Dance (80%), Streetwise (80%), Demon and Monster Lore (98%), Faerie Lore (80%), W.P. Chain, W.P. Whip, and W.P. Sword.

Equivalent Level of Experience: 8th level.

Natural Abilities: Fly, nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m); can see in total darkness), see the invisible, turn invisible, track by smell (45%), dimensional teleport (74%), bio-regenerates 4D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per minute (every four melee rounds), impervious to fire (including magic fire), can magically speak and understand all languages, and can leap 50 feet (15.2 m) without assistance from wings.

Attacks Per Melee: Six physical attacks per melee or three by magic. Favorite weapon is the magic Fire Whip.

Damage: Lord Mahder, like all Demons, has supernatural P.S. Restrained punch: 2D6. Full-strength punch: 6D6. Power punch: 1D6x10 (counts as two attacks).

The following are all in addition to whatever damage his Supernatural P.S. inflicts. Clawed hands: 2D6, kick: 3D6, bite: 1D6. Rarely uses weapons, preferring to rely on natural abilities and magic.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +6 to strike, parry and dodge. +4 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, +3 on magic saving throws, +12 to save vs Horror Factor. +2 to save vs psionic attack and insanity. +8 to save vs magic and poison. +30% to save vs coma/death.

Psionics: None.

Magic: All Fire Elemental magic, levels 1-4, plus Fire Whip (level 7). Also has the following Wizard spells at 5th level proficiency: Animate and Control Dead, Turn Dead, Exorcism, Remove Curse, Heal Wounds.

Weapons: None; prefers to use natural abilities, especially the Fire Whip.

Armor: None. Though Lord Mahder desires to accumulate many suits of magic armor as trophies, he would never actually wear them. He relies entirely on his thick hide for protection, and enters combat wearing nothing more than a loincloth.

Magic Items: None, but Lord Mahder covets any and all magic items he can get his clawed hands on. As a recent addition to the Minion War, he has not yet had the time to accumulate a considerable pile of plunder.

Other Equipment: None.

The Mighty Carabondra

This creature is one of the few *Demon Locusts* not directly accountable to Lord Modeus, who otherwise keeps a tight leash on these creatures for use as his personal army of enforcers. Carabondra actually won her freedom from Modeus when she single-handedly slew an entire contingent of greater Deevils on a world far across the Megaverse from the Palladium World. Though the deed made her a hero, the Demon Locust cared not for the approval of her master, and when she was granted her freedom, the first thing she did was publicly insult her former master, Modeus. Not one to take such conduct lightly, Modeus has Carabondra magically bonded to the Palladium World so she can never leave it unless she personally slays 9,999 Deevils within the scope of the Minion War.

As a result, the Demon Locust has grudgingly joined this conflict, and commands an army of some 100,000 fellow Demons, who are fanatically loyal and will follow their commander's every order, no matter how bizarre or self-destructive it might appear. These troops earnestly believe their leader will not let them come to harm, and so they follow her commands to the letter without sparing a moment's thought on them.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q.: 28, M.E.: 28, M.A.: 22, P.S.: 48 (supernatural), P.P.: 28, P.E.: 28, P.B.: 6, Spd: 70 (running); 230 (flying).

Hit Points: 80

S.D.C.: 120

Natural A.R.: 16

Horror Factor: 16

Size: 12 feet (3.6 m) long.

Weight: 700 lbs (315 kg).

Age: 6,393

P.P.E.: 900

I.S.P.: 56

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Basic and Advanced Math (98%), Literate in Elven and all Human languages (98%),

Forgery (98%), Intelligence (98%), Land Navigation (98%), Swim (84%), Climb (94%/84%), Streetwise (98%), Demon and Monster Lore (98%), Faerie Lore (98%, and Magic Lore (98%).

Equivalent Level of Experience: 9th level

Natural Abilities: Winged flight, nightvision 200 feet (61 m), see the invisible, turn invisible, track by smell (45%), dimensional teleport (54%), bio-regenerates 6D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per minute (every four melee rounds), impervious to fire (including magic fire), magically knows all spoken languages, can leap 80 feet (24.4 m) without assistance from wings.

Attacks Per Melee: Seven physical attacks or three by magic.

Damage: Restrained punch: 2D6. Full-strength punch: 1D6x10. Power punch (counts as two attacks) or kick (counts as one attack): 2D6xlO. Bite: 2D6.

Scorpion Tail Sting: inflicts 6D6 damage. Even supernatural beings and creatures of magic must roll to save versus poison (14 or higher). A failed roll means the character has fallen victim to the poison, and is paralyzed for 2D6 melees and suffers an additional 6D6 damage.

Bonuses: +4 on initiative, +9 to strike, +7 to parry, +11 to dodge, +1 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, and impervious to Horror Factor. +7 to save vs psionic attack, +11 to save vs insanity. +7 to save vs magic and poison, +26% to save vs coma/death and +5 on all saving throws.

Psionics: All Sensitive powers at fifth level proficiency.

Magic: All level one spell magic plus the following, all at 8th level proficiency: Call Lightning, Fire Ball, Fire Bolt, Negate Magic, Dispel Magic Barriers, Fly as the Eagle, Animate/Control Dead, Turn Dead, Remove Curse, Exorcism, Curse: Phobia, Luck Curse, Spoil, Sickness, Earthquake, Id Barrier, and Sanctum.

Weapons: None. Uses only natural abilities.

Armor: None. Uses only natural abilities.

Magic Items and Other Equipment: The Mighty Carabondra does not collect mortal trinkets, even impressive magic items or hoards of wealth. In fact, she despises such trifling matters and compulsively destroys any treasure piles she might capture from her enemies. As far as she is concerned, too many participants in the Minion War are interested in lining their pockets rather than winning the war.

Lord Gruble

Lord Gruble is a unique Demon who appears as a normal human except he has the head of a giant housefly! He comes off as a very refined and cultured individual, speaking with a noble accent and inflection. His manners and dress are impeccable, marred only by his frequent habit of rubbing his hands together and grooming his head. That, and he regurgitates digestive enzymes on his food and then slurps it up when eating. For reasons he can not understand, this seems to ruin the appetites of anybody dining with him.

Gruble's Faction of a paltry 54,000 troops is on the verge of total collapse, thanks to a series of disastrous offensives he carried out. His soldiers are deserting in droves, and at least two other Factions are closing in, fast. Gruble himself seems oblivious to all of this, and merely sees his recent troubles as a mere hiccup in his strategy. To him, everything will work out fine on its own, if given enough time. Too bad for this dreamer that he is fighting the Minion War, where such sentiments are tantamount to a death sentence. The way Gruble is headed, he will be dead within a month and his soldiers destroyed or scattered to the wind.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q.: 30, M.E.: 30, M.A.: 20, P.S.: 20 (supernatural), P.P.: 15, P.E.: 20, P.B.: 8 (pretty good considering the fly head), Spd: 25.

Hit Points: 121

S.D.C.: 76

Natural A.R.: 14

Horror Factor: 16

Height: Six feet (1.8 m) tall.

Weight: 210 lbs (94.5 kg).

Age: 2,001

P.P.E.: 500

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Demon and Monster Lore (88%), Magic Lore (88%), Faerie Lore (88%), History *(all* subjects; 76%), Wilderness Survival (66%), Land Navigation (66%), Swim (66%), Prowl (50%), Climb/Scale Walls (50%).

Equivalent Level of Experience: 8th level.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 1,000 feet (305 m), see the invisible, see aura, see in magical darkness, impossible to surprise (thanks to his huge, multi-faceted eyes), impervious to disease, resistant to fire and cold (half damage; magical fire and cold do full damage). Bio-regenerates 4D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per melee round, can leap 200 feet (61 m) in any direction, magically knows and is literate in all languages.

Attacks Per Melee: Five physical attacks per melee or three by magic (preferred).

Damage: Restrained punch: 1D6. Full strength punch: 2D6. Power punch: 4D6 (counts as two attacks).

Spit Acid: Lord Gruble eats like a fly by vomiting highly corrosive digestive enzymes on his food, letting it break down, and then slurping up the liquefied remains. If pressed to it, Gruble will use this as a defensive measure too. He can vomit acid out to 10 feet (3 m) and is +3 to strike when doing so. Upon initial contact, the acid will inflict 5D6 damage. Unless the acid is washed off by milk (water won't work) or some other base, the acid will keep burning until it has neutralized. Each melee round, the damage inflicted by the acid burn reduces by 1D6, so the second round burns for 4D6, the third round 3D6, the fourth round 2D6, the fifth round 1D6, the sixth round it does no damage; acid is no longer potent. While the acid is burning its victim, a nauseating smoke will come off the wound that will make all who smell it (including the victim) want to retch. Those who smell the smoke must save vs poison (12 or higher) per melee round of exposure, or they will double over and vomit until the smoke is cleared away. While sick, the victims will be at -1 attacks per melee round, all combat bonuses are in half, and all skills are performed at -25%.

Bonuses: +3 to initiative. +2 to strike, parry and dodge. +3 to save vs magic and poison. +2 to all other saves. +10% to save vs coma and death.

Psionics: None.

Magic: Lord Gruble knows *all* Water and Air Warlock magic at 8th level proficiency.

Weapons: None. Lord Gruble relies entirely on his magic ability and on rare occasions, his natural abilities.

Armor: None. Armor is so ... *unfashionable.*

Magic Items: None as of yet. Gruble has only recently entered the Minion War and prior to his deployment in the Blasted Lands was forced to give up his vast hoard of treasure to the Demon Lords of Hades for some infraction he cares not to discuss. All the Demon Lords will say on the matter is that "if he had kept his hands and mouth to himself, he would never have gotten into trouble."

Other Equipment: None.

Dame Lilissa

This sinister and wily ***Raksasha*** has been having the time of her life in the Minion War. The endless deal making and breaking among the Factions is like a huge game to her, and she enjoys little more than betraying a supposed ally right when they need her the most. She has proven to be a predatory Faction Lord, springing upon other Factions, striking at their leadership, and then absorbing all of the ground troops into her organization. At present, her faction has swollen to 400,000 troops, which is absolutely enormous by Faction War standards. Dame Lilissa is working on some kind of mass action so she can send many of her troops into suicide charges before the other Faction Lords view her Faction's size as reason enough to gang up on her.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q.: 22, M.E.: 21, M.A.: 21, P.S.: 29 (supernatural), P.P.: 21, P.E.: 27, P.B.: 18, Spd: 60.

Hit Points: 87

S.D.C.: 120

Natural A.R.: 10

Horror Factor: 14

Height: Seven feet (2.1 m).

Weight: 300 lbs (135 kg).

Age: 2,543

P.P.E.: 800

I.S.P.: 310

Equivalent O.C.C.: Wizard.

Equivalent Level of Experience: 10th level.

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Literacy in Elven, Dwarven and Wolfen (98%), Magic Lore (98%), Demon and Monster Lore (98%), Basic and Advanced Mathematics (98%), Card Shark (75%), Concealment (71%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors (76%), Palming (81%), Pick Locks (91%), Pick Pockets (86%), Prowl (86%), Streetwise (71%), Use & Recognize Poison (75%/67%), Ventriloquism (67%), W.P. Sword.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 120 feet (36.6 m), keen normal vision, see the invisible, turn into mist at will, track by smell (45%), bio-regenerates 4D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per minute (every four melee rounds), teleport self and up to 300 lbs (135 kg) at will up to five miles (8 km) away (98%), dimensional teleport (83%), resistant to fire and cold (magic fire and cold do half damage), and magically knows all spoken languages.

Metamorph at Will: Dame Lilissa's most frightening power is the ability to change at will into the shape of virtually any living creature no smaller than one foot (0.3 m) and no larger than 10 feet (3 m). She can also use this power to disguise herself to look exactly like a specific individual, a gift she has frequently used to infiltrate enemy camps and assassinate other Faction Lords.

Shape-Changing Disguise Skill: 95% if the person is being mimicked in their presence. 82% if Dame Lilissa is very familiar with the subject or is working from a drawing or painting of him/her. 40% if working from memory and/or with little personal knowledge of the subject. Voice imitation is another power that is used in conjunction with disguise. 94% if Dame Lilissa is very familiar with the subject. 30% if working from memory and/or with little knowledge of the subject.

Note: Dame Lilissa's disguise abilities are enhanced by her psionic powers of Total Recall and Alter Aura. If she has met and studied her subject, including having seen or studied his/her aura, she can alter her own to make the disguise nearly perfect. In addition, Lilissa can tweak her disguise at any time to make it appear more accurate.

Attacks Per Melee: Six physical or psionic attacks per melee or two by magic.

Damage: Restrained punch: 2D6. Full-strength punch: 4D6. Power punch: 1D4x10 (counts as two attacks).

In addition to the Supernatural P.S. damage listed above, Lilissa inflicts 1D6 per claw strike and 1D6 on bite attacks.

Bonuses: +4 on initiative. +7 to strike, parry and dodge. +4 to pull punch. +4 to roll with impact. +10 to save vs Horror Factor. +10 to save vs magic and poison. +7 to save vs insanity. +6 to save vs psionics. +4 on all other saving throws. +25% to save vs coma/death.

Psionics: Lilissa possesses all Sensitive, Healing and Physical psionic powers. She also has the following Super Psionic Powers: Psi-Sword, Psi-Shield, P.P.E. Shield, Mind Block

Auto-Defense, Mentally Possess Others, Hypnotic Suggestion, Catatonic Strike, Cause Insanity, Insert Memory, and Telekinetic Force Field.

Magic: All metamorphosis, protection and illusory spell magic, plus the following spells: Fool's Gold, Heavy Breathing, Charismatic Aura, Multiple Image, Horrific Illusion, Apparition, Hallucination, Anti-Magic Cloud, Protection Circle: Lesser, Protection Circle: Superior, Banish, Exorcism, Sanctum, Sanctuary, Create Magic Scroll, Remove Curse, Healing Touch, Armor of Ithan, Charm, Escape, Shadow Meld, Swim as the Fish, and Magic Net.

Weapons: Favorite weapons include the *Psi-Sword* and *Psi-Shield*. Lilissa, like all Raksasha, loves sword weapons in general and is in the process of collecting as many magical swords as possible. (She has not yet acquired any but is working on a plan that will win her over a dozen weapons at once, including the legendary rune sword *Vorascis*, which reportedly has the power to split opponents souls in two without ever touching them.) Otherwise, she likes to use her psionics or magic powers before resorting to ordinary weaponry.

Armor: Lilissa wears a beautifully crafted suit of magical plate mail (A.R. 17, S.D.C. 300) that magically regenerates lost S.D.C. at a rate of 3D6 per hour. The armor is weightless, noiseless, and while it is worn, the user does not require food or drink. This has done little to mollify Lilissa's love (and constant cravings) for raw humanoid flesh and blood, which she consumes for pleasure more than for nourishment.

Magic Items: Lilissa is obsessed with magic crystals and stones. Her collection currently consists of the following items, which she keeps on or near her person at all times: Six Chasers, a Crystal Ball (her prize possession!), a Crystal of Light (actually, it's the centerpiece of a beautiful necklace she wears that in jewelry value alone is worth over 100,000 gold), a Gem of Reality, and a Gem of Direction. She also owns three Demon Guardian Stones, which she uses to guard her whenever she is in repose or is otherwise distracted.

Other Equipment: None, though she would like to be done with this annoying Minion War so she can travel the Megaverse and add to her burgeoning treasure collection.

Deevil Faction Lords

Lord Thrope

Perhaps the longest-lived *Arch-Fiend* on the battlefields of the Minion War, Lord Thrope has actually commanded two other Factions before this one. Each time he gains command of a Faction, he inevitably enjoys a little too much success with it and a coalition of enemies emerges to destroy everything he has built. Thrope has a knack for escaping tough situations alive, so he never falls with his Faction, but that is only a matter of time, he thinks. He remains convinced that the Faction of 150,000 troops he now commands will be his last commission and that soon he will endure the attack that shall destroy him forever. Only this time, Thrope has decided not to flee the destruction of his Faction. Whatever happens, he is tired of running and living to fight another day. He shall stay with his Faction regardless of the circumstances and is prepared to go down swinging. This is a real attitude shift for this creature, long known for his selfish, freewheeling attitude. But in recent weeks, he has turned grim and fatalistic; perhaps he really *does* know that his death is coming soon...

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q.: 22, M.E.: 20, M.A.: 28, P.S.: 26 (supernatural), P.P.: 24, P.E.: 28, P.B.: 18, Spd: 32

Hit Points: 64

S.D.C.: 74

Natural A.R.: 14

Horror Factor: 15

Height: 15 feet (4.6 m).

Weight: 1,000 lbs (450 kg).

Age: 985; a comparative stripling to other Deevils of his stature.

P.P.E.: 160

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Streetwise (74%), Intelligence (83%), Land Navigation (83%), Track Humans (83%), Escape Artist (85%), Pick Locks (85%), Palming (75%), Concealment (68%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors (65%), Demon and Monster Lore (98%), Basic Math (98%), Prowl (75%), Climb (95%/90%), Literate in Elven, Dwarven and Gobblely (98%).

Equivalent Level of Experience: 7th level.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), see the invisible, metamorphosis at will (human and animal), dimensional teleport (84%), resistant to fire and cold (half damage),

bio-regenerates 4D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per minute (every four melee rounds), magically knows all spoken languages.

Attacks Per Melee: Five physical attacks per melee or two by magic.

Damage: Restrained punch: 2D6. Full-strength punch: 4D6. Power punch: 1D4x10 (counts as two attacks).

Bonuses: +3 in initiative, +9 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge, +5 to pull punch, +3 to roll with impact, +9 on all magic saving throws, +7 to save vs poison, +3 to save vs psionics and insanity, +10 to save vs Horror Factor. +26% to save vs coma/death.

Psionics: None.

Magic: All level one spell magic plus the following spells: Chameleon, Shadow Meld, Multiple Image, Fear, Escape, Mystic Portal, Magic Net, Circle of Flame, Fire Ball, Fiery Touch, Repel Animals, Turn Dead, Animate and Control Dead, Exorcism, Banishment, and Heal Wounds.

Weapons: Lord Thrope commands an impressive magical arsenal, which he likes to keep on or about his person at all times. His weaponry includes:

Koronomus: This magic spear inflicts 5D6 per strike, plus double damage to any Demon or Deevil. It is magically indestructible, and when thrown, has a range of one mile (1.6 m). The spear also adds one attack per melee and grants Thrope the ability to cast Multiple Image at will.

The Ivory Sword: Carved from a single piece of ivory and beautifully carved along the handle and blood groove, this long sword inflicts 1D4x10 per strike, is magically indestructible, and renders the user immune to poison. Also, when wielding this weapon, the user can not accidentally drop it or have it knocked from his grasp.

Attack of the Swarming Lords: This is a collection of a dozen tiny throwing knives that all resemble long spikes with leather-wrapped handles. Though each knife inflicts only 2D6 per attack, Thrope can command them to all attack at once in a single volley, inflicting terrible damage. The knives return when thrown, if thrown one at a time. If hurled in their massive volley, they do *not* return, and must be retrieved, whether or not they hit their target. Since their throwing range is one mile (1.6 km), the user had better be sure he will hit his target when throwing in a volley, or restrict the attack to indoors or in front of some kind of backstop. Otherwise, he will find himself searching the countryside for his lost knives when they miss their mark.

Armor: Lord Thrope wears two armor items, his enchanted suit of plate and chain, *Sorus*, and his specially crafted *Robes of Iron.*

Sorus: Thrope wears an ancient suit of Elven plate and chain named *Sorus* that was used by a number of champions during the Elf-Dwarf War. While its provides wonderful protection (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 250), and renders the wearer immune to fire and cold (even magical fire and cold), its prime feature is that no weapon of Dwarven manufacture can harm either the armor or its wearer. *All* Dwarven-made weapons, conventional, magical, runic and otherwise, simply can *not* harm this armor or its wearer. As a result, the Elven champions who wore it during the Elf-Dwarf War were often killed with captured Elven weapons, were poisoned, or slain by magic.

Robes of Iron: On top of Sorus, Thrope wears the standard long, all-covering hooded robes of the Arch-Fiend. Only his have been enchanted to provide extra protection. The Robes of Iron have an A.R. of 12, 150 S.D.C. and act as an extra layer of armor in addition to the protection provided by Sorus, Thrope's suit of armor. Incoming attack rolls of 12 or lower will harm only the Robes of Iron. Incoming attack rolls between 13 and 15 will bypass the Robes of Iron but will damage Sorus. Incoming attack rolls of 16 or higher go through both the Robes of Iron and Sorus and will harm Lord Thrope directly.

Magic Items: None other than his weapons and armor.
Other Equipment: None.

Prince Advogan

Prince Advogan is a unique Deevil, appearing much like a normal human except for one critical distinction: his head is separated from his body! Advogan usually carries his head in one hand, moving it around like a lantern so he can see things. In combat, he hurls his head like a vicious weapon, which returns to his grasp once it has finished its deadly business. He commands a relatively new army of close to 200,000 troops, nearly half of which are Minion Warriors he has personally shanghaied from various inter-dimensional gateways in the Abyss of the Great Rift. Advogan believes that the Minions make better warriors than Demons or Deevils and that someday they will all unite, create a third major infernal race, and not only take over the Great Rift, but will begin waging war upon Hades and Dyval. Should such a thing happen, Advogan is more than ready to abandon his homeland of Dyval and to fight for this emergent new nation of evildoers.

Alignment: Aberrant.
Attributes: I.Q.: 24, M.E.: 24, M.A.: 24, P.S.: 48 (supernatural), P.P.: 24, P.E.: 48, P.B.: 24, Spd: 48 (running); 96 (flying speed of his head).
Hit Points: 101
S.D.C.: 55
Natural A.R.: 12
Horror Factor: 15
Height: Six feet, three inches (1.9 m).
Weight: 220 lbs (99 kg).
Age: 1,000
P.P.E.: 250
Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Literacy in Elven, Gobblely and all Human tongues (98%), Land Navigation (90%), Wilderness Survival (88%), Public Speaking (88%), Sing (76%), Dance (76%), Streetwise (80%), Use & Recognize Poison (76%), Demon and Monster Lore (98%), Religious Lore (98%).
Equivalent Level of Experience: 10th level.
Natural Abilities: Nightvision 500 feet (152.5 m), see the invisible, turn invisible, sense magic 100 feet (30.5 m), teleport self and up to 300 lbs (135 kg) up to five miles (8 km) away (76%), dimensional teleport (66%), magically knows all spoken languages.

Detached Head: Perhaps Prince Advogan's most noteworthy and startling characteristic is that his head is permanently detached form his body! Advogan carries his head around by the hair, holding it up like a lantern in order to see things. Advogan does this mostly for dramatic effect, since he can

see things just fine even if his head's eyes are closed or the head is in a bag or otherwise separated from the body. When his head is detached, an unearthly blue-white glow emanates from his eyes and mouth.

Advogan's head has the same number of Hit Points and S.D.C. as Advogan's body, and if one kills either the head or the body, then the other half will follow suit and die also. For Advogan, the primary utility for his detached head, other than to shock people (hence his high Horror Factor), is as a weapon (see below) and spying tool. When Prince Advogan likes, he can set his head back on his neck and keep it there for up to 24 hours so that he might pass among mortal society without raising any eyebrows. After 24 hours, though, the head must come off (it gets way too uncomfortable to keep it on any longer than that) and Advogan and his head must remain apart for at least 1D6 hours before he can put it back on again. Advogan uses this ability so he can enter the Western Empire and mix with its upper crust. He routinely gets himself invited to the parties and social events of the most powerful nobility, where he mingles with the powers behind the power in the Empire. There, he slowly reveals his true nature to these mortals, gradually encouraging them to devote their souls to the religion of Dyval. Those who oppose him, he kills (but only if he can get away with it).

Prince Advogan usually has no troubles maintaining his mortal image when among ordinary folk, but his head does have a fondness for buxom young lasses, and on more than one occasion, a passing maiden turned the Deevil's head (literally!) to such a degree that it detached and went floating after the young girl while the body stayed behind. Much to the surrounding people's horror, Advogan had to retrieve his head and escape the scene before a mob formed and destroyed him.

Attacks Per Melee: Six physical attacks per melee or two by magic.

Damage: Restrained punch: 2D6. Full-strength punch: 1D6x10. Power punch: 2D6x10 (counts as two attacks).

Head Attacks: Advogan can hurl his head like a missile weapon out to 500 feet (152.5 m). It returns when thrown, and when it reaches its target the head may strike as a blunt missile for 2D6 plus P.S. bonus (used most often for getting an opponent's attention or knocking weapons from their hands), it may bite for 3D6 (no P.S. bonus), or it may use a variety of magical weapons, hovering in place for up to a full minute (four melee rounds) before returning to Advogan's hand. When floating in place, Advogan's head can breathe fire for 1D4x10 out to a range of 100 feet (30.5 m) with a 76% chance of igniting combustibles. Advogan's head floats/flies on its own, and he often will hurl it to send it on brief spying or reconnaissance missions (such as getting a better vantage point to view one's enemies during battle).

Bonuses: +33 to damage, +4 on initiative. +8 to strike, parry and dodge. +4 to pull punch. +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact. +12 to save vs magic and poison. +3 to save vs psionics. +2 to all other saves, +30% to save vs coma/death.

Psionics: None

Magic: Prince Advogan can cast all spell magic levels 1-3 plus the following spells: Blind, Multiple Image, Trance, Charm, Domination, Eyes of Thoth, Memory Bank, Time Slip, and Words of Truth.

Weapons: In addition to fighting with his head, Prince Advogan also uses a wicked magic long sword named *Alairian*. *Alairian* is an enchanted long sword Prince Advogan had specially constructed for himself during one of his recreational jaunts to the Western Empire. The weapon is indestructible and constructed out of a strange sort of jet black metal alloy. It inflicts 6D6 per strike (in addition to his supernatural P.S. damage) and inflicts a critical strike on a roll to hit of 15 or higher. If somebody else were to gain this weapon, it would lower their target number for a critical hit by 3. Thus, a character who scores a critical hit on a Natural 20 would, when wielding Alairian, score a critical hit when rolling a Natural 17 or higher to strike.

Armor: Prince Advogan wears a suit of enchanted scale mail (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 350) that is completely immune to the effects of fire, electricity, cold and acid. It also makes its wearer immune to Horror Factor.

Magic Items: Prince Advogan wears an enchanted set of bracers (armguards) that add +3 to strike. Were an ordinary mortal to wear them, these bracers would also grant the wearer Supernatural strength (their P.S. attribute would remain the same, but it would become Supernatural).

Other Equipment: Prince Advogan usually rides a magnificent war horse (Hit Points 50, S.D.C. 40, three attacks per melee, kick for 3D6, +3 to strike and parry, +4 to dodge) into battle.

Duke Slurgish

The infamous Duke Slurgish is one of the most well-known *Horrors* ever to set clawed foot on the Palladium World. Even for a Horror, Slurgish looks bizarre and disturbing, his upper body covered with grotesque, unblinking eyes that constantly ooze a gooey, yellow cream from where the tear ducts would be. Over the years, Slurgish has managed to make hundreds of enemies on both sides of the Minion War, but none of them have been able to kill him yet. In large part, this is because Duke Slurgish is a master manipulator who has an uncanny knack for turning his worst enemies into temporary allies, thereby defusing any assassination attempt he might be facing.

Slurgish's army of 100,000 knows their lord has too many enemies for his own good and that he plans on doing something with his army that will probably a) ensure Slurgish's continued survival and b) condemn most of his soldiers to a quick death. Though Slurgish is an adept political survivor, he has little knack for battlefield planning and execution, and his foot soldiers almost always end up paying the price for it.

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q.: 19, M.E.: 24, M.A.: 9, P.S.: 50 (supernatural), P.P.: 24 , P.E.: 40, P.B.: 4, Spd: 64.

Hit Points: 100

S.D.C.: 44

Natural A.R.: 16

Horror Factor: 17

Height: 20 feet (6.1 m) tall.

Weight: 2,000 lbs (900 kg).

Age: 1,919

P.P.E.: 360

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Streetwise (55%), Intelligence (74%), Land Navigation (79%), Track Humans (90%), Recognize Weapon Quality (75%), Military Etiquette (80%), Demon and Monster Lore (80%), Basic Math (98%), Climb (95%), Swim (85%), Literate in Elven, Dwarven and Gobblely (98%).

Equivalent Level of Experience: 6th level.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 120 feet (36.6 m), see the invisible, turn invisible at will, keen vision plus its many eyes make it impossible to blind or attack from behind/by surprise. Can leap 100 feet (30.5 m), dimensional teleport (88%), impervious to poison, impervious to normal fire and cold (magic fire and cold do half damage), bio-regenerates 4D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per melee round, magically knows all spoken languages.

Attacks Per Melee: Five physical attacks or two by magic.

Damage: Restrained punch: 5D6. Full-strength punch: 1D6x10. Power punch: 2D6xlO (counts as two attacks). Plus, the bite of Lord Slurgish inflicts an additional +1D6 and his claws inflict an additional +2D6 damage.

Bonuses: +5 on initiative. +8 to strike, parry and dodge. +6 to pull punch. +2 to roll with impact. +11 on all magic saving throws. +8 to save vs poison. +12 to save vs Horror Factor. +30% to save vs coma/death.

Psionics: None.

Magic: All level one Air Elemental magic plus the following spells: Call Lightning, Turn Dead, Exorcism, Banishment, and Heal Wounds.

Weapons: None.

Armor: None.

Magic Items: None, per se. Slurgish has a strange obsession with swallowing magic rings, however, and his stomach is thought to contain over 30 of them, including, among others, the Rune Rings *Vybold the Unjust, Megallon the Meddler,* and the *Integral Loop.*

Other Equipment: None.

Dame Yveldt

Dame Yveldt is a unique Deevil who at first glance appears like an ordinary but very beautiful human woman. However, there are a few characteristics (one in particular) that give her away as something more than mortal. First off, her eyes are an odd shade of pale blue and have an eerie, unnerving quality to them. One look from her sends shivers up the spine of even the toughest warrior. Only creatures of darkness possess such a sinister presence. Secondly, her voice, when she talks, has a slight reverberation to it, so everything she says immediately echoes back a half second later. She does not seem to notice this, but anybody she talks to will pick up on it at once. Third, and most importantly, Dame Yveldt constantly and unconsciously metamorphs from one beautiful woman to another. Her face and body are constantly in a state of metamorphosis such that anybody who studies her for more than a minute will notice the slow and steady changes going on. This, more than anything, makes it impossible for her to mingle with mortal society, for she is constantly identified as a Changeling, or as the Deevil that she is, and run out of town. As a result, she has grown angry and bitter with all mortals, but especially humans. She longs for the Minion War to come to and end so she can begin exacting terrible vengeance on the humans who have made her life difficult so many times in the past. In the meantime, she expertly commands her force of about 125,000 troops in a variety of engagements throughout the Minion War's battlefields.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q.: 30, M.E.: 30, M.A.: 30, P.S.: 30 (supernatural), P.P.: 30, P.E.: 30, P.B.: 30, Spd: 30.

Hit Points: 60 S.D.C.: 60

Natural A.R.: 12

Horror Factor: 14

Height: Six feet (1.8 m).

Weight: 160 lbs (72 kg).

Age: She refuses to tell anybody, insisting that asking a lady her age is a) impolite and b) grounds for having one's eyes and tongue puled out and devoured.

P.P.E.: 333

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Literate in all languages (98%), Basic Mathematics (98%), Climbing (80/70%), Demon and Monster Lore (98%), Land Navigation (80%). play Musical Instrument (Lute) (88%), Swim (76%), Wilderness Survival (76%).

Equivalent Level of Experience: 8th level.

Natural Abilities: Although Dame Yveldt is in a constant state of shape change, she does not command any kind of voluntary metamorphosis or shape-changing abilities. Nightvision 300 feet (91.4 m), see the invisible, turn invisible, detect metamorphosis/shape change, see aura, magically knows all spoken languages.

Attacks Per Melee: Six physical attacks or three by magic.

Damage: Restrained punch: 2D6. Full-strength punch: 4D6. Power punch: 1D4x10 (counts as two attacks). Dame Yveldt rarely resorts to barehanded attacks and if pressed into melee combat, will use one of her beloved magical weapons, below.

Bonuses: +5 on initiative, +8 to strike, parry and dodge. +7 to pull punch. +6 to roll with punch/fall/impact. +8 to save vs magic and poison. +8 to save vs psionic attack. +13 to save vs insanity. +7 to save vs illusions. +3 to all other saves.

Psionics: None.

Magic: Like her appearance, Dame Yveldt's magical abilities are in a constant state of flux. Her abilities remain the same for 4D6+6 days at a time, after which they change overnight. At any given time, she has control over *one* of the following sets of abilities:

Earth Warlock Magic: All spells, levels 1-7.

Water Warlock Magic: All spells, levels 1-7.

Fire Warlock Magic: All spells, levels 1-7.

Air Warlock Magic: All spells, levels 1-7.

Wizard Spell Magic: All spells, levels 1-6.

Diabolism: Knows all runes and wards, including a dozen or so that are unknown to the Diabolist community of this world. (G.M.s, have fun deciding what these mystery wards might be!)

Summoning: Knows all circles, including circles of power.

Exotic Magic: Dame Yveldt commands knowledge of one of the lesser known schools of magic, such as Conjuring, Life Force Wizardry, Shadow Magic, etc. Her powers are at 7th level proficiency.

Weapons: Dame Yveldt carries with her an assortment of flaming weapons, including a magnificent flaming sword (1D4x10 damage), a flaming ball and chain (1D4x10 damage), a flaming short sword (6D6 damage), and three flaming knives (3D6 damage each; return when thrown).

Armor: Dame Yveldt wears a suit of magic chain mail (A.R. 15) so fine it hugs her body like a silvery second skin. This mail is indestructible, so any hits upon it simply do no damage, bouncing off harmlessly. The suit will expand to fit any normal-sized humanoid (Giants and small folk like Dwarves and Gnomes can not wear the suit).

Magic Items: Dame Yveldt likes to fly around on a magic carpet she recently liberated from the treasure vault of a rival Deevil field commander. She insists her forces had nothing to do with the surprise raid on her rival's encampment. That her rival was found dead with numerous burn marks all over his body is a mere coincidence that makes it *look* like Dame Yveldt might have used her flaming weapons, but she maintains her rival's death is just a fortunate coincidence for her. Sure, Yveldt. We all believe you.

Other Equipment: None.

Lady Shade

Lady Shade is a unique Deevil who appears as a ghoulish human female with pale, drawn skin, sunken eyes, dark glistening teeth, and a head full of long, red, ropy hair that falls down over her face. She is completely disheveled in appearance, and the perpetually crazed look in her eyes is a fair warning to all who encounter her that this Deevil is stonecold crazy. Bonkers. Nutso. Out to Lunch. Bananas. Damaged Goods. Not playing with a full deck.

Being one of Lady Shade's 85,000 Faction soldiers is never an easy task, especially when their commander goes on insane rampages, ordering the deaths of nearly everyone around here.

Alignment: Diabolic. If there was one step beyond this, she'd be it. As such, Diabolic will have to do, but it really does not quite describe the depth of this monster's utter depravity and contempt for all life.

Attributes: I.Q.: 25, M.E.: 29, M.A.: 30, P.S.: 33 (supernatural), P.P.: 28, P.E.: 31, P.B.: 3, Spd: 55.

Hit Points: 111

S.D.C.: 123

Natural A.R.: 13

Horror Factor: 17

Height: Seven feet (2.1 m).

Weight: 190 lbs (85.5 kg).

Age: 856

P.P.E.: 24

I.S.P.: 299

Insanities: Lady Shade suffers from several "rotating" insanities, which means at any given time, her mental illnesses could be totally different from what they were a few days before. Roll three insanities at random to start, and re-roll each insanity every 3D4 days. Times when more than one of her insanities switch over are particularly rough on this tormented villainess.

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Demon and Monster Lore (88%), Magic Lore (88%), Faerie Lore (88%), History *(all* subjects; 76%), Wilderness Survival (66%), Land Navigation (66%), Swim (66%), Prowl (50%), and Climb/Scale Walls (50%).

Equivalent Level of Experience: 8th level.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 400 feet (121.9 m), keen hearing (impossible to surprise), track by smell (66%), leap 100 feet (30.5 m) in any direction from a standing start and twice that distance from a running start, immune to disease and poison, resistant to fire, cold and electricity (magic fire, cold and electricity do half damage). She can also perform a spell-like ability equivalent to the Shadow Meld spell at will and at no cost to her P.P.E. or I.S.P.

Attacks Per Melee: Seven physical or psionic attacks per melee.

Damage: Restrained punch: 2D6. Full-strength punch: 5D6. Power punch: 1D6x10 (counts as two attacks).

Retractable Forearm Blades: Lady Shade has a pair of long, bony blade-like claws housed in the flesh of her forearms. These blades can be extended at will and used in combat like built-in swords. When fighting with these, she enjoys the benefits of W.P. Paired Weapons. Each strike with these blades inflicts 5D6 in addition to her Supernatural P.S. damage.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +11 to strike (+13 to strike with forearm blades). +12 to parry and dodge. +4 to pull punch and roll with punch/fall/impact. +8 to save vs magic and poison. +12 to save vs insanity (Ironic, since she's so wacko). +7 to save vs psionic attack. +28% to save vs coma/death.

Psionics: All Sensitive, Healing and Physical psionic abilities, plus the following Super Psionics: Bio-Manipulation (10), Cause Insanity (30), Empathic Transmission (6), Group Mind Block (22), Induce Nightmare (15), Insert Memory (25), Mentally Possess Others (30), Mind Bolt (varies), Mind Bond (10), and Mind Wipe (special).

Magic: None.

Weapons: None, since she prefers to rely on her natural weapons and psionic abilities. If Lady Shade found a powerful or

noteworthy magic weapon, she might consider carrying it around as a trophy.

Armor: Lady Shade wears a tattered suit of Leather of Iron (A.R. 15) that has been enchanted to be indestructible. The suit-was enchanted when it only had about 30 S.D.C. left, so it is in a terrible state of disrepair. If the full-body suit had been enchanted in good condition, its A.R. would be more like 17. As it stands, this armor is a disgrace and hangs off Lady Shade in ragged strips. While it looks terrible, this is exactly how she likes it.

Magic Items: None.

Other Equipment: Lady Shade has an extensive collection of the skulls of her fallen opponents. She frequently enjoys Object Reading the skulls to relive these victims' last moments.

The Bloodletter

The sinister Beast known as the ***Bloodletter*** has a just reputation as a vicious killer without peer. A tactical genius with an eye for striking at the perfect time, the Bloodletter's entrance to the Minion War a few years ago has upset the balance of power in such a way that things still have not entirely sorted themselves out. To date, the Bloodletter and his Faction of some 250,000 soldiers (and growing ever larger each day as the group swallows up deserters and prisoners from other factions) are directly responsible for the utter destruction of four different Factions, and he has played an integral part in the severe weakening of another two Factions. All in all, the Bloodletter and his crew are perhaps the most dangerous single entity on the battlefields of the Minion War, something not lost on every other Faction Lord. They all agree that the Bloodletter is dangerous and he could, if not contained, eventually break out and take over every other Faction in the war. He must be stopped, and stopped now, so goes the thought.

The Bloodletter suspects there is a large plot against him, but he does not know its specifics, or who is part of it. As a result, fear and paranoia are beginning to crack his calm, composed exterior. Under such stress, the Bloodletter is becoming more prone to taking foolish risks in a fight just to prove that he can take it. It is only a matter of time before his enemies exploit his foolhardiness and kill him.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q.: 22, M.E.: 20, M.A.: 22, P.S.: 44, P.P.: 24, P.E.: 40, P.B.: 16, Spd: 32 (running); 120 (flying).

Hit Points: 120

S.D.C.: 67

Natural A.R.: 15

Horror Factor: 15

Height: 16 feet (4.9 m) tall.

Weight: 2,000 lbs (900 kg).

Age: 3,210

P.P.E.: 360

Equivalent O.C.C. Skills of Note: Dance (88%), Heraldry (78%/83%), Land Navigation (76%), Literate in Elven, Dwarven and Gobblely (98%), Military Etiquette (93%), Basic Mathematics (98%), Interrogation Techniques (63%), Surveillance (68%), Detect Ambush (73%), Detect Concealment & Traps (68%), W.P. Lance, W.P. Sword, W.P. Chain, and W.P. Shield.

Equivalent Level of Experience: 7th level.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 120 feet (36.6 m), see the invisible, metamorphosis at will (humanoid or bull), dimensional teleport (84%), resistant to fire and cold (half damage), bio-regenerates 4D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per melee round, magically knows all spoken languages.

Attacks Per Melee: Five physical attacks per melee or two by magic.

Damage: Restrained punch: 2D6. Full-strength punch: 1D6x10. Power punch: 2D6x10 (counts as two attacks).

Bonuses: +2 on initiative. +4 to strike. +2 to parry and dodge. +6 to pull punch. +4 to roll with impact. +3 on all magic saving throws. +10 to save vs Horror Factor.

Psionics: None.

Magic: All spell magic, levels 1-3 plus the following spells: Domination, Multiple Image, Magic Net, Circle of Flame, Fire Ball, Energy Disruption, Call Lightning, Turn Dead, Animate and Control Dead, Exorcism, Banishment, Heal Wounds.

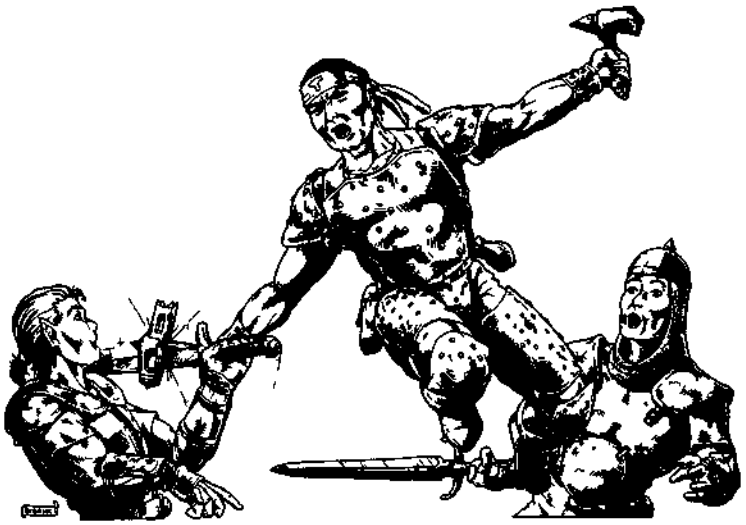
Weapons: The Bloodletter used to use weapons of every kind but nowadays prefers to use his natural abilities. He might use discarded weapons found on the battlefield, but unless a device has noteworthy powers, he will not keep it. He once owned a mighty runic flamberge named *Palmorghenna* that inflicted 1D6x10 per strike, could consume up to nine souls a day, and knew all spell magic levels 1-4, but the weapon was lost during the *Battle of Sundered Heads* when the Bloodletter was struck from behind and killed. However, shortly afterward his untimely death, the Bloodletter came to again, only his sword was missing and in place of it, he had his unusual ring of immortality on his finger (details below). The Bloodletter knows not who revived him or who gave him the ring or took his sword. While he is thankful for the ring, he suspects whoever gave it to him took his sword, so he would like very much to retrieve it. He suspects whoever owns the weapon is probably still somewhere in the Blasted Lands using it. If that is the case, it is only a matter of time before the Bloodletter catches up to him and reclaims what he feels is rightfully his. Of course, if Palmorghenna can not be found during the course of the Minion War, the Bloodletter will eventually leave this war behind and roam the world in search for his favorite weapon. There is no length to which this monster will not go to retrieve Palmorghenna.

Armor: The Bloodletter never wears armor for any reason, not even when masquerading as a human. This is largely due to the protective magicks of the special ring he wears, as described below.

Magic Items: The Bloodletter wears a magical ring of white gold with a large ruby as the main stone. This ring confers agelessness upon the wearer as well as the inability to be killed unless one's head is removed. Should the Bloodletter fall in battle, he will bio-regenerate at his usual pace until reaching positive Hit Points again, at which point, he will get up, dust himself off and resume activity. No save vs coma or death need be made while wearing the ring. Mortals without bio-regeneration who wear the ring will heal at their normal rate if slain, and when they return to positive Hit Points they will come back to life. This ring magically grafts to the finger of whoever wears it and will only come off if the wearer is permanently slain (bye-bye, head) or if the ring finger is am-

putated (bye-bye piano career). The **Bloodletter** will not say where he obtained this most precious treasure, except that its former owner "will trouble the ranks of the sinister no more." Rumors amid the other Faction Lords is that the ring was once the property of the famous (infamous to Demons and Deevils) Demon Hunter ***Kavelin*** *Broadside,* who was last seen slaughtering hundreds of lesser Deevils in the Blasted Lands during the *Battle of Sundered Heads,* three years ago. It was shortly after that battle that the Bloodletter rose to power, with (presumably) Broadside's ring on his finger.

Other Equipment: None.



Avenues of Adventure

The following are a bunch of adventure ideas suitable for the Northern Mountains. Just a little something to get a few nights of adventures rolling. Don't forget to use the multitude of rumors and history presented at the beginning of this book as springboards for adventures. The *Northern Hinterlands*™ ***sourcebook*** also presents a number of ideas for adventure and a host of strange beasts that would fit nicely into adventures for this part of the world, especially at the onset of a campaign in the mountains.

Hook, Line & Sinkers™

The Hook, Line & Sinker™ is a bare-bones adventure format in which only the essential ingredients of an adventure are provided. It is then left to the **G.M.** to make the adventure as big and important as he likes. **HL&S's** are great for crafting a quick, one-shot adventure, or they can be expanded or strung together to form the basis for a long-term campaign. Best of all, their brevity allows for you, the G.M., to tailor-fit these adventures to the precise feel and direction of your player characters and their ongoing game.

The Hook is the current situation or location of the adventuring party.

The Line is an opportunity for adventure that presents itself to the party. Think of this as the "bait" or enticement for the party to enter the adventure.

And finally, the **Sinker** is the clincher to the Line. The Sinker presents the party with a dilemma or development that makes the situation a true adventure.

These are just a few examples of the kinds of scenarios that are to be found in this part of the world. G.M.s, hopefully after reading these you will be familiar enough with this to try designing some of your own. Good luck, and enjoy!

HLS were originally conceived and created by Jolly Blackburn.

Head Them Off...Now!

Hook: The heroes stumble upon a surprisingly large hidden village in the Northern Mountain Lowlands. Known as *Brogan's Hollow,* the village is home to some 350+ people, representing nearly every race commonly found in the Land of the Damned.

Line: What the heroes ***don't*** know is that a large horde of barbarians, the *Fist* ***of Quendle,*** have been looking for **Brogan's** Hollow for some time so they might loot it and enslave the people living there. Having sighted the adventurers, Fist of Quendle scouts have shadowed them to Brogan's Hollow, and now realize they have hit **paydirt.** The scouts are on their way back to tell the rest of their fellows that their long search for the village is over.

Sinker: Needless to say, the people of Brogan's Hollow are unhappy about this when they learn of it. The town elder, a mysterious Elf named *Master* ***Tukenzımen,*** informs each of the player characters that they had better stop those scouts if they know what's best for them. Master Tukenzimen then looks deep into each character's eyes and says something about them that only the character thought he knew, his **mother's** favorite color, the first time he remembered being sad, the name of his first dog, things like that. This is to let the heroes know that Tukenzimen and his fellow villagers are not without powers of their own, and that they mean business. Whether they could fight off the barbarians is up for debate, but whether they could track down the heroes and exact vengeance on them is not. Better get moving, people! Those barbarian scouts have a head start!

A Rocky Invitation

Hook: A massive rock slide occurs about a mile (1.6 km) ahead of the characters' current position in the Northern Mountain Lowlands. The deafening crash of stone is hard to miss, especially as it rumbles through the Lowland valleys like thunder. Knowing that rock slides do not often occur in this part of the Lowlands (at least, not as far as they can tell), the heroes double-time it to the scene of the rock slide to see what happened.

Line: This was no ordinary rock slide! A large secret cavern was exposed by the slide, revealing the entry way to a magnificent city of both Dwarven *and* Kobold construction! This is most odd, since those races do not get along with each other. What could have made them work together on something so grandiose as an underground city? And what made them cover it up with a mountain side of stone?

Sinker: To get all the answers, the heroes will have to get some lanterns and plumb the dark depths of this remarkable undercity. But perhaps a hint of what waits to be discovered can be gleaned from the following passage engraved into the crossbeam of the huge marble archway leading into the city:

Follow not your dreams of greed or tired flights of fancy,
For they shall gain you nothing 'cept broken hopes, we fear.
Rather try to wonder
Of the worthiest of plunder
That one might find when fighting off the erosion of the years.

The Gift That Keeps on Giving

Hook: As the heroes ascend into the Northern Mountain Midlands, they come across a cliff side seemingly chiseled into the shape of a vast system of terraces. Only this is no work of engineers, this is an example of the mysterious *Artifex Effect,* a phenomenon in which natural forces create things that look like they could only have been built by the hand of humanoids, such as stairwells, towers, obelisks, and so on.

Line: As the heroes ascend this enormous terrace, they find the *real* treasure of the area, an entire town on the terrace's top level. And you guessed it — it too has been crafted by the Artifex Effect. Any Earth Warlock in the party will be able to tell immediately that the Artifex Effect is at play here. Otherwise, the heroes will learn of this when they enter the village and find in its center a large stone pool filled with water that, when approached, will shimmer and show the face of a wizened old Dwarf who will look at the characters as if gazing through a window. He will introduce him as *Mundle Greegmunder*, a scholar, engineer, and expert on the Artifex Effect. He will not say where exactly he is, only that he is alive and well and keeps tabs on this place through this unusual scrying pool that was put here long ago by the original inhabitants of this village.

Sinker: Mundle informs the heroes that aside from the Artifex Effect, this place also has another secret; it is the site of an insidious magical plague that affects anybody who enters the town (oops...that means the heroes!) who does not save vs magic. Each character will have a penalty of -3 to save. Those affected will immediately suffer from a single random curse, and will suffer an additional curse each month thereafter. The effects of these curses are permanent, Mundle laments, but there is supposedly a cure. That is the good news. The bad news is that he does not exactly know what the cure is, only that it lies somewhere atop Mount Kideon, the highest mountain in the world, and one that has never been successfully scaled by mortals...

Should the characters undertake an assault upon Mount Kideon, they might want to figure out exactly who this Mundle character is and how he came to be this Artifex Effect village's watcher. Could it be that there is more to this Mundle character than he lets on? And could it also be that he is the same Mundle Greegmunder who, during the Time of a Thousand Magicks, became one of the greatest authorities on magic in the Dwarven Empire (though he himself never actually learned how to use magic of any kind)?

It Just Gets Stranger

Hook: High in the Northern Mountain Midlands, a terrific shearstorm comes out of nowhere and blasts the entire party off the rocky path which they were walking on, and out into the open air! At first, it seems that the heroes will all plunge to their deaths, but after a few seconds, they spy a lonely Midlands outcropping fast approaching. The outcropping is like a huge stone column standing freely off of a mountainside, almost resembling a stalagmite from a cave, only its pointy tip has been broken off. The shearstorm carries the heroes to the outcropping and then runs out of steam, letting them all gently land on the top of the outcropping. The heroes have just experienced a most rare occurrence — riding out a shearstorm and living to tell of it!

Line: The heroes' celebration might be short-lived. For this is not just any outcropping. This is an extremely *old* outcropping, and the base of it is made of 'rotten' stone that is very cracked and unstable. The outcropping has been on the verge of toppling for decades, and the sudden weight of the heroes has pushed the stone's limit to the breaking point. Immediately, the outcropping begins to sway and shudder as a chain reaction of cracks works its way up its length. Within 1D4 minutes, the entire outcropping will collapse, and the heroes will fall hard indeed when their landing spot turns into a great big falling rock pile.

Sinker: There is no clear way off the rock face except for a small stone building, almost like a crypt, that stands in the center of the outcropping. The crypt appears sealed, but if the characters can open it up somehow, they will find a treasure trove of handy items (both magical and otherwise) secreted inside, including a large Flying Carpet capable of holding four people, a Broom of Flying and five coils of magical rope & grappling hooks. When the hook is thrown, it will magically adhere to any surface, and when the rope is uncoiled, it will play out infinitely, giving the characters the ability to rappel down to the ground safely. These will come in handy for climbing the Northern Mountains, huh? Too bad the heroes will have to defeat the zombified knight who was stored in the crypt and will want his stolen property back! Even if the heroes manage to elude the zombie knight and get off the crumbling outcropping, the monster will magically know where the heroes are at all times, and it will never stop coming after them, even if takes the creature a hundred years to catch them. **Note:** If at some point the heroes return ALL of the knight's property to him, he will go back to his grave and leave them alone.

Fighting the Good Fight

Hook: As the heroes reach the uppermost reaches of the Northern Mountain Midlands, they hear a curious howling. No, it is not the wind, it is an actual creature howling, sad and lonely. As the heroes keep climbing, they find on a rocky ledge a single Sundog, howling as loud as it can. When the heroes approach, the creature starts, having been surprised. It instinctively teleports to another ledge a few yards/meters away and eyes the heroes suspiciously. After a moment, it realizes that the characters are all right and asks them who they are, and what their purpose is traveling in a war zone. Don't they know they could get hurt traveling through a place like this?

Line: Huh? What? A war zone? What the heck is going on? It turns out the Sundog is just part of a group of good-aligned creatures, including some Dying Races, some adventurers from outside the land of the Damned, a smattering of demon hunters and Crusaders, and even a few repentant Demons and Deevils looking to make up for all the evil they have done. All told, the group numbers about twenty self-styled 'Soldiers of Light,' and they are conducting their own brand of warfare against the forces of evil throughout the Northern Mountains. The Sundog is the group's scout and was signaling to his fellows that this part of the Midlands is clean of hostile folk and that they could encamp here for the night. Naturally, the heroes don't have a problem with this...right?

Sinker: As the rest of the Soldiers of Light convene on the site, they take a particular interest in the heroes. If the player characters are of at least moderate level and power (3rd to 7th level) and are clearly crusaders for goodness, then the Soldiers of Light *might* just offer them a position in their ranks. All they would have to do is prove themselves. Whether the heroes are interested or not, they will get their chance soon enough, for that night, a virtual army of Shadow Stalkers descends on the area, attacking the Soldiers of Light as well as the player characters! The player characters could leave if they want to, but if they leave these other heroes behind, well, let's just say that it would not speak well for them. If the heroes stand and fight well against these shadow creatures, their admittance in the Soldiers of Light is virtually assured. And why exactly would anybody *want* to be in the Soldiers of Light? Aside from a great chance to wage war on evil in all of its forms, the Soldiers of Light have the direct backing of the royal family of the Island Kingdom of Bizantium, and whenever they return to those isles for reprovisioning, they basically have a blank check for whatever they need. Plus, after serving in the Soldiers for five years, the King of Bizantium awards any retiring soldier with a lifelong pension of 5,000 gold a year. Not bad for doing the right thing, eh?

The Safe Place

Hook: We find our heroes just entering the Death Zone on Mount Kideon, the highest mountain in the world. No mortal has ever successfully reached the peak, and we are about to see if our heroes will become the first to do so. All they have to do is make it the next few thousand feet, if only the weather would hold out. But luck is not with the player characters and from a few miles/kilometers out, they can see it coming: a storm so intense that it looks like the wrath of the gods themselves. The heroes have already gone past the point of no return — there is no way they can descend to a safe place before this storm hits. Their only chance (outside of some tricky magical solution they might have) is to strap down and ride out the winds. Hopefully, they won't freeze to death or get blown off the rock, but one never can tell.

Line: The storm hits like a sledgehammer. Any hero not tied to the rock face somehow (like driving a climbing spike into the rock and tethering themselves to it) *will be* blown off the mountain and into the air, never to be seen again. Likewise, any hero who is not impervious to the effects of normal cold will freeze to death within an hour, since right before the storm hits, the temperature on the mountain drops even lower than it usually is. The raging winds make it cold enough to freeze one's exposed flesh in just a few seconds. This is bad. The worst the heroes are likely to encounter or endure in their trek over the mountains. As the weather grinds on, the heroes begin to wonder if climbing Mount Kideon was such a good idea after all. In fact, it looks like this might be the end for them. Only...

Sinker: As quickly as the weather started, it stops! Just cleared away, like if one were to wake up from a bad dream. In fact, to the heroes, that is what it seems has happened, in a way. They are no longer on Mount Kideon. They are in a beautiful valley, where the sun is shining, the air is still, and the temperature is blissfully warm and comforting. For a moment, the heroes are grateful to be alive, and joyous to be in such a wonderful place. Only...where the heck are they? And how did they get here? As they look around, they can see no end to the flat horizon all around them. There are no clouds in the sky, and no animals to be found! There are only the skeletons of other climbers, still wearing their gear, but their bodies have been reduced to clean, dry, white bones. In fact, every few yards, there is another group of bodies who must be all of the other climbers who never made it off Kideon alive! The heroes could loot the bodies to find something of value (they are pretty likely to, actually), but their thoughts will be occupied with something a little more pressing: how do they get out of here? G.M.s, we invite you to determine the nature of the odd place the heroes are in, what its purpose might be, why the heroes have gone there, and how they might get out. Feel free to make this a real head trip of an adventure, or maybe just a nefarious plot by some evil creature to snatch up climbers and whisk them to a pocket dimension where it can kill and devour them. The choice is yours, as is the decision of whether the heroes should (assuming they get out of this weird place) exit back on to Mount Kideon or to some other randomly determined place in the Land of the Damned. After all, this odd mechanism might be the very reason nobody ever makes it to the top of the mountain.

The Silent Speak

Hook: In the middle of the highlands of any one of the Great Peaks, the heroes come across a lone *Vorloc*, sitting in a rocky ledge, its body locked up, absolutely still. Vorlocs do this as way of retreating from the world and to dwell on their race's conversion into their monstrous armored selves. Vorlocs do not know what they were originally, only what the Old Ones crafted them into, and that is something most of these creatures can not bear. Such thoughts are what roll through the heroes' heads when they first see this Vorloc. Then they see another, and another, and another. And soon, they realize there must be over

150 of these creatures all congregated in this one place, high above the world, where few people would ever come to bother them.

Line: One by one, the Vorlocs stir from their motionless reverie and approach the heroes. Are they angry with them for having disturbed their thoughts? Do they see the heroes as possibly violent intruders? Are these creatures simply willing to eject anybody who comes to their part of the mountains? Or do they have something else in mind? As the Vorlocs slowly move to encircle the party, the heroes will have all sorts of anxious thoughts running through their heads. The Vorlocs are an especially alien race that people know very little about. Most folk fear them outright because of their strange armored body frame, and their single, bulbous eye dominating their otherwise featureless face. It is easy to see why so many **humanoids** prefer to kill these creatures first (or at least try to) and ask questions later. These Vorlocs are enough to give anybody the creeps.

Sinker: From the crowd, a **Vorloc** about twice the size of his fellows comes forward and addresses the heroes by writing in the dirt with his finger. The language is a dialect of ancient **Elven,** and anybody with Literacy in **Elven** will be at -10% to understand the message, which is an invitation to mystery and a peculiar adventure:

We have been waiting for those who would show us the way past our pain and into the Light. We once were Soldiers of Chaos, willing and transformed minions of the Old Ones. But their regime is over, and our penance is done. We now seek a new war to fight, and we need the guidance of the righteous to point us the way. Would you lead us on the greatest of crusades, to finish what the Alliance of Light and The Garrison started, to purge this land of all its evils, once and for all? Consider well what we ask ***of*** *you, for we only speak knowing that Destiny has brought you here, to us,* ***and*** *we will not be denied. Not even by you. You must show us the way, or we will be forced to destroy* ***you*** *just as we can never destroy* ***ourselves.'***

Unwelcome Visitors

Hook: As the heroes travel through the Canyon region of the Great Rift, they find that they have taken a wrong turn somewhere and have ended up entering a large plateau area where Minion armies are routinely assembled and made to serve a Demon or Deevil Lord in the Minion War. Just as the heroes realize their mistake, they are cut off — entering the plateau is a new batch of freshly arrived Minion Warriors — nearly 10,000 of them! They are accompanied by a small army of nearly 5,000 Demons or Deevils (G.M.'s choice), and the whole lot of them begin to settle down on this plateau, where the heroes are now trapped and rapidly running out of places to hide as the ranks of the Minion Warriors fill the plateau to capacity.

Line: Should the heroes remain hidden, they will have to find a sneaky way off the plateau. Engaging in open combat anywhere here is just plain stupid, and it will only get the heroes captured or killed, or both. If the heroes are captured, they will not be murdered right away. Rather, they will be brought before the local commander, who will decide to make a training exercise out of his fresh meat (the heroes). Stripping them down to their barest clothes and giving them a simple weapon each, the heroes are each matched up against a single Minion Warrior and told to fight them to the death. If the heroes are victorious, they will probably just be kept prisoner and made to fight training matches until they die. If the heroes die, well, they probably copped the easy way out.

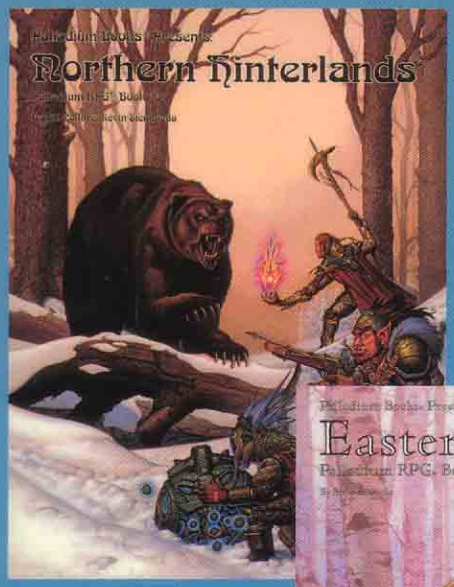
Sinker: But this is just if the characters get caught. If the heroes are especially resourceful, they might just make it through the host of infernal soldiers and Minion Warriors and escape to the outer Canyon region. Of course, if the heroes do this, a nice dramatic turn would be for the enemy host to learn of their escape right after the heroes have gotten off the plateau, inciting a grand chase the heroes actually stand a chance of winning. Yet even if the characters remain free after this escapade, they will have earned the hatred of a Demon or Deevil commander who absolutely hates how the heroes made him look stupid in front of a bunch of raw recruits.

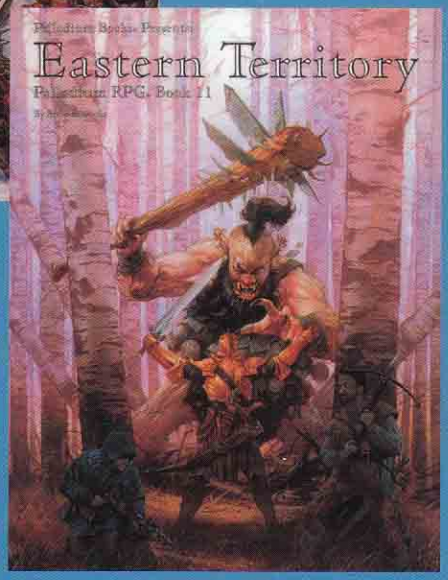
Going Down?

Hook: In a secluded part of the Canyon region is a large well in the earth that Minion Warriors simply call the *Pit.* The hole is perfectly cylindrical and is nearly 300 yards/meters in diameter. The outer edge of the well has a staircase built into it, and it winds down, down, down the Pit into its black and bottomless depths. Now, some heroes might be willing to explore the Pit just to see where it leads. Others might wish to leave it alone and continue on with their journey. That second camp of adventurers might be more prudent, but on this day, they will have no choice. For right as the heroes find the Pit, they are discovered by a large Deevil war party that had been on its way to attack an enemy faction but found the player characters instead. Looking for some easy kills, these creatures come after the heroes, who are outnumbered twenty to one and have no choice for escape but to begin running down the stairs of the Pit.

Line: The center of the Pit is constantly roaring with a massive **updraft** of hot air, making flight within the Pit impossible. The only way down or up is by the stairs. The updraft makes it impossible to jump across the Pit's interior to another section of the staircase, too. This places the heroes in a good position **flightwise,** since there is no way they can be headed off by their pursuers. All they need worry about is if they run into something or someone on the stairs below them, or if their Deevil pursuers overtake them. Heroes could make a stand on the stairs, and if they focused on knocking their Deevil foes out into the center of the Pit, the updraft would grab them and shoot them up and away, out of sight. Of course, the Deevils might do the same to our heroes, and nobody wants that, do they?

Sinker: The real brass ring here is the bottom of the staircase, if indeed there is one. Astute characters with the presence of mind to consider their lore while being chased might recognize this place as the *Tunnel of Jolan,* a structure built by The Garrison early after the Chaos War as a kind of containment unit for the absolute worst of the worst of the Old Ones' minions. These creatures were tossed into the Tunnel (or the Pit) and were forgotten about. The updraft was put in place to keep creatures from prying too deeply. Clearly, if there are any creatures still alive down here, they will be worse news than the Deevils already chasing the heroes. But what do the heroes do? Face certain hardship on the stairs, or take a chance and head to the bottom of the Pit and face whatever menace lives there — which will be many times more dangerous than the Deevils, but only if it still *exists.*





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