

PATHFINDER CHRONICLESTM



THE GREAT BEYOND

By Todd Stewart

Plane
of
Water

Plane
of
Fire

Astral Plane

Material Plane

Positive Energy Plane

Shadow Plane

Negative Energy
Plane

Astral Plane

Plane
of
Earth

Ethereal Plane

Plane
of
Air

Inner Sphere

The Abyss

Abaddon

Hell

Elysium

Astral Plane

The Boneyard

The Maelstrom

Heaven

Nirvana

Axis

The Abyss

Outer Sphere

THE GREAT BEYOND

A GUIDE TO THE MULTIVERSE

A Pathfinder Chronicles Supplement

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The Great Beyond

Gods and demons, angels and devils, and even stranger creatures occupy the various planes that constitute Golarion's unique cosmology. Different from the mortal world, each plane exemplifies some aspect of reality's basic fabric: alignments, elements, energies, etc. Far from just being larger, more exotic continents on the same mundane game world, the planes are places of wonder and terror, beauty and horror. The planes, even those less openly hostile, were never truly meant for mortal eyes—for after visiting paradise, how could a world less vibrant be anything other than painful by comparison? Yet despite their dangers and their very nature, the planes provide an ideal location for adventures. Literally anything is possible. Characters might battle fiends against a backdrop of an eternally twilit wasteland, bargain with gloom dragons in a twisted reflection of their native mortal kingdom, or even

stand in the presence of an avatar of their patron god, who offers them aid for the unfathomable challenges ahead. The dangers are greater, the foes more terrible, and the stakes even higher, should a GM wish a campaign to evolve to that point.

More than simply a conceptual model, planar theory separates Golarion's planes into two distinct regions: the Inner and Outer Spheres. The planes of the Outer Sphere rest upon the inner surface of a great, hollow sphere, with the planes of the Inner Sphere nestled at the sphere's core, separated by the void of the Astral.

INNER SPHERE

The so-called Inner Sphere comprises the elemental planes, surrounding the Material Plane like a series of immense, clustered shells. Opposite the Material Plane, and separated



by the misty realm of the Ethereal, the Shadow Plane exists like a warped reflection of the physical realm. Comprising the remainder of the Inner Sphere, the Positive and Negative Energy Planes rest at the hearts of the Material and Shadow respectively, like the cores of a split apple.

Plane of Air: A vast realm of blue skies, clouds and storms, the first of the elemental planes sits adjacent to the Material Plane, inhabited by djinn and a population of immigrant white and silver dragons. Solid land is scarce, though great chunks of ice, conjured rock, and magically solidified clouds drift through the expanse. It has the air-dominant planar trait with subjective directional gravity.

Plane of Water: Divided between light-filled regions of fresh water and progressively darker and saltier oceans, this is the second of the elemental planes. Within its virtually endless expanse, vast empires of marids and sahuagin clash, while krakens and brine drakes rule its darkest depths. It has the water-dominant planar trait.

Plane of Earth: Filled with endless rock and crossed by veins of precious metals and gemstones, this plane is a place of claustrophobic darkness and massive caverns, often lit by magic or phosphorescent fungus. Far from sterile, the plane is jointly ruled by the tyrannical merchant empire of the shaitan genies and the sprawling, fractured empire of the crystalline drakes. It has the earth-dominant planar trait.

Plane of Fire: The last plane of the Inner Sphere, the Plane of Fire borders the Plane of Earth and the Astral Plane. Though filled with vast oceans of liquid flame, plains of compacted cinders, and rivers of magma, the plane holds perhaps the most varied array of life of any of its elemental siblings, including the vaunted efreet and their legendary City of Brass, a rival empire of fire mephits, and the enslaved azers of an ancient, fallen kingdom. It has the fire-dominant planar trait.

Material Plane: The star-filled void of the Material Plane harbors life both mundane and bizarre that populates its innumerable galaxies and solar systems, with Golarion and its stellar neighbors among them.

Ethereal Plane: This misty realm exists almost like a buffer between the Material and Shadow Planes, overlapping each. Ghosts, manifest dreams, night hags, alien xill, and things even stranger populate its endless expanse. It has the no gravity physical trait.

Shadow Plane: This place exists in flawed, mocking imitation of the Material. The warped spawn of the Negative Energy Plane, the Shadow Plane's gloomy depths hold twisted reflections of locations and creatures from its bright twin, as well as gloom dragons, shadow-touched mortals known as fetchlings, and its own enigmatic natives, the d'ziriak.

Negative Energy Plane: Also known simply as the Void, this plane exists as the manifestation of universal entropy

SOULS AND THE UNDEAD

While the Positive Energy Plane serves as the birthplace of all souls, and its dark, rapacious twin remains incapable of such creation, many scholars and clerics have long pondered over the nature of the undead. Do they possess souls? Is their existence evil or simply an abnormality?

Generally speaking, non-intelligent undead such as zombies and skeletons possess no souls. Little more than puppets of flesh and bone, animated by negative energy in a warped attempt at life, these automatons have no attachment to the souls of their former owners, and are evil merely due to the corrupting influence of the Negative Energy Plane.

Intelligent incorporeal undead such as ghosts and spectres *are* souls, unwilling to discard their mortal lives due to unfinished business, lingering concerns, or a desire for revenge. Shackled by their own passions, negative energy corrupts their essences, acting like a tether to prevent the natural progression of the soul toward the Outer Sphere.

Such beings as vampires and liches further exemplify the condition, being possessed of their original mortal souls, and still bound to a version of their corporeal form. Twisted, augmented, and improved by their bond to the Negative Energy Plane's power, their embrace of undeath is most often a willing process, and likewise prevents their souls from migrating to whatever paradise or hell would have awaited them originally.

The possession of a soul implies nothing about a being's morality—after all, many demons of the Abyss originate as mortal souls. While many intelligent undead are evil, their alignment can often be seen as the result of the manner of their deaths, rather than the energies that animate their bodies or link them to the Material Plane. Likewise, positive energy, despite its association with conventional life, has no impact on a mortal being's capacity for good or evil, and indeed the natives of its originating plane—the jyoti—can hardly be described as benevolent.

and destruction. A pitch-black expanse of hungry, devouring nothingness, its yawning infinity still holds warped, twisted life of its own and their paradoxical creations, as well as powerful undead quixotically granted unlife by the very wellspring of negation. It has the major negative dominant and subjective directional gravity traits.

Positive Energy Plane: The glowing heart of life and creation, the origin-spark of mortal souls and the Material Plane itself, this plane remains out of bounds for most planar travelers, and somehow forbidden to gods. Populated by shining, phoenix-like beings of light known as the jyoti, the plane's interior resembles the molten heart of an active star, and as such little true information exists about it, pending exploration by heroes of truly epic

stature. It has the major positive dominant and subjective directional gravity traits.

Astral Plane: The vast silver void of the Astral stretches away from the burning surface of the Inner Sphere, to a distance almost beyond mortal comprehension before reaching the planes of the Outer Sphere. The many branches of the River of Souls, composed of the migrating spirits of dead mortals, snake through the Astral, watched over and warred over by numerous outsiders, while flocks of astradaemons seek to plunder its spiritual currents. It has the timeless and subjective directional gravity traits.

OUTER SPHERE

Beyond the void of the Astral, the planes of the Outer Sphere stand arranged upon the inner surface of a massive sphere, suspended like islands of stability within the eternally shifting borders of the Maelstrom.

Axis: The plane of unyielding law, the perfect city of Axis is home to the mathematics-obsessed axiomites, the underground kingdoms and floating hives of formians, and numerous gods of law. As the enemy of the Maelstrom, the plane regularly unleashes massive armies of inevitables

into the writhing entropy, seeking to impose their order upon its shifting chaos. Once the home of Aroden, the dead god's domain now mars the plane's symmetry as a ruined, sequestered battleground of dozens of competing factions. It is strongly law-aligned.

Hell: The god-fiend Asmodeus rules the infernal plane of Hell with absolute authority, promising law without mercy and a salvation of servitude to the cosmos. Like bishops in an unholy church, eight unique archdevils oversee Hell's first eight layers, ruling its resident devils in their master's name, promoting his will and waging eternal war against the forces of chaos and good. It is mildly law- and evil-aligned.

Heaven: The realm of the archons and the pinnacle of enlightened order, the shining mountain of Heaven seeks to tame the forces of disorder and evil. A paradise unto itself, this plane is home to celestials and gods who seek to pacify the Maelstrom and tame the Abyss and Hell, forever crusading into their depths even though the task seems impossible. It is mildly law- and good-aligned.

The Maelstrom: With its fluid borderlands touching upon every plane of the Outer Sphere, the churning expanse of the Maelstrom eternally laps at its neighbors like the tide of an endless sea, threatening to inundate and consume them, just as it birthed them from its raw potential. Ever changing and never static, the Maelstrom is home to the serpentine proteans, who epitomize its dualistic creative and destructive spark, birthing wonders within its cerulean heart but also raging against what they see as the crippled reality of the other planes. The Maelstrom is strongly chaos-aligned and has the wild magic planar trait.

The Abyss: Manifesting as yawning cracks and chasms descending below the Outer Sphere's surface, the malignant chaos of the Abyss seeks only to absorb and defile the rest of reality. Its native demons, ruled over by godlike demon lords, war amongst themselves and against anything brought within their reach, causing pain and destruction for no other reason than because they can. It is mildly chaos- and evil-aligned.

Elysium: Populated by the freewheeling, hidden courts of the native azata celestials, Elysium's wilderness holds both paradise and risk. Marked by roaring seas, mountains where reclusive titans dwell, and fields and forests traversed by wandering lillend clans, the plane represents goodness without law, and the boundless creative spark. It is mildly chaos- and good-aligned.

Abaddon: As the nadir and heart of universal evil, Abaddon is the forsaken home of the soul-devouring daemons. Crisscrossed by the memory-erasing River Styx, and divided among the four archdaemon Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Abaddon's ashen skies reflect the debased, abject misery of its universally shunned and loathed inhabitants. It is strongly evil-aligned.





Nirvana: A paradise of unsullied benevolence, the plane of Nirvana grants a return to innocence to its chosen souls, and the power to protect that state for those spirits willing to sacrifice that gift. Home to a powerful, poignant mystery and many other hidden, resonating secrets, Nirvana also harbors the agathions and angels. These celestial martyrs pledge themselves to a higher purpose, sacrificing their own chance to taste a return to innocence in order to defend and uphold their plane's principals of universal good, whatever the cost to themselves. It is strongly good-aligned.

The Boneyard: The Boneyard rests atop a massive spire rising up from the plane of Axis, serving as the final destination for the great River of Souls. Although it contains a variety of regions, mortals largely recognize the plane for the presence of the domain of Pharasma, the Lady of Graves, goddess of birth and death. Within her courts, deific and planar representatives gather their pledged souls, surrounded by the vast Graveyard of Souls and the looming moon of the demigod Groetus. It is mildly neutral-aligned.

Other Planes: Other minor planes (often called demiplanes) and anomalous realities of uncertain category exist within and outside of the common model of Golarion's cosmology. Such planes have few to no restrictions of their nature (see Chapter 7).

A HISTORY OF THE PLANES

Few sources of planar history agree on the true chronology of the cosmos as a whole. Most detailed sources tend to have a rather myopic focus, and many sources suffer from a revisionist slant as influenced by deific dogma or the politics of the authors' races. The further back in time that scholars look, the rarer the sources grow, leaving the ultimate origins of the planes shrouded with more myth than history.

One point largely agreed upon, however, is the relative youth of the Material Plane. The Maelstrom existed well prior to the emergence of the Material, with the Shadow Plane forming in twisted imitation shortly thereafter. The elemental planes probably existed before the Material Plane (as most of the genie-kin claim), though others hold that they formed as a result of the Material's birth. The Positive and Negative Energy Planes may be eternal, or the creations of some original, unknown creator or creative force.

As for the planes of the Outer Sphere, most sources agree that the Maelstrom existed prior to all of its sibling and daughter planes. At some point, sparked by chance or the action of now-unknown gods, the Abyss broke away as a curdled corruption of the cerulean void, with other planes emerging from that same wellspring of cosmic potential later on. Of course, axiomite legends speak of their arrival from "somewhere else" rather than emergence from the Maelstrom, while the oldest of Golarion's gods, such as

WHAT IS A GOD?

Are gods truly transcendent beings, or simply more powerful creatures no different from any other outsider? While the gods might wish to present themselves as transcendent, the answer remains difficult to find. Some of the oldest gods clearly existed prior to mortal life as "true" gods, some like Sarenrae and Lamashtu began as powerful outsiders that acquired or stole their divine spark, and others were once mortals themselves, elevated by magic, deed, or the sponsorship of another deity. Yet other gods had no prior existence and seem to have been the creation of mortal worship alone, and deities such as Rovagug and perhaps others like Azathoth or the night hags' Alazhra have origins swathed in mystery. This book deliberately does not give a firm answer on this topic. Individual GMs should define godhood to fit their own games.

Asmodeus, Pharasma, and many more forgotten kindred, claim to hark back to an earlier period, without specifying exactly where they came from, save that it was not the Maelstrom.

The Maelstrom itself might span multiple realities, with only a local tributary existing within Golarion's cosmology and untold other branches extending out into other realities from some common, chaotic multiversal sea. Some claim that Rovagug's sudden arrival from some nebulous elsewhere is proof of this, while others point at similarities to the Great Old Ones and believe he is a straggling member of that mysterious group. Given the utterly vast scope of the known cosmology, such topics remain purely academic for mortals, as it would take a thousand lifetimes to explore a single plane, let alone all of them.

THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE SOUL

Every religion across the cosmos possesses its own story of the world's creation, and often very specific tales that focus on the primacy of one deity or another in the creation of life and the formation of souls. Some believe that Pharasma, as the goddess of birth and death, plays a central role in that formative spark of life and the creation of each new mortal soul, while the dwarven worshipers of Torag claim instead that the father of the dwarven pantheon forges their souls from the raw stuff of creation to this very day.

In reality, while some races were actually created by one divinity or another, the gods themselves have precious little information about the ultimate origins of mortal souls, even as they foster mortal life across the Material Plane and shepherd and care for those souls after death. While mortal life typically begins upon one of the innumerable worlds drifting through the star-speckled darkness of the Material Plane, each mortal birth is not the start of the

life-cycle of the soul, but instead its middle point as the union of flesh and spirit.

The soul itself begins in the glowing heart of the Positive Energy Plane, though some speculate that even there the soul simply germinates, with its natal seeds arriving by means unknown from places utterly beyond reach and description. There under the zealously protective ministrations of the plane's enigmatic natives, immature souls grow like fruit, tended to in vast, glowing expanses often likened to orchards. They seem to grow naturally, though it ultimately begs the question of just where their metaphorical vines first came from, and if they are growing, or simply being collected and fostered from another source entirely before their next migration.

At their point of maturation, these pre-incarnate souls migrate from the glowing furnace of their birth, a crèche like the interior of a star, to the Material Plane, emerging to germinate among the nascent lives of any orbiting worlds. A child is born possessing a soul; they live and then they die, their actions and experiences further shaping their nature and spiritual weight. Upon death, the soul separates from its physical shell and begins its migration toward the realms of the Outer Sphere, joining the vast currents of souls that traverse the Astral Plane, flowing toward judgment at Pharasma's Spire.

Within Pharasma's courts a great apportionment of souls takes place, with each spirit's nature marking it as destined for one plane or another, one patron god above all others. Only when complications arise, such as dramatic, deathbed conversions, renouncements of faith, or disputed soul-binding pacts, does the sorting of souls become a war of words with two or more parties arguing for the ownership of a soul. In the most rare of cases, the choice becomes that of Pharasma herself.

Shepherded off to the various planes of the Outer Sphere or a specific god's realm, each soul arrives to face its chosen fate. Known as petitioners at this stage of their existence, many continue much as they did in life, enjoying a paradise of health and happiness, while others toil under the yoke of infernal masters. Regardless, each fate is that which most accordingly matches the character of the soul. For some souls, however, their evolution continues, as they transform to become outsiders native to their new home. On other planes a petitioner might appear much as it did in life, or in some idealized, perfected version of that mortal self, and those pledged to a specific god adopt whatever form their patron chooses, regardless of their former appearance.

Though they come from many different races and paths, all petitioners reflect certain core truths about life after death. Having transcended mortality, their mortal lives mean something less to them. While they still care for those they left behind, worry is something that

rarely enters into their minds as concerns their former existence. In the process of their migration through the Astral, the dross of mortality is shed, leaving behind only their core self, their memories, and the refined character of their prior life. The soul of a human paladin, for example, after its arrival before the archons of Heaven, has itself become a being of Law and Good, molded by its exodus, while likewise the soul of a crazed murderer might arrive in the Abyss no different than those demons already dwelling therein.

So what do petitioners do? What goals do they have for their eternal afterlives? Just like their fate and form, the answers vary widely. Many simply enjoy the wonders of the paradise they come to inhabit, at peace with an afterlife that seems a reward for their actions and beliefs in their mortal lives. Other souls endlessly suffer the torment and slavery of fiendish masters, yet still others in the same conditions thrive, ultimately becoming fiends themselves. Regardless of whether a soul takes a more passive or active role in the afterlife, as time progresses it grows increasingly attuned to its plane or patron deity. For many, the end result is transformation into one of the plane's outsiders, or into a divine servitor of their deity. For others, however, the end of their journey is cloaked in mystery, as they simply vanish into the hinterlands of their plane. Perhaps they merge with their plane in body and soul. Perhaps they vanish from reality altogether, and the life-cycle of the soul continues on in vistas that even gods cannot predict.

But not all souls reach their destination. Descent into undeath sullies the natural cycle for that soul, disrupting the spiritual resonance that allows their deceased brethren to progress across the Astral Plane. Certain spells, such as *soul bind* and *trap the soul*, allow for a soul to be caught like a fly in amber, denied its place in the hereafter. Perhaps most frightful of all, such creatures as devourers and the daemons of Abaddon literally subsist on souls, and possess the ability to consume and destroy souls or strip them from a living being entirely.

Hell, the Abyss, and Abaddon possess a thriving economy built upon the collection and trade of purchased and stolen souls. Many fiends find a ready market of mortals willing to sell their immortal essence for such transient things as wealth, power, or arcane knowledge. Other souls are simply swindled by subtler fiends, stolen from their owners by the fine print of devious contracts or challenges their mortal victims have no chance of winning. Less commonly, non-fiends sell magically stolen souls to the fiends; this is typically done by evil wizards and clerics, but occasionally soul objects are sold with little knowledge on the part of their seller, who might regard the magical receptacle as simply an overly large, expensive black sapphire or other gem. Such gemstones are the most common vessel to hold entrapped



souls, though other, more fantastic prisons exist, such as screaming, rune-inscribed chimes, or pages of bleeding flesh stitched into the binding of a fiend's spellbook.

Beyond bargains and contracts, the River of Souls within the Astral has its wealth plundered by daemons and night hags, and during the course of conflict between various planes, petitioners may be carried away as spoils of war. Far from their ultimate buyers, the night hags of the Ethereal Plane steal the souls of dreaming mortal men, herding them across the planes like wriggling livestock. In all cases, such souls invariably find their way to the hands of buyers in the lower planes, eager to use them for their own foul ends. For more practical purposes, fiends torment and break captured souls, converting them to swell the ranks of their armies or binding them to infernal constructs under the control of fiendish masters. Fiends may devour souls for their own perverse pleasure, or use their essence to fuel spells or empower magical objects and creations, ultimately destroying their spiritual essence.

Do all creatures possess souls, or is it a unique quality of the mortal condition? Among the elementals and most natives of the other planes of the Inner Sphere, the answer seems to be that while they do not possess souls of the same origin or manner as do mortals, their core spiritual essence acts in much the same way, to the point of being functionally the same. Within the Outer Sphere the situation is rather more complex. Most outsiders begin as mortal souls, each adopted and transformed by the raw incarnate forces of the planes. Some outsiders breed conventionally, others form spontaneously from their planes, and some predate the very existence of mortal life. In the first two cases, scholars speculate that the resulting creature possesses a soul, albeit one cobbled together from the recycled shreds and fragments of untold millions of souls absorbed by the plane over its existence. But for those outsiders that existed well before the first mortal soul crossed the Astral, no answer exists, not even among the gods, raising the question of why souls originate in the first place, from where, and by whose design.

TRAVEL TO THE PLANES

At first glance, the planes might seem unreal, impossible places—the homes of beings both infernal and divine—and certainly out of reach for mortal adventurers. While the distance, both literal and figurative, is indeed vast, many varied means of travel exist, allowing intrepid heroes access to their wonders and terrors alike.

Natural portals, created by unknown flukes of the cosmos, allow one- or two-way transit, often activated by special material keys or even random conditions, allowing GMs to conveniently position their players with ready egress to the planes. Additionally, artificial portals exist, created as artifacts of old or long-lost civilizations

STACKING EXTRADIMENSIONAL SPACES

While many spells or magic items can transport adventurers to other planes, not all methods do so without hazard, and not always as an intended function; some trips to other planes happen much by accident. Long a tool of tricky GMs and ingenious or unlucky players alike, stacking extradimensional spaces within one another like nested dolls—such as placing one *bag of holding* into another, or into a *portable hole*—causes a temporary rift or gate into the Astral Plane. Such rifts, although temporary, can suck characters through, stranding them in less than ideal conditions and circumstances on the other side, bereft of equipment, injured, or surrounded by potentially hostile natives.

like Azlant, Thassilon, and the elves of Kyonin. Beyond such artifacts, the magic necessary to create new portals might still exist, jealously guarded by individual wizards on Golarion, found in dusty tomes of lore, or contained in works from the planes themselves that somehow find their way to the Material Plane.

In addition to portals, various magical items and spells exist that can provide transport to other planes. Such spells include *astral projection*, *ethereal jaunt*, *ethereality*, *gate*, *plane shift*, and *shadow walk*. Several magic items have explicit plane-traveling powers.

Amulet of the Planes: A much more refined object for prospective planar travelers to use, this provides access to any plane, though using it risks error. The key is that the user must be capable of imagining a specific spot on that plane to visit, with sufficient mental clarity and concentration to properly utilize the amulet's power. In lieu of that ability, the amulet still functions, but deposits the user at either a random spot on that plane, or in a completely different plane altogether.

Cubic Gate: Linked to as many as five planes as well as the Material, this item provides ready access to the planes. Upon activation of a side keyed to a specific plane, the cube provides the equivalent of a *plane shift* spell, giving PCs a convenient and reliable way to travel to a small set of planes.

Mirror of Mental Prowess: This rare and powerful item allows scrying on locations on other planes, and can create a temporary two-way portal to those same locations.

Robe of Stars: These ornate, silken robes allow the wearer to physically transition to the Astral Plane.

Well of Many Worlds: This chaotic object appears similar to a portable hole, but rather than a contained extradimensional space, it acts as a blind, two-way portal to a random plane. Though hardly an optimal choice for planar transport, someone surrounded by hungry demons might find any other plane a better place to be than his current location.



The Inner Sphere

Those who venture beyond Golarion are confronted with spaces larger than a planet or solar system, vast reaches so enormous they boggle the mortal mind. To help understand these metaphysical distances and concepts, they create material analogies for the planar arrangements. At the “center” is the Material Plane, the typical mortal’s center of reference, the heart or pit of the cosmic fruit, mirrored by its twin, the Shadow Plane. Within that pit are the Positive and Negative Energy Planes, the sources of life and unlife. The flesh of the fruit, represented by the Ethereal Plane, surrounds and divides the heart. The flesh is wrapped in a four-layered skin, represented by the Planes of Air, Water, Earth, and Fire. The fruit hangs in empty space, the Astral Plane, which extends outward to the Outer Sphere. Of course, the planes are not three-dimensional constructs obeying some simplistic mortal metaphor, and natural conduits and magic such as *gate* allow travelers to move immediately from one plane to another without

passing through “adjoining” spaces, but the Inner-Sphere-as-fruit model is sufficient for most discussions.

Each plane of the Inner Sphere falls into one of four categories: elemental planes, material planes, energy planes, and transitive planes.

Elemental planes are the home of the fundamental building blocks of matter. The Planes of Air, Earth, Fire, and Water are the four that planar sages agree are elemental planes, though different cultures and fringe researchers include the Planes of Metal, Ooze, and Plants (which traditionalists consider subregions or contested areas in the four “true” elemental planes).

Material planes are formed out of collected and refined matter from the elemental planes. Golarion and all known mortal worlds belong to the eponymous Material Plane, though some believe there may be other material planes, either whole or fragmentary, buried within the Ethereal Plane.

Energy planes are the source of the raw energy of life and unlfe, so overwhelming in their power that most mortals can only survive there for a few moments. The Positive Energy Plane and Negative Energy Plane are the only known energy planes; a few researchers consider these (and all energy planes) to actually be a type of elemental plane, but their role in the multiverse and relative position in the planar arrangement suggest otherwise.

Transitive planes are border dimensions that adjoin multiple other dimensions, making them hubs for travel. Some transitive planes are almost barren of native life, though there are some with more inhabitants than the elemental planes. The Ethereal and Shadow Planes are transitive planes, as is the Astral Plane (though it technically is part of the Outer Sphere).

THE MATERIAL PLANE

A vast, seemingly infinite, star-studded void and the cradle of mortal life, Golarion's Material Plane holds a unique position within the cosmos. In many ways the center of the multiverse (at least to mortal minds), the Material Plane exists as the object of focus for virtually every deity and many godlike planar entities from both the Inner and Outer Spheres, with vast effort and energies spent waging philosophical (and sometimes physical) war over its ultimate fate and that of its mortals' souls. Souls from the Positive Energy Plane migrate to the Material, and when mortals die, their spirits migrate again, placing the plane at the very center of a cosmic procession.

THE ENERGY PLANES

Though sages may quibble over whether certain demiplanes should be considered "energy planes," they all agree that the Negative and Positive planes are realms of energy rather than material or elemental matter.

The Negative Energy Plane

An empty, infinite void of entropic darkness, the Negative Energy Plane exists as the antithesis of its bright twin at the heart of the Material Plane, and an eternally devouring hunger that spawned the plane of shadow in flawed mockery of its twin's creation. Known simply as the Void, the Negative Energy Plane empowers undead just as positive energy is the driving force behind all living things, but contrary to some religious dogma, neither it nor its destructive energies are evil. As dangerous and antithetical to life as they might be, they simply exist as an opposite to the creative potential of the positive, divorced from any notion of morality.

Native Creatures

The Negative Energy Plane is one of the single most hostile planes that exists, though much of this stems

from the fact that virtually any explorer is empowered by positive energy. As such, for those bathed in the plane's relentless wash of negative energy, death is almost instantaneous without magical protection, though even non-living substances erode and weather at a frighteningly accelerated rate: metal corrodes, stone breaks down, and organic material disintegrates.

The Sceduinar: Creatures of living entropy and one of the few beings truly native to the Void, the sceduinar resemble ambulatory, vaguely humanoid fractures and tears in the fabric of space, even against the darkness of the Negative Energy Plane. Unlike the undead that exist as soul-stuff forged of positive energy and corrupted by the Void, the sceduinar form spontaneously from the Negative Energy Plane, with no connection to the souls of its burning twin. At places where the ambient concentration of negative energy reaches an absolute, it begins to self-aggregate as a solid, crystalline material, growing into beautiful, deadly, chaotic snowflake-like structures of absolute entropy. Where these crystals form strange angles, the Void gives birth to the sceduinar.

Not existing within any rational ecology, the so-called raptors of the Void specifically target living creatures sustained by positive energy, but at the same time also take perverse glee in tearing undead limb from limb and destroying them utterly. Still, the creatures are not evil but simply harbor a staggering hatred for anything carrying the spark of life, and the sceduinar rarely converse even with those properly protected. Outsiders, on the other hand, draw no particular attention, and the sceduinar usually ignore even the most powerful denizens of the Outer Sphere.

The sceduinar seem to view undead as an insult to their and their plane's inability to truly create, forced to mimic the Material Plane in the creation of the Shadow Plane, and denied the capacity to form anything resembling souls from the substance of the Negative Energy Plane. They claim that the beings of positive energy—fiends and thieves, in their view—denied them their creative spark, stealing it for themselves and forever shattering some form of original cooperation between the two natural forces, now reduced to a duality of creation and destruction.

Undead: Beyond the natural hazards, the plane attracts a considerable population of undead creatures. Everything from ghosts, specters, and shadows to greater beings such as lichs, vampires, and nightshades migrate to the Void, along with many mortals who die within the plane's grasp and rise as undead, all of whom paradoxically feed and thrive off of the plane's twisted energies. But even empowered and sustained by the plane itself, these creatures themselves fall prey to the sceduinar.

Notable Sites

Even the life-sucking Void has landmarks.

Eternity's Doorstep: Perhaps the Void's greatest enigma, the object known as Eternity's Doorstep looms out of the depths as a planet-sized sphere of perfectly smooth black glass. Though information about it is mostly confined to ominous legends, the object very much exists, suspended in the darkness and seemingly immune to the omnipresent onslaught of the plane's entropic hunger. Not a single defect or flaw marks the mirror-smooth exterior except for inscriptions that repeat, in thousands of languages, the same damning refrain: "What you think of as life is a great deception. The faithful have already been claimed, taken, and saved. You are ours."

Tales speak of the object as a "soul trap" whose gravity well attracts ghosts, shadows, and all manner of undead that bear original mortal souls, ultimately siphoning away and entrapping their spiritual cores, leaving behind either nothing or simply empty material shells, the Void quickly reducing the latter to dust and ashes. Apocryphal tales speak of intelligent undead screaming in horror as they sink into the sphere's surface, madly trying to escape the grasp of an indistinct legion of shapes and shadows clouding the surface from the inside, before finally vanishing from sight.

Malikar's Keep: Atop a massive, drifting island of heavily weathered bedrock stands the redoubt of the mad, planewalking lich, **Xegirius Malikar** (CN male unknown lich wizard 20). The lich's rare visitors find the desolate rock occupied by the ruins of a city, or rather a fragment of a city, apparently wrenched free from its original plane and dragged into the depths of the Void. Most of the buildings have long since succumbed to the plane's destructive, entropic influence, but some explorers have remarked that the architectural details vaguely resemble some of those encountered among the equally ruined debris that comprises the Diaspora of Golarion's solar system.

The Positive Energy Plane

While the religious dogmas and mythologies of the Material Plane's mortal races often ascribe the sustenance of life and the generation of souls to their gods in a myriad of different and often mutually exclusive ways, the truth is something altogether divorced from the divine. While mortal souls eventually migrate to the gods, their origin and the very sustaining and empowering energy of life itself originates in the Positive Energy Plane, sometimes known as the Furnace or Creation's Forge.

Capable of healing wounds, raising the dead back to life, and even destroying the undead, positive energy has a favored place in the minds of most mortals. But just as fire can burn as well as warm, the ferocious energies of the Positive Energy Plane make it (perhaps paradoxically) one of

the single most hostile planes in all of existence. Described as the burning interior of a star, the plane's ambient energies are so powerful as to be lethal within seconds of unprotected exposure to mortals and weaker immortals.

Likening the plane's environment to that of a star isn't simply an analogy, since permanently open natural portals within the Furnace lead into the interior of every star in the Material Plane, allowing them to radiate life-giving energy onto the surface of every orbiting world. These same portals act like gravity wells within the glow, and the plane's natives flock to these locations to build their rare permanent structures. While the generally xenophobic inhabitants, especially the phoenix-like *jyoti* , shy away from allowing non-natives any access, their constructions are said to include great crystalline cities and orchards of glowing, anemone-like trees as tall as mountains, sprouting immature souls like glossy, liquid fruit.

Perhaps the most curious of the plane's traits is that somehow direct deific influence is blocked. No divine entity or avatar seems capable of manifesting within the plane, and the plane's natives uniformly present unwelcome attention to deific servitors and even mortal priests.

Native Creatures

The creatures that call the Positive Energy Plane home are as alien as the strangest creations of chaos.

The Jyoti: A race of glowing, phoenix-like humanoids, the *jyoti* are the most active and powerful of the plane's native races, and those most likely to show interest in any potential visitors. Not "good" by any means, the *jyoti* are uniformly neutral, displaying an intense xenophobia and an extreme level of precaution as it pertains to the immature souls that they cultivate, nurture, and finally release into the portals at the hearts of their cities, seeding them into the stars and then the worlds of the Material Plane.

Befitting their insular nature, they approach any interlopers with caution, especially denizens of the Outer Sphere, and in the rare cases where they come face to face with creatures of shadow or the Void, their reaction is brutally hostile. Oddly, despite their antipathy to undead, they show a surprising amount of pity for such beings.

Though typically wary of anything deific in origin, from time to time the *jyoti* enter into agreements with visitors to take possession of various artifacts and holy or unholy relics, allowing their plane to be used as a hostile, remote vault of sorts to keep such objects safe and out of the wrong hands. While accepting of such objects, they make a special case for those of religious nature. In such cases, the *jyoti* generally have no intention of ever giving the artifact or relic back, and often prefer to destroy it as soon as possible. While the *jyoti* don't have an absolute antipathy toward the divine, it seems that they simply

don't trust gods at all, though whether this stance is based on some past involvement is unknown.

The sceaduinar, their counterparts from the Negative Energy Plane, are denied any chance at rational interaction, nor will the jyoti even speak of them. They are an absolutely forbidden topic, and the reaction to even speaking their name is immediate anger, with any recounting of the sceaduinar's accusations against the phoenix-kin resulting in swift and brutal immolation. It seems clear that the two races' mutual antipathy is grounded in a complex past that neither cares to discuss as their eternal proxy war continues unabated.

Ravids: Unlike the insular jyoti, the odd, vaguely draconic ravids express supreme joy in briefly leaving their home plane in order to spread its energies to other dimensions as they see fit. Whimsical at the best of times, they are perhaps best known for imbuing non-living objects with a temporary spark of life, or zealously obliterating any undead they encounter, spreading the influence of Creation's Forge while simultaneously snuffing out that of the Void.

Notable Site

This location is arguably stranger than the plane's inhabitants.

The Garden: Deep within the glowing heart of the Positive Energy Plane there exists a massive garden of great crystalline flowers, each the size of the tallest Golarion tree, all tended and virtually worshiped by the jyoti. Some flowers glow with an inner light that varies in brightness, while others remain dark, with a minute fraction lying shattered and eternally guttering with sick black flame against the omnipresent white flux. Each flower represents the genesis of a once-mortal soul ascended to godhood, and the jyoti are keenly interested in the development and germination of the seeds born of these flowers. The darkened flowers represent those of dead gods, while the broken and defiled are those gods who embraced undeath prior to their transcendence.

More so than any other location, the Garden is barred to any non-jyoti, though the flowers (or whatever they truly are) outwardly possess no overt power over the divinity they represent.

THE TRANSITIVE PLANES

The transitive planes are so named because of their connectivity to many other planes; they are the crossroads of the dimensions.

The Ethereal Plane

Perpetually wrapped in shifting fog, lit by slowly rising and fading shifts of light like the somber interior of a thunderstorm, the Ethereal is a plane out of phase with reality, a strange border realm sandwiched between two antithetical extremes at the core of the Inner Sphere. Amid the drifting fog, warped visions of the Material and Shadow appear like oases where the borders between their reality and the Ethereal depths grow shallow and tenuous. In such places, canny planewalkers can exploit the situation to bypass common barriers like walls, or to drift through the ether over obstacles, but the true dangers and wonders of the plane exist much deeper, far from such familiar shores.

Situated between the Material and Shadow planes, empowered by equal parts reality and shadow, the perpetually shifting ether possesses an amazing capacity to be shaped and formed by magic and even pure will, if only on a temporary basis. As they sleep, mortal minds reach out from the Material Plane, sparking the ether like a god's life-giving touch, causing their slumbering dreamscapes to manifest in a tangible facsimile of the sleepers' dreams. Of course,

these same dreams can prove hazardous to travelers, and also trigger the interest of some of the plane's less benevolent natives.

Native Creatures

Most of the "natives" of the Ethereal Plane are actually dimensional travelers who spend much of their time here hunting creatures from the Material Plane.

Animate Dreams: When mortals awaken from sleep, the dreamscapes their minds form within the ether subside back to a ground state, obliterating the temporary reality



and its occupants. But on rare occasions something happens, and when mortals wake, they leave something behind stranded on the ether, some fragment of their dreams or nightmares. The creatures born of these fragments take forms as diverse as the full scope of mortal imagination, humans and more alien races alike, and their temperament follows the same range as well. Some wanderers in the mist might encounter a living dream in the form of mortal elf's long-dead mother, while others might find themselves facing the dagger-toothed, blood-soaked bogeyman of a human child's nightmares.

Night Hags: By far the most dangerous and predatory natives of the Ethereal Plane, the night hags are blessedly few in number on the plane itself. At any given point, fully half of their population is engaged on other planes, or involved in frequent disputes with the plane's xill within the deeper reaches of their shared territory. Mercantile as much as they are carnivorous, the night hags engage in a wide-ranging planar trade in mortal souls, trafficking in the ensnared spirits of

the Ethereal and in the stolen souls of mortal dreamers accessed through their manifest dreamscapes. Through considerable effort, they insinuate themselves into the fabric of a mortal's dreams and then slowly pervert it to nightmare, driving the victim mad and ultimately sinking hooks into the soul, allowing the hags to claim it and summon its larval form into their hands upon the victim's death.

Undead: Just like the Ethereal Plane itself, a realm out of phase with normal reality and trapped between the real and the illusory, some of the most common denizens of the mists are themselves trapped. Ghosts, spectres, shades, and other forms of incorporeal undead drift among the mists, wrapped in undying misery, rage, or simply confusion, having long ago shed their mortal coil but finding themselves incapable of the great astral migration that souls naturally undergo. These creatures often pose a distinct hazard to travelers, but others whose states were less tragically induced might converse with planewalkers, offering advice or guidance in exchange for an equivalent favor.

The Plane of Shadow

Locked between the mists of the Ethereal and situated perilously close to the all-devouring darkness of the Negative Energy Plane, the Plane of Shadow lurks as a twisted, dark reflection of the Material Plane. Like a stunted, deformed twin, the Shadow Plane mimics its bright sibling, but given its proximity to the Void, its attempts end up faded and imperfect, and some say that the Plane of Shadow is nothing less than the bitter attempt of the Negative Energy Plane to perform the act of creation ever denied by its own nature.

Not entirely devoid of light, the plane exists in a perpetual shadowy gloom. Dominated by monochromatic landscapes of black and gray, the portion most familiar to planar travelers from Golarion resembles Golarion itself, cloaked in darkness and altered as is if through a warped and broken lens. Oceans on the Material may appear reflected in the Plane of Shadow as dry basins of black dust, devoid of life, while mountains may be higher and more treacherous, the forests deeper, thicker, and more menacing than their real counterparts.

The plane has a practical use, however, due to its warped and imperfect reflection of the Material and its tendency to grossly skew the distance between any corresponding locations. By entering from one point on the Material Plane, travelers may partake in treacherous but ultimately time-saving jaunts, crossing hundreds of miles in a fraction of the normal time. Travelers risk losing themselves in the shifting darkness, reappearing in unmapped or dangerous locations far from their destination, or falling afoul of the very real dangers lurking in the gloom.



Native Creatures

While the Shadow Plane lacks the rich variety of life present on the Material Plane, it does possess warped reflections of many plants and animals, as well as its own unique denizens. Many creatures “native” to the Plane of Shadow were in fact transplants from the Material Plane or elsewhere, lost and stranded in this muted dimension, and while their descendants survive, they remain undeniably altered by their new home. The most prominent beings travelers might encounter are human-descended fetchlings or the insectoid d'ziriaks, while umbral dragons exist as rare but dire threats, along with more mundane undead beings such as shadows, nightcrawlers, and nightwalkers spawned where the Negative Energy Plane leaks through more heavily.

D'ziriaks: This insular race of eerie but largely neutral insect-like humanoids resemble glossy, black-shelled, four-armed lightning bugs or termites. D'ziriaks perpetually glow a muted range of colors on their abdomens, flaring in intensity only rarely, but also displaying elaborate luminescent patterns on their limbs and thoraxes that are unique to each individual.

Possessing their own complex societies, d'ziriaks dwell in great, partially underground cities lit by the eerie flicker of their own luminescent glands, the glowing tips of their highest structures decorated with cold alchemical and illusory flame. Telepathic, they also speak their own buzzing tongue most species find themselves incapable of comprehending without magic, let alone possessing the ability to speak it.

They are true natives of the Shadow Plane by their own admission, but their ultimate origin remains wrapped in mystery, as do their aims and motives toward other species. Of all the plane's races, they alone seem to be capable of sensing the Hinterlands of Zon-Kuthon as they wander the landscape, yet the roving, predatory genius loci never target them or their cities.

Fetchlings: Descended from humans trapped on the plane for generations, fetchlings are mortals infused with the plane's dark essence. Slender, bordering on skeletal, they possess ashen skin tones, pale yellow eyes, and monochromatic white or black hair, though both genders are prone to dying it green, blue, or red when the pigment is available through cross-planar trade. Aware of their origins, and aware of what they have lost in terms of their humanity, they often serve as middlemen in planar trade and politics.

Notable Sites

Flickering on the edge of the real and unreal, the following are permanent, if mobile, locations in the Shadow Plane.

The Hinterlands of Zon-Kuthon: While the actual prison that contained Zon-Kuthon no longer exists, having evaporated upon his escape, his eons-long incarceration had a long and lasting effect upon the surrounding fabric of the plane. Regions of the plane curdled by the Midnight Lord's fury still persist—wandering sections of landscape like mad genius loci, or permanent magical storms drawn toward mortal planewalkers and locations they frequent.

Known as the Hinterlands of Zon-Kuthon, multiple fragmented areas exist, and have been known to subdivide further or join together. These regions pose many dangers. The environment is actively hostile, the terrain twisted to pose the maximum danger to those entering its borders, with exposure beyond an hour or two having a deleterious, will-sapping, and hallucinogenic effect. The regions also seem to draw the attention of all manner of bestial shadow creatures, especially dangerous when the Hinterlands cross paths with nightgaunts of any variety.

Shadow Absalom: Not all reflected locations exist in twisted, ruined form, inhabited only by monsters and ferocious shadow creatures. Some such places instead thrive, and even draw visitors from across the planes. Such is the case for Shadow Absalom.

Of all the Material cities reflected in Shadow, the great city of Absalom stands as the largest and grandest. Shadow Absalom, as the city's residents call it, rises out of the gloom, lit by the beautiful if haunting light of thousands of magical lamps and conjured fires strung from its towers and ramparts, as well as one other source of illumination that serves as the city's reason for success. Where a great



cathedral stands at the center of Absalom's Ascendant Court, holding within its heart the *Starstone*, the perfectly reflected cathedral in Shadow Absalom opens into a formless expanse of white light, streaming out across the city from open gates and arched windows like a glowing beacon across the all-encompassing darkness.

While no divinity-granting *Starstone* exists at the heart of the reflected Cathedral, its glowing heart represents something perhaps equally valuable: a permanent portal leading out of the Plane of Shadow. Passing through the gates and into the light, any creatures not native to the Shadow Plane immediately find themselves transported to the point at which they originally entered into the Plane of Shadow, be it a spot on the Material Plane, the location of a portal in the depths of Hell, or even a spot of open sky in the Plane of Air where a companion invoked a *plane shift* spell.

Given the immediate and unerring utility of Shadow Absalom's portal, the city exists as something of an oasis within the dark, attracting those stranded in the plane and also allowing the city's inhabitants to profit from the constant influx of visiting travelers. A permanent and shifting population of mortals forms roughly a quarter of the city's population, while fetchlings comprise almost half, the remainder being filled by a mix of others such as d'ziriak, night hags from the Ethereal, intelligent undead, mercane, and even several resident umbral dragons, including the city's undisputed ruler, Argrinyxia the Shifting Lady of Ebon Scales.

SHADOW ABSALOM

Size metropolis (nonstandard); **AL** N

GP Limit 100,000 gp; **Assets** 120,000,000 gp

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 24,000

Type mixed (50% fetchling, 24% Material Plane humanoid, 10% d'ziriak, 6% intelligent undead, 10% other)

AUTHORITY FIGURES

Argrinyxia the Shifting Lady of Ebon Scales (NE female great wyrm umbral dragon sorcerer 5), **Inva Ebonblade** (CE female fetchling rogue 8/shadowdancer 4), planar guide for hire and reputed Queen of Thieves, **Gremala the Dream-Monger** (NE female night hag cleric 5 of Nethys), self-proclaimed buyer of souls and seller of dreams, **Z'mandrik** (LN d'ziriak wizard 11), public spokesman of the city's d'ziriak hive and master of the light-weavers' guild.

Xovaikain: Irrevocably warped and corrupted by his exposure to beings dwelling deep within the Sea of Night, Zon-Kuthon's prison-turned-realm deep within the Plane of Shadow was supposed to last for all time, isolating the mad god from the rest of creation. But all of that changed with Earthfall, which ended the god's imprisonment.

Now the god of darkness's domain exists as a region of complete and utter blackness, seen from the outside like a great obsidian wall rising from the ground and piercing the clouds above, dominating the landscape for miles. While no light violates its borders, the same cannot be said of the screams, as a hellish, wailing cacophony endlessly issues forth from the domain. Rarely, one of the god's petitioners bursts free as well, usually panicked and covered in lacerations, only to scream even more as his momentary—and likely orchestrated—freedom ends with the gloom extending out like the arms of a great black kraken, wrapping around him and dragging him back to his torment. Virtually nothing is known of the domain's interior, as except for the mockery of freedom granted for scant seconds to some of his petitioners, only Zon-Kuthon's deific servitors enter and exit the domain.

THE ELEMENTAL PLANES

These planes are raw fundamental matter rather than energy, supplying the base materials for the Material Plane and most demiplanes.

The Plane of Air

Beyond the void of the night sky, the Plane of Air surrounds the Material Plane like a vast, spherical shell of idealized sky. Eternally lit by an innate glow from the air itself, the plane encompasses unimaginable stretches of clear blue skies, banks of drifting clouds and snow, and even roiling thunderstorms the size of planets. While a plane of nothing but air might appear inhospitable to non-flying creatures, steady ground does exist in places. Great chunks of ice drift through the expanse, broken away from the neighboring Plane of Water and providing a ready perch along with magically suspended cities and even mountains torn free and transported from the Material Plane by powerful sorcery. Despite these refuges and the relative lack of natural hazards and predatory natives, the Plane of Air harbors only a fraction of the non-native populations possessed by its kindred elemental planes.

Native Creatures

With limitless space and mobility, the creatures of the Plane of Air have a unique existence.

Air Mephits: Ignoring all evidence to the contrary, the mephits of the Plane of Air dispute the djinn's monolithic dominion (benign as it is in the absence of other rival powers). The diminutive mephits maintain their own small nations in the shadow of the Djinn Empire, with their cities often haphazardly constructed atop drifting chunks of ice below others' notice. Ruled by dozens of self-proclaimed Grand Emperors of Air, Princes of the Winds, and High Kings of Thunder, the creatures have little ability to back up their grandiose claims, but in their

defense, their society has largely borne the destructive brunt of the plane's less pacified occupants.

Djinn: The true lords of the Plane of Air, the djinn have occupied the plane as far back as recorded history extends, and in all that time they have never faced a serious threat to their dominion. Free of the internecine conflict of their watery kindred, or the open warfare of the earth and fire genies, the djinn live a relatively placid existence. Consuming themselves in artistic and mercantile exploits—heavily employing entire clans of wandering jann in the latter—the djinn consider themselves the paragons of civilization within the Inner Sphere. While their cultural endeavors and their glittering floating cities are things of dream-like wonder, their attitude often turns paternalistic to a heavy degree, especially where non-elemental beings are concerned, leading some to view the djinn as self-important and overly decadent.

Elementals: While the various true elementals of the Inner Sphere often possess either an alien mindset or remain limited to an animal level of intelligence, the air elementals often transcend these limitations. Though they still lack any sort of organized society, writing, or permanent structures, they do possess a culture of their own, and often interact with the plane's other natives—and visiting non-natives—in a whimsical, unpredictable fashion. One group of elementals might gather to conjure forth a torrential thunderstorm, while another might spend months constructing a miles-wide piece of solid ice and simply gift the drifting object to a local djinn clan or mephit kingdom. Largely divorced from any material need or any meaningful concerns with the plane's politics, the air spirits indulge their creativity more than anything else, sculpting the clouds and ice and literally playing thunderstorms like instruments. Despite this independent nature, many djinn suspect that the air elementals' random nature obscures a deeper devotion and link to the elemental deity Gozreh.

Silver and White Dragons: Unlike the Planes of Earth and Water, the Plane of Air claims no native draconic species, but that does not preclude the presence of dragons from the Material Plane. Arriving either via their own sorcerous talent or the use of natural gates and portals, significant populations of silver and white dragons call the plane home, viewing the open, cloud-

laden expanses as a paradise. Claiming the clouds and drifting icebergs as their own and constructing their lairs therein, the immigrant dragons fiercely oppose one another, and often come into conflict, usually over the whites' desires to exact tribute from all others in the vicinity or their tendency for wanton destruction and pillaging (much to the native mephits' woe). As a result, the dragons' roaring, deadly battles usually end in death for one combatant, and so fierce is their antipathy that the djinn refer to large and long-lasting storm-fronts by the names of particularly notorious dragons, such as Olrivek the Blood-Laden Hailstorm and Ralikor the Cloud Sculptor.

Notable Sites

While the creatures of this plane can fly and need no solid ground to stand upon, they gather at natural or artificial agglomerations of matter for the sake of trade and community.

Armun Kelisk, the Djinn Capital: The political and religious capital of djinn society, the city of Armun Kelisk sprawls across seven stone, ice, and silver platforms, each miles across and carved or cast to resemble the rolling terrain of a terrestrial city, taking inspiration from the Material Plane. The djinn frequently remind mortal visitors that their city's configuration is a mutable thing, having occupied dozens of forms since its construction thousands of years earlier.



Trade and commerce takes place along the city fringes, with specific platforms for docking flying vessels and perches for flying mounts, allowing ready access to non-flight-capable visitors. Further in, the djinn make their palatial homes, forums, and ultimately towering palaces of their nobility as well as temples to various gods and their own ancestors. The temple to Gozreh is prominent, constructed of magically frozen and shaped stormclouds, but remains decidedly smaller than the palace of Sultan ZaferXXXVIII, “Lord of the Heavens and All the Stars of the Mortal Void.” An exceedingly powerful wizard, the sultan takes pleasure in dealing with summoned extraplanar beings, learning from them of far off places and planes without leaving his palace, and if possible adding to his harem those who especially capture his fancy.

The Spheres: Like burnt-out and enigmatic stars, hundreds of cold and silent bronze and iron spheres hang suspended among the clouds of the airy void. The spheres bear the fury of millennia of weathering, and

while their surfaces were once deeply inscribed with multiple lines of ornate text, the now illegible symbols defy translation, including—worryingly enough—magical means. As old as the written records of the djinn, and possibly older, these spheres are considered a taboo topic by many of the plane’s natives, even given the preciousness of stable ground. In fact, the djinn refuse to build upon their surfaces or even touch them. Often considered little more than superstition by outsiders, the djinn’s fears seem borne out by historical cases of major settlements vanishing without a trace. Even more disturbing, divinatory attempts uniformly fail to define their interiors, and wizards involved report subsequent nightmares of a roiling cloud of jagged, bloody teeth.

While no other powers within the Plane of Air come close to challenging the djinn, this might have not always been the case. Some legends of the spheres from sources outside of the Plane of Air claim that the mysterious, cursed objects serve as the prisons of an ancient rival to the djinn. Other tales suggest that the spheres each contain a piece of the broken and fragmented essence of a monstrous god of storms, or an equally monstrous elemental paragon of water, thunder, or ice that was once the equivalent to the Plane of Fire’s Ymeri, Queen of the Inferno. The periodic absorption (or devouring) of people and settlements built upon their surface might be indicative of the imprisoned race or entity’s fury. But whatever the spheres’ occupants might be, if the natives of air have willingly forgotten its nature and even its name, the answer must be a terrifying one.

The Verglas Precessional: This spinning palace of nearly invisible frozen air is home to Hshurha, the Storm Tyrant, the Unseen Whirlwind, Duchess of All Winds. Surrounded by her court of air elementals and various dignitaries from the fey and other flying planar travelers, she is the self-proclaimed leader and mother-goddess of air elementals (though she is not a true deity), and looks disdainfully upon any creature with solid flesh or visible form. Naturally invisible (as are most of her lieutenants), she finds great joy in building bizarre monuments to herself out of cloud and ice, tearing down the works of lesser beings, scattering peaceful meetings, or dragging hostile creatures into the midst of their enemies. She maintains a tenuous peace with the djinn, though she has been known to attack their fringe settlements from time to time in search of diamonds, magical dust, and delicious incense. Those unfortunate enough to be kept as playthings within her palace are usually stranded in an invisible-walled room or left to wander invisible halls in search of food or egress, often plunging to their deaths when they discover an open spot on the floor or she whimsically redesigns her palace.



The Plane of Earth

A vast stony shell between the Planes of Water and Fire, the Plane of Earth encompasses material riches and lightless expanses similar to dwarven mines and the horrors of the Darklands. Far from being a uniform expanse of solid stone, the plane is riddled with caverns, chasms, and hollows exposed by fault lines, claustrophobically small or as large as entire worlds, as well as all manner of artificial passages burrowed and carved out by the plane's inhabitants.

Much of the plane is devoid of light, but many places are lit by phosphorescent minerals or bioluminescent fungus mined or cultivated by the plane's natives. Less common are massive, spectacular geodes and crystalline deposits, as well as veins of precious minerals threading the rock like capillaries, which promise both spectacular wealth and certain doom to the many explorers who seek to steal from the elemental natives.

Finally, where the plane borders the neighboring Planes of Fire and Water, their influence mingles with the stone. The former ushers forth molten rivers of burning magma seeping through the stone and serves as a battleground between the genie-kin of fire and earth even as their respective elements vie for supremacy, while the latter forms border regions of solid, glittering salt, inundated flows of alluvial muck, breathtaking caverns of eroded limestone, vast underground rivers, and even lightless seas encapsulated by the rock.

Native Creatures

Most natives of this plane are living stone or earth spirits in flesh bodies.

Crystal Dragons: Ruling an empire of small, personal kingdoms throughout the plane, the crystalline drakes of the Plane of Earth are often compared to the brine drakes of the Plane of Water—they are elemental creatures rather than adapted true dragons. Like dragons sculpted from rock and scaled in precious gemstones, or even appearing cut from whole, living crystals of various kinds, the native drakes are just as covetous and prone to self-importance as their Material kindred, but with a particular bent toward savvy trading in gems and metals in exchange for magic and crafted items. Usually laying claim to particularly valuable deposits of ores and minerals, the dragons serve as kings to vassal populations of mephits, dwarves, jann, and even exiled groups of shaitan genies.

For one example, Messentrel the Purple, a crystalline drake of flawless amethyst scales, directly rules over a series of linked geode caverns each a dozen miles across. Beyond his immediate domain, however, he holds sway over several kingdoms of mephits and earth-touched dwarves, proxy-ruled by his own half-dragon children. While their ruler is possessed of his own draconic peculiarities, such as an extreme vanity and “appreciation of gifts” from adjacent regions not

within his self-claimed empire, the dragon's subjects live relatively comfortable lives, free of the plane's environmental threats and the brusque slavery that represents the shaitans' attempts to “civilize” them. The same is generally true for all the drake kingdoms, and conflicts between them are typically personal affairs between the dragons, sparing their subjects any prolonged wars.

Elementals: Little can be said of the true elementals, since the vast majority of their kind seem content to live sessile lives within the rock itself, rarely venturing out into the caverns or tunnels, and even more rarely interacting with the other native races. Most interaction with their kind occurs when the shaitan genies and crystalline drakes lay claim to particular veins of precious metals or deposits of gemstones—and such interaction is rarely peaceful.

Shaitans: Perhaps the species most widely known among non-natives, the shaitan genies rule a vast empire built upon a combination of their own ruthless pragmatism and discipline, their open exploitation of the plane's natural wealth, extensive intra- and interplanar trade, and a staggering amount of slave labor. Appearing as large, well-built humanoids with flesh of precious metals and stones, the shaitans occupy massive cities carved from their plane's living rock, linked by massive tunnel and mine networks.

Like their racial and elemental nemeses, the efreet of the Plane of Fire, the shaitans' society operates by ingrained traditionalism and strict, efficient laws, with the shaitans following the letter but not always the spirit if it can pave the way for personal gain—and personal gain is one of their primary motivations. While physically enforced slavery exists within their mines (and the shaitans justify this as a form of tribute by conquered populations), they prefer to use legal contracts, entrapping mortals, elementals, and especially other genie-kin in magically enforced servitude. The shaitans operate by such contracts themselves, offering their services to mortals and one another alike, dancing amid the words for the chance to exploit them. Barring that, they perform their services with exceeding pride, especially acts of fine craftsmanship with stone or metalwork.

Other Races: Less prominent than their empire-building fellows, numerous other species call the Plane of Earth home. Nomadic jann wander the tunnels and drift through the rock on their endless trading expeditions, and specific groups often serve as envoys and go-betweens for the greater powers. Mephits dwell in every nook and cranny of the plane, scavenging along the fringes of the other races' societies, as they are often considered pests or delicacies. Dwarves and even a small scattering of elves and humans dwell in the depths as well, and among those mortals—often the descendants of the trapped or self-exiled—travelers can find either the best aid or the worst dangers.

Notable Sites

Though this plane has many marvelous geodic locations, two stand out as particularly memorable.

The Opaline Vault: The largest city within the Plane of Earth, and the center of the shaitans' empire, is the so-called Opaline Vault, constructed upon the many surfaces of a vast crystalline geode some 30 miles across. Golden palaces rise from the walls and ceilings, while great bridges of bronze and steel span the gaps between hollowed clusters of the natural crystal, housing the noble shaitans and the powerful guilds of their commoners alike. Far from a lightless vault, the void is lit by thousands of enchanted, glowing spheres of light like burning gemstone stars, reflected and refracted within the geode's walls for one of the plane's most breathtaking sights.

Ruled for the past 500 years by Sultana Ashadieeyah bint Khalid, the city's people have prospered from a relative peace between themselves and the often whimsical crystalline drakes, allowing them to expand their trade into those realms and beyond into the border with the Plane of Water. Yet as soon as the Opaline Vault's treasures fill, they empty with the construction of weapons and the paid contracts of mercenary armies sent against the most-hated efreet of the Plane of Fire (at whose hands the Sultana's father was killed).

Possessed of a personal vendetta on top of an innate racial mistrust of the fire-genies, the golden-skinned Ashadieeyah has increasingly spun a web of contracts between herself, the shaitan atamans and their guilds, the mercenary jann nations, and a myriad of others including (in secret) the fire mephitis rivals of the efreet. Ever ready to purchase the service of adventurers not bound by other obligations within the elemental planes, some whisper she stands at a tipping point, facing either major success in her peoples' lengthy war, or a complete societal collapse.

The Blistering Labyrinth of Ayrzul the Fossilized King: Distant and isolated from the empires of the shaitans and drakes, a vast stretch of the Eternal Delve lies like a cancerous cyst, a lethal and silent forbidden zone for many of the plane's inhabitants. The domain lacks formal border markers to dissuade potential invaders or wayward travelers, though the fringes are scattered with the fossilized, oddly warped bones of all manner of creatures. Ignoring those dire portents, intruders within the self-claimed kingdom of Ayrzul the Fossilized King know their error when their flesh begins to burn from the invisible, leaching heat of the rock itself, threatening to add them to the carpet of the dead.

The bizarre radiation given off by the stone of the Blistering Labyrinth is frighteningly hostile to most life-forms, including many of the plane's natives, with the sole exception of true elementals and mephitis, many of whom

cluster within its borders for safety. Ultimately those same creatures give fealty to Ayrzul, the mysterious and godlike being dwelling there. Never observed outside of his realm, legends say that his physical form is somehow bound to the rock itself, or restricted to the boundary of his realm. Often assumed to be a powerful elemental paragon and demigod, the Fossilized King is also purported to be an ascended shaitan wizard, an undead crystalline drake of truly awesome age, or a fragment of the dead god Ydersius. Regardless of his origin, Ayrzul largely ignores his own plane's politics, except when seeking to keep the peace between its various races while simultaneously ensuring antipathy toward the efreet of the Plane of Fire and his hated rival and possible counterpart, Ymeri the Queen of the Inferno.

The Plane of Fire

Possessed of a deadly beauty, the Plane of Fire is easily the elemental plane most inimically hostile to mortal life, yet life of its own prospers, as diverse as the hues in flickering firelight. Much of the plane exists as a vast, roiling sea of flames, cut by rivers of molten stone and flat stretches or mountains of compacted ash, all situated below skies of scintillating, burning clouds, smoke, and cyclic weather of boiling metallic rain and slowly falling soot. Hostile as the Plane of Fire might be, like a forge it breeds strength and removes or destroys weakness, and for those capable of enduring its flames, wonders and trials abound.

Native Creatures

The common creatures of this plane are quite familiar to mortals through the actions of mages and storytellers.

Efreet: When most mortals think of the Plane of Fire, they think of the efreet. Mortal legends typically describe them as haughty, devious, and cruel, capable of granting wishes but always seeking to twist the words and bring about the subject's downfall, often to the efreet's amusement and profit. Mortal legends don't stray far from the truth of the matter, and the description suffices for most members of the race. Ruled by Sultan Hakim Khalid Suleiman XXIII, Lord of Flame and Khan of Magma, the efreet dwell in great cities of bronze, iron, and brass suspended above the plane's seas of flame. While not uniformly evil in the way that devils embody the concept, the efreet of the Dominion of Flame espouse a racial superiority over other creatures of the plane as well as non-natives, and use these beliefs as a pretext for slavery and exploitation in trade—a policy that fuels their endless conflicts with the fire mephitis and the shaitans of the Plane of Earth.

Elementals: Unlike the mephitis and efreet, the true elementals generally lack a unifying culture or society

of their own, though they often deal with both efreet and mephits, acting more as a natural force capable of being bargained with than a nation. For the most part they have little interest in the trappings of civilization, except for a distinct subset of humanoid-shaped elementals, the Tongues of Ymeri, who act as mysterious advisors and ambassadors to the other races of the plane on behalf of their greatest paragon, Ymeri, Queen of the Inferno.

Mephits: While each of the inner planes has its own varieties of mephits, those of the Plane of Fire are the only ones with a highly developed society and a major claim to power within their native plane. While weaker than the efreet and often involved in border disputes and low-level conflict, the theocratic mephits manage to hold their territory, even ruling over a racial slave class of azers whose ancient empire fell to the mephits millennia ago. A matriarchal theocracy, ruled by Dirimalia VI, the Ninefold Matriarch of Holy Sublimation, the mephits are much more open to trade, especially cross-planar, providing unique alchemical products and weapons to other races and even going so far as to sign a secret alliance with the shaitans of the Plane of Earth.

Notable Sites

Each native race of the Plane of Fire has one mighty stronghold that outshines all its other creations.

The Auroric Palace of Ymeri, Queen of the Inferno: The transition between the Planes of Earth and Fire is typically a slow and gradual change, with stone melting into rivers of magma, or flames dying and magma cooling into stones and metals, all depending on who's telling the story. But while this gradual transition is the norm, there are places along the nearly unimaginable border where one element or the other is particularly recalcitrant and seems to fight against any violation of its true form. The Auroric Palace is one such place—a palace of frozen, sculpted flames built atop a gigantic, continent-sized inclusion of pure stone, crystal, and metal. Seeming to rage against its slow, incremental dissolution in the heat of the Eternal Furnace, when viewed from the side of the Plane of Fire, its pure metals remain solid and unsullied till the moment they violently succumb to their torture, the heat of years suddenly catching up with them in an instant. As rock boils away in a shining rain of magma, veins of pure metals are exposed and sublime, igniting from solid to gas to produce towering jets and sheets of brilliantly colored flame. For

hundreds of miles, the skies burn with brilliant green, piercing yellow, dull blue, and sun-like white lights.

Within the palace dwells Ymeri, Queen of the Inferno, who views the auroras as an expression of the ultimate submission of elemental earth to the indomitable fury of fire. Somewhere along the uncertain boundary between elemental paragon and demigod, Ymeri lives amid a growing, multiracial cult of flame-touched mortals, efreet, mephits, and her chosen elementals. Dancing amid the shining clouds, inhaling the burning, metallic dust like hallucinogenic incense, Ymeri's followers conspire to elevate their mistress to godhood and grant her control over the entirety of the Plane of Fire. But perhaps more than total control over her own plane, Ymeri seems hell-bent on pushing and expanding the war between the efreet and shaitans as a proxy conflict between herself and Ayrzul the Fossilized King.

City of Brass: A place of legend and ignominy, opulence and suffering, and the largest city within the Plane of Fire, the City of Brass serves as the majestic capital of the efreet. While their other cities sit upon platforms of magically suspended iron, steel, or bronze, their capital rests within a massive, shallow basin of glittering brass. Stratified and segregated by class and race, the City of



Brass favors the efreet nobility dwelling within the basin's nadir, surrounded by circular canals of flame and molten metals, while their many palaces and sanctums tower above the rest of the city despite the relative height of the outer, higher districts. At the very center sits the palace of Sultan Hakim Khalid Suleiman XXIII, Lord of Flame and Khan of Magma, surrounded by his fawning court, advisors, and stock of personal slaves composed of mortal nobility ensnared by their own foolishly worded wishes.

Beyond the central noble district, each defined in boundary by its own burning canals, reside the Commoners District, the Slaves' District (more commonly called the Fools' District), the Temple District, and the great Suq al-Azzmir marketplace, with a dozen smaller districts sprinkled officially or unofficially amid their margins. In all districts, including that of their slaves, the city's ambient temperature never rises above "very hot," even while standing on the edge of a canal or public fountain of molten sulfur. Maintained by magic and royal decree, the temperature—while sweltering—allows a relative respite from the furnace just beyond the city walls, making extraplanar trade a viable option.

Most visitors only see the market, which the ruling efreet strive to promote in order to fill their own pockets with innumerable fees and taxes. These fees include everything from a buyer's license to fees for docking ships to selective taxes based on a merchant's race or plane of origin. Still, despite the cost and the hassle of the byzantine and borderline-tyrannical laws, the city provides access to an amazing selection of goods, especially the rare and obscure—but woe to those who attempt any theft or insult the ruling nobles.

Ninefold Towers of the Matriarch of Holy Sublimation: Surrounded by the broken remains of ancient azer fortifications, razed and toppled by the mephits in antiquity, the capital of the mephit theocracy ascends high into the burning skies. Its nine interlinked towers have been carved like sculptures from a unique variety of copper-veined quartz, and with the plane's heat the veins literally boil, sending glittering clouds of vaporized metal rising up through the walls until they cool and descend as liquid currents, repeating the cycle again as they approach the flames below. The quartz was supposedly gifted to the mephits by one of the Plane of Earth's draconic and self-declared Crystalline Emperors, but the efreet maintain as a point of antipathy that it was instead a gift from the shaitan genies.

While the eight secondary towers are ruled by lesser priestesses, the tallest and central tower serves as the center of secular and spiritual authority for the fire mephits' society, directly ruled by their titular Matriarch of Holy Sublimation, Dirimalia VI. Living in splendor that actually eclipses that of the efreet Sultans and treated as a

living goddess by her people—especially her multi-species harem of male supplicants—Dirimalia devotes herself to a mixture of hedonism, alchemical experimentation, and foreign diplomacy with representatives from across the planes eager to conduct trade outside of the rigid laws and heavy taxation of the efreet. While her people obey their religious taboos and rituals without question, their Matriarch could care less about them herself, though she enjoys watching foreign diplomats and merchants fumble to obey the observances in their fear of causing her some offense.

The Plane of Water

The Plane of Water exists as an immense, spherical ocean between the neighboring Planes of Earth and Air. Mixing vast stretches of fresh and saline seas, generally growing more saline as it approaches the border with Earth, the Plane of Water contains numerous bits of its neighboring planes which occasionally break away, suffusing the depths with drifting chunks of stone and ice, upon which many of the natives construct their cities. The plane also grows darker the farther one travels from its border with the Plane of Air, which along with vast schools of luminescent fish provides most of the plane's gently filtering light. Still, despite its utter lack of innately breathable air, the Plane of Water is more accommodating to non-natives than the other elemental planes, and small pockets of air occasionally intrude, supporting communities that often hold precious positions of power and trade.

Native Creatures

The natives of the Plane of Water are remarkably similar to the aquatic races of Golarion.

Brine Drakes: The one race of dragons native to the Plane of Water, the spine-covered and heavily frilled brine drakes, may have originated as elemental creatures on the saline border between Water and Earth, or were perhaps transplanted from other planes. Regardless, the dragons are relatively common within the deeper reaches, and grow ever larger as the light from the Plane of Air grows dim. Once past the plane's salinity interchange, the fiercely territorial creatures rule as reclusive, petty tyrants, with some of their oldest and most powerful possessed of both the interest and the ability to challenge the plane's marids and sahuagin.

Krakens: Largely locked into a racial conflict with the plane's brine drakes, these massive cephalopods are often driven into lighter waters by their endless warring. There, despite their preference for darker waters, the creatures pose a severe threat to travelers, especially given their massive intellect and physical power. At times, lone krakens ally themselves with various marids or sahuagin nation-clans, insinuating themselves into their societies, and after

generations become powers behind the thrones—and in the process escape the brine drakes' predation.

Marids: The most populous of the plane's natives, the marid genies of the Plane of Water claim the entirety of the plane as their dominion, though the reality of the situation differs rather starkly. To begin with, unlike the genie-kin of the other elemental planes, marid society lacks a single unifying ruler, and has been without true imperial rule for nearly 10,000 years since the death of the last Saline Padishah, Niloufar the Great, and the destruction of her capital city of Arzanib by the elder brine drake Kelizandri. As it now stands, their "empire" is divided between dozens of powerful clans delineated by both heritage and ideology alike, all jockeying among themselves while occasionally warring with the neighboring sahuagin and other powers.

Sahuagin: Originally natives of the Material Plane, the first sahuagin migrated to the Plane of Water several thousand years ago at the behest of a now-forgotten prophet or priest-king. Upon their arrival the so-called sea devils spent centuries carving a bloody empire from the wreckage of the crumbling marid hegemony, only to see their own empire collapse inward upon itself like sharks in a cannibalistic feeding frenzy. Currently the sahuagin dominate vast saline territories in the plane's twilight reaches, deeper than the marids' domain, but even more fractious and divided among the fiefdoms of competing nobles, mutant warlords, and religious clans seeking to recreate their original empire.

Other Races: Scattered throughout the plane, inhabiting both the illuminated reaches and the darker waters, dozens of other intelligent races exist, including tritons, merfolk, water mephits, and gillmen. These various races dwell within the realms of the greater powers or in smaller, independent realms of their own. In some cases—especially for the people of Vialesk—they make up for a lack of population and power through unique resources or a capacity to position themselves as independent parties situated between their greater, more populous neighbors.

Notable Sites

The two most famous sites on the Plane of Water are both ancient and mysterious.

Kelizandrika, the Brackish Empire: Considered a demigod by some, the great earth lord Kelizandri rules a vast and poorly demarcated swath of the borderlands between the Plane of Water and the Plane of Earth. Taking the form of a dragon-like creature of earth, metal, and crystal, and claiming to be the offspring of a brine drake and an unknown godling, the so-called Brackish Emperor is, in his own way, a positive force within the plane.

Ratcheting between periods of bloodthirsty activity and torpor seemingly at random, Kelizandri's realm lies

adjacent to the fragmented sahuagin kingdoms. The sea devils often bear the brunt of his fury as convenient and wealthy targets, and the wyrm lays claim to much of their territory. Despite the intermittent bloodshed and destruction, his lurking presence is one of the few things capable of providing any level of political stability and cultural unification among the fractious and warring sahuagin nations.

During his torpor, the dragon's lair exists as one of the greatest lures for treasure hunters, adventurers, and would-be sahuagin princes. The dragon's riches are said to be utterly vast, on the level of a god of wealth. Supposedly Kelizandri lairs within the ruins of an ancient marid city of carved coral and stone that was physically dragged into the depths thousands of years ago. Little of the truth is known, and few ever return from such expeditions for a very good reason—there is no torpor. During his supposed periods of inactivity, Kelizandri allows his earlier victims to recover while gorging himself on krakens, randomly maiming other members of his own species, and even passing among lesser races incognito with an adopted sahuagin, marid, or human form.

Vialesk: The largest of the plane's independent cities and one of the few capable of supporting air-breathers, the trade city of Vialesk also serves as the capital of a small nation of planetouched mortals. Mistakenly called gillmen by some, but referring to themselves as maridar, they are unrelated to the gillmen of Azlant, claiming descent from ancient humans and various planar creatures including marids, mephits, dragons, and even sahuagin.

Vialesk stands atop a massive outcropping of granite drifting through the depths, packed with several tiers of structures—some of which even preceded the maridar—and including marids, mephits, and an unknown eel-like race. Built atop the earlier structures, the city's buildings extend down into the stone as well as up into both the water and a magically tethered bubble of breathable air designed to support visiting merchants. As a result, Vialesk has accrued significant wealth as a middleman between traders and adventurers from other planes and the less-accessible marid and sahuagin civilizations.

Vialesk's origins remain as murky as the depths of its current plane. While the commonly accepted tales of its founding invoke survivors of Golarion's Azlant, and its oldest structures resemble known examples from that culture, questions remain. Similar gillmen inhabit the depths where the ruins of the fallen civilization still exist, but scholars question if the maridar's human ancestors were Azlanti, or merely adopted their civilization's trappings after the fact. If the Azlanti truly did migrate from Golarion, a permanent portal leading to Vialesk might still exist deep in Golarion's oceans, or vice versa.



The Outer Sphere

The Outer Sphere is the destination for the souls of dead mortals. Here is where law and chaos battle over the very fabric of matter, with Axis trying to bring structure to the Maelstrom. Likewise, the Outer Sphere is where good and evil fortify their positions and try to wage war on each other over issues sacred and profane.

THE ASTRAL PLANE

Surrounding the entirety of the Inner Sphere, the awesome void of the Astral Plane stretches out of sight to distances beyond mortal comprehension. But while the physical distance staggers the mind, the great River of Souls reaches across the void, delivering the souls of the dead to their ultimate reward or punishment.

By either natural effect of the cosmos itself or agreement of the gods and planar powers, the souls of the

Astral brook no interference with their natural transit. The powers of the Outer Sphere almost uniformly consider the Astral currents to be inviolate, and it is common to find flocks of souls shadowed by celestial and infernal stewards. Even diametrically opposed stewards possess a vested interest in the traffic, each ensuring that the souls reach their judgment, usually giving either a respectful distance or a cold shoulder to opposing beings serving in the same capacity. However, despite their common role as guardians, antagonistic species sometimes wage fierce conflicts as extensions of the same wars within the Outer Sphere itself, be they demons against devils, archons against proteans, or any other potential combination. The combatants never target the actual souls, but are quite content to destroy one another.



Even if the River sometimes makes strange bedfellows of angels and demons, the spheres are not unified in their opinion regarding the inviolate sanctity of mortal souls. Just like sharks hunting schools of fish in the depths of a terrestrial sea, the astral gulf has predators of its own—predators deadly enough to temporarily unite Heaven and Hell when necessary.

Rarely, the River of Souls faces the greedy, opportunistic predations of night hags (whether alone or in a covey). However, the hags are relatively few in number upon the Astral and so their threat never truly amounts to more than petty theft, and when faced with opposition they flee rather than fight, unwilling to risk their soul-traffic gained elsewhere in the face of the River's diverse guardian armies. The astradaemons (see page 54), however, are a true threat. An endemic blight upon the River of Souls, they are natives of the infernal plane of Abaddon, a fiendish servitor race created and beholden to the will of the Archdaemons. Like an unholy crossbreed of blind, anemic giants and phosphorescent jellyfish, they swim through the Astral with a frightening degree of prowess, leading to the notion that they were created specifically for the task of marauding within the River of Souls. Potent on their own, the fiends tend to travel in cooperative packs, snatching souls with their arms or tentacles and either devouring them or dragging them back, screaming, to the lords of Abaddon.

ABADDON

The infernal realm of Abaddon is perhaps the most openly hostile plane of the Outer Sphere. Cold, cloying black mist covers much of the terrain while the sky provides only the eerie twilight of a perpetual eclipse, barely enough illumination to reveal the surrounding lands in darkened silhouette and the poisoned surface of the River Styx. The memory-devouring river originates in Abaddon and meanders its way across the plane and to realms beyond like a twisted serpent, but it and the other environmental hazards are the least of any traveler's concerns.

The daemons, Abaddon's native fiends, embody not the tyranny of devils nor the savage destruction of demons, nor anything in the middle. Instead, they personify the very concept of death and oblivion. Feared across the multiverse as soul-devouring horrors, the daemons are ruled by a quartet of godlike archdaemons known as the Four Horsemen. They view the mortal realms as nothing more than a waiting feast, and themselves as the universe's chosen tools of a coming apocalypse.

Apollyon

The domain of Apollyon, the Horseman of Pestilence, stretches out over a region equivalent to the surface area of several planets, though the vast majority of the archfiend's

domain is a thinly populated, plague-ridden morass of swamps and flooded forests, the largest of which is known as the Plaguemere. Scattered through Apollyon's domain, cities and citadels rise out of the muck like boils or scabs cresting above raw flesh, many of them built upon the sunken remnants of predecessors. Befitting the worldview of the Four, the majority of them were originally drawn into Abaddon as prizes from conquests of mortal worlds on the Material Plane, usually in the aftermath of plagues spread by the leukodaemons (Apollyon's deacon servitor race), but at times with their mortal populations largely intact. In the latter event, their bones provided the surface upon which later settlements were constructed, and their agonized spirits were devoured by the conquering fiends or sold off as commodities within Abaddon's twisted economy of souls. Ruling from the Throne of Flies, Apollyon stands as a massive pockmarked and plague-scarred man with a ram's head, wrapped in a cloak made from the tanned flesh of a dozen angels stitched together.

The Throne of Flies: Apollyon's throne, a miles-high citadel built from the broken bones of a singularly massive corpse, decorated and surrounded by its flesh and viscera, is an object of hideous appearance and uncertain origin. The corpse's presence within Abaddon predates Apollyon's reign as Lord of Pestilence, but the Throne of Flies was crafted from its flesh by his order. Its identity is also an enigma, variously rumored to be that of a dead god of healing, a rival deific patron of disease, or the body of a protean lord dragged from the formless depths of the Maelstrom and slaughtered like a harpooned whale by Abaddon's daemoniac hordes. The Throne of Flies serves as the Archdaemon's seat of power, situated beneath a sky perpetually filled with clouds of leukodaemons like black flies buzzing above a rotting corpse. Below the endless daemon swarms, a flickering array of gates and portals ushers in the arrival of captive mortals and souls in a long, steady stream up to the rotting ramparts of flesh and bone, where agony and obliteration await.

Charon

The Lord of Death usually takes the form of a tall, skeletal man dressed in moldering robes and a wide-brimmed hat that obscures his face, leaving only a shadowed outline and dimly glowing eyes. At other times the infernal boatman dresses in the rotting finery of a king, cradling a staff hung with mementos and heirlooms stolen from the memories of those drowned in the Styx. Of the domains of the Four Horsemen, his is the simplest, holding only the waters of the Styx and his palace.

The Drowning Court: At a juncture of eight branches of the River Styx, Charon, the Horseman of Death, rules over the floating, moving realm of the Drowning Court. The drifting citadel's core is composed of dozens of artificial



islands chained to one another and the distant shore, anchored in place by unknown means along the fringes of a titanic whirlpool. Lesser satellite islands routinely break away from the Court and flow downstream along the Styx's tributaries toward the Abyss, Hell, the Maelstrom, Axis, or other portions of Abaddon. Charon's servitors, the deacon race of thanodaemons, sail vessels like smaller copies of their dark master's, coming and going with a constant stream of trapped, bought, or stolen souls, or dragging tethered nets filled with gasping and delirious spirits dredged from the river. To a lesser extent, Charon's boatmen carry paid passengers—though not all of them survive their journeys—along the river to distant locations or to meet and bargain with the Archdaemon of Death himself. Many of the latter end up hurled into the river and washed of their memories, their souls collected at the moment of death.

The Whirlpool: At the Court's center, a great and nameless whirlpool coils down into the darkness, the focus of many rumors regarding its purpose and what fate awaits those caught in its fearsome grip. Planar talk says that Charon keeps a storehouse of stolen memories here, either fully inundated by the Styx itself within a sunken

palace or held within a pocket plane accessed through the nexus of currents present at the Drowning Court. For every being that falls prey to the river's mind-stealing magic, their collective knowledge eventually finds its way in bits and pieces to the Horseman of Death, where he and his servitors collect, record, and savor each morsel. The whirlpool represents one of the most potent stockpiles of information on the lower planes, and with careful sifting for useful details, it provides the daemons—or at least Charon—with a powerful tool for exploitation or sale to the highest bidder, who remains completely in the dark as to the source of each purloined gem.

The whirlpool is not the mystery of Charon's domain. That is reserved for the rarely seen method by which the Drowning Court's islands remain tethered to their respective spots within the river itself, and how the thanodaemons' skiffs connect to and decouple from their adjoining islands and quays. Black tentacles like those of a great kraken writhe under the surface, barely distinguishable from the black and polluted waters of the Styx. These tentacles reach out from beneath the stone, wood, or metal of the islands and the thanodaemons' vessels, briefly cresting over the waters' surface before



vanishing once again. Only moments after they dip back below the surface of the Styx, an island changes its position or a boat swiftly and effortlessly crosses the currents of the whirlpool, suggesting that they are responsible for the skiffs' and islands' speed and security. Whether they are some living extension of the thanodaemons or an invoked property of the Styx itself, it is clear that Charon's servitors are anything but simple ferryman.

The Oinodaemon

The nearly forgotten ruler of daemonkind goes by many titles, including the First Daemon, the Lord of the Forsaken, the Oinodaemon, and (by the Four Horsemen) the Bound Prince. While cloaked in mystery and fear, the Oinodaemon's current circumstances are far from the status legends might ascribe to a being of such stature. Once the singular ruler of all daemonkind, the godlike Oinodaemon was betrayed and nearly killed by his most powerful servitors, the daemons Apollyon, Charon, Szuriel, and Trelmarixian's now-forgotten predecessor. The Oinodaemon is feared and worshiped, ritualistically defiled, tortured, and partially consumed by the archdaemons. Sealed away within a crumbling spire at Abaddon's heart, he is concealed from the rest of the cosmos within a region of twisted space, marked only by a series of monoliths, cairns, and petrified trees where the archdaemons' domains border upon his eternal prison.

The archdaemons still revere him. Unwilling or unable to kill their first and greatest, the first Horsemen erected an altar to themselves and the concept of oblivion, and there bound the Oinodaemon in place—dismembered, disemboweled, and mad from the pain. Year after year the fiends returned to mockingly honor their fallen father (or mother—the legends disagree as to which gender applies). Yet though they had usurped their master's power, and maintained and nourished their own by consuming what portions of him regenerated with the passage of time, they never expected the side effects. Feasting on his entrails, swollen with blood glowing with ambient soul-stuff from Abaddon itself, the fiends gorged themselves while mocking their maker, naming him the Bound Prince—and that was when his eyes fixed upon them and he spoke lucidly for the first time.

The contents of the Oinodaemon's words were never recorded, but ever since that first utterance, only the Four Horsemen are allowed to enter the citadel in which he remains imprisoned. Whatever was spoken then, it horrified them, but also set in place the current status quo within Abaddon's hierarchy of power. Since then, the Four have returned regularly, sating themselves on his flesh in a perverse sacrament, struggling to perceive

meaning in the Oinodaemon's screams, the reflections in his eyes, the patterns of his spilt blood, and the regeneration of his undying flesh.

No longer their king, the Oinodaemon serves as an oracle, providing inspiration to the Four through whatever meaning—real or perceived—they manage to extract from his torment. Yet not all meaning is left to chance, for the Oinodaemon has given his children lucid words on other occasions since the first—foretelling with frightening accuracy the death and replacement of former Horsemen, the death of Aroden, and similar planes-shocking events. Many of these proclamations remain unknown, though one of them occurred following the death of the Last Azlanti, and their accuracy remains unsullied even in the current age of uncertainty. For this reason, the archdaemons fear their undying primogenitor, and though he may be crippled, pinned down, quartered, and insane, they still follow his every word.

Szuriel

The Horseman of War and self-described Angel of Desolation appears as a giant, statuesque woman with milky, marble-white flesh and raven-black angelic wings, dressed in gossamer silks and effortlessly carrying a gleaming two-handed sword. Breaking any notion of angelic identity, the archdaemon's solid-black eyes leak a constant stream of blood, and her grin displays a maw of jagged and broken teeth.

Szuriel rules over the largest of Abaddon's domains, a desolate region of dead volcanoes, lifeless basalt plains, fields of razor-sharp obsidian, and the fortress citadels of her ever-marching armies. Her domain is most disturbingly marked not by the march of her soldiers, the deacon race of purrodaemons, but by the aftermath of their conquests—the mountain-like cairns of bleached bones and miles-deep chasms and cracks filled by past and ongoing genocides across the planes.

More so than any other region of Abaddon, Szuriel's realm is openly hostile simply as a result of environmental conditions. Surrounded by uncounted miles of blasted wasteland, the land littered with broken pumice, basalt, and the bones of the dead, anyone moving causes the air to rapidly fill with a localized cloud of fine volcanic glass. Initially any inhalation causes only a simple nagging irritation, but exposure for more than an hour gradually causes internal bleeding and countless tiny ruptures in the lungs, resulting in the affected victims literally drowning in their own bodily fluids and adding another set of bones to the Angel of Desolation's vast domain.

The Cinder Furnace: Szuriel's armies marshal from her throne, known as the Cinder Furnace, deep within the hollowed interior of an extinct volcanic cone at the

heart of her domain. A mockery of the frost-covered peaks of terrestrial mountains, the Furnace and its surroundings are painted a perpetual white by ashfall and a layer of bone, ground to a powder-fine consistency by the purrodaemons' clawed feet. Concealed by the clouds of raining ashes, the soot-darkened sky is even darker around the seat of Szuriel's power, and the only light for miles is that which leaks from the interior of the Cinder Furnace. Inside, Szuriel's servants manufacture fearsome engines of war and weapons for her own armies and those of the other archdaemons', for sale to the highest bidder across the planes, or gifted to mortal rulers foolish enough to bargain for her aid—whether due to delusion as to her true nature or absolute desperation.

Trelmarixian

The newest archdaemon, Trelmarixian the Black, the Horseman of Famine, rules over a twisted realm of bizarre organic constructions, dotted by lakes and rivers of chemicals and bodily fluids. Obsessed with experimentation upon mortal souls, outsiders, and even other daemons, Trelmarixian fills his realm with the results of those trials, both the successful miscegenations and the grotesque failures alike. Among his kindred, Trelmarixian and his servitors elevate the devouring of souls to a ritualistic art form, holding to a near-religious ideology revolving around their experiments upon and consumption of soul-stuff; mortals are the preferred meal, but the cannibalization of other outsiders is common.

Disproportionate in size to his age among the Four, Trelmarixian inherited the realm from his deposed lover and predecessor. A shapeshifting horror by nature, Trelmarixian appears as an anemic, jackal-headed man (sometimes with three heads) with crystalline teeth and burning emerald eyes, composed of a syrupy fluid resembling a churning mix of congealed blood, bile, and mucus, held into form by a tenuous protoplasmic membrane.

The Bile Sluice: Marking the border between the realms of Charon and Trelmarixian is the broad, shallow liquid body known as the Bile Sluice. The stagnant sea originates as a tidal wash from the River Styx mixed with the constant flow of digested soul-stuff, putrid rendered flesh, and alchemical runoff from the Weeping Tower and its satellite citadels. While the vast tidal body eventually siphons off into the Styx, the meladaemons' endless experiments upon mortal and immortal souls cause a cyclical rise and fall, not unlike the tides of a natural ocean. Rather than forming a deep body, the sluice simply expands its footprint as Charon or Trelmarixian sees fit, enlarging the plane locally. Thus, it never reaches more than a dozen feet deep. The tide of the organ-choked fluids and the constant evaporation leaves the shores caked with a sticky rime of crystalline

bile salts and evaporative pillars of the same, which dot the sea like tiny, irregular islands. The most noted aspect of the sluice is not its sickening appearance and residue, but rather the feeling of agony that floods the senses of those near its waters, born of the lingering misery of souls devoured or destroyed within the Weeping Tower as they mingle and fade with the memory-leaching waters of the Styx.

The Broodcomb Field: Covering a hexagonal area some 50 miles on a side, this bizarre region is one of the few remaining constructions of the former Horseman of Famine. Named for its bizarre similarity in form and function to a honeybee's hive, the field is filled with evenly spaced towers of blackened, partially translucent waxy and crystalline secretions rising anywhere from 5 to 50 feet tall—just high enough to accommodate a single entrapped soul of a given species. The ground is sticky with the spilled preservative fluids that inundate each wriggling spirit, and the cells are routinely filled or tapped as needed for consumption, experimentation, or sale within the twisted daemon economy.

The Weeping Tower: The Lord of Wasting rules from a towering structure in the center of his domain, a pseudo-organic lair of crystallized mucus and calcified flesh known as the Weeping Tower. The nightmarish edifice takes its name from the perpetual mewling of millions of entrapped souls, the reverberating screams of those facing the meladaemons' ever-evolving methods of consumption, and the fluids constantly sweating from its living surface as the waste collectively left behind from its inhabitants' meals and activities.

Riddling the tower's interior like the labyrinthine ducts of an infernal organ are laboratories, archives of the meladaemons' work and the history of Abaddon (edited to their lord's approval), and arenas in which public acts of soul-devouring are enjoyed like a combination of art and sacrament. The chambers and passages are typically filled with a fluid vaguely reminiscent of lymph, making entry and egress difficult or impossible for other daemon races. Dry chambers, though an exception, are reserved for ambassadors from the other members of the Four, as well as the rare visitor who intrigues the fiends enough to stave off their appetite.

Urgathoa's & Zyphus's Realms

Abaddon's only true gods, Urgathoa and Zyphus, possess their own domains distinct from the daemon hegemony and are not subject to the ruling whims of the Four. Urgathoa's realm sits on the far side of Szuriel's domain, surrounded by unclaimed wasteland and the holdings of various minor daemon nobles. Shrouded in cold fog, the goddess's realm is filled with cities of the undead engaged in a perverse extension of their own worldly excesses,



worshiping their patron's desires as they indulge their own. Significantly smaller, Zyphus's domain actually lies inside of Urgathoa's, entirely encompassed within its borders, appearing as a massive field of open tombs like a perverse mockery of Pharasma's Graveyard of Souls.

Some mortals wonder why these two gods live on a plane of godless, soul-devouring fiends; the answer is that the daemons invited them. Long ago, Urgathoa and Zyphus had domains on the Material Plane, but at some point—unprompted and unexpectedly—the fiends of Abaddon set aside a domain for each of them and offered to let them stay. Seeing this as a beneficial arrangement, the deities willingly (if warily) accepted. Urgathoa's influence ends at the boundaries of her deific domain, and she makes no attempts to expand it. Simply put, her interests lie within the mortal realms and not within the blasted wastes of Abaddon.

Neither deity uses daemons as servants. The specifics of their arrangement with the daemons are uncertain, but since their arrival in Abaddon, no soul destined for Urgathoa or Zyphus has been devoured or seized from the River of Souls by an astradaemon, their clergy have traveled the river Styx unmolested (though left to find their own paths unless they properly bribe the thanodaemons), and the fiends have never attacked either gods' domain. On the surface, the daemons gain nothing from this bargain. Although, should the soul-devouring fiends anger another god too often and too directly, they might gain a pair of gods in theory willing to shield them from overt retribution, in practice the daemons could care less about divine retribution within their own domains. In addition, both gods' actions on the mortal plane benefit the daemons' long-term goal of the destruction of mortal life. Yet the daemons' true purpose is rather darker—unlimited observation at close range of two deities. Surrounding their guests on all sides, the fiends can study them up close and in detail, and all along the border, daemons sit motionlessly, staring inside, coldly watching whatever they might observe. If approached or challenged, they quickly vanish back into the surrounding fog, only to be replaced further down along the border by another fiend. It is possible that once the daemons have exhausted the supply of mortal souls, they might turn upon their godly guests and the spirit-delicacies preserved within.

THE ABYSS

First visible as great cracks and yawning chasms within the chaotic Maelstrom, the Abyss is a plane of malignant chaos, evil unconstrained by law, and an unplumbed realm of horror where all desires and torments are made flesh. The Abyss has no rules, no order except for the transient, and no laws except those which can be enforced

by the strong upon the weak. The Abyss is a perversion of freedom in which the strongest abuses of others are glorified—a manifest nightmare in which the strong survive by whatever means they see fit.

Native Creatures

While the majority of Abyssal creatures are demons, there are other beings of evil and chaos that roam its depths.

Demons: Comprising such monsters as succubi, vrocks, mariliths, hezrou, balors, and others, demons appeared relatively late in the history of the Abyss, and originated somewhere else entirely. The Abyss, in those ancient eons, was ruled by primeval entities known as the qliploth, fiends removed from the cycle of mortal souls that later came to dominate the Outer Sphere. The first demons began as a corruption of the qliploth, when a long-forgotten daemon lord performed a hideous experiment—the mixing of a newly-formed qliploth with an evil mortal soul. The experiment vastly exceeded the daemon lord's hopes for success, resulting in a chain reaction in the Abyss. As more mortal souls came to the plane, more demons arose. Soon, a single soul could fuel the birth of dozens of demons, and it took little time at all for the demonic host to vastly outstrip the numbers of qliploth and daemon-kind combined. So potent was the combination of Abyssal scion and mortal soul that a new category of life emerged—the demon lord. Legend holds that the daemon responsible for this hideous evolution was executed by a source even more ancient, while others hold that the daemon lord lives still in a self-imposed exile in one of the deepest rifts of the Abyss.

Demon Lords: The godlike demon lords are capable of generating most of their lesser kindred out of the raw stuff of their native plane to suit their whimsy, though just as often their subjects form from the exposure of mortal souls to the energies of the Abyss, from conventional breeding and crossbreeding, and even spontaneously.

Qliploth: When the Abyss first opened into the Outer Sphere, it was already inhabited. Creatures of primal chaos and unrelenting evil, the qliploth survive today although their numbers have been greatly reduced by the far more fecund demons. Qliploth are direct manifestations of the Abyss—chaos and evil unsullied by the failings of mortal souls—and as such represent an altogether more bestial cruelty than even the demonic host itself. The qliploth are inhuman in shape and mind, yet their goals of destruction and cruelty are all too familiar.

Abyssal Fiends: Mortals most often encounter fiends created by and nominally loyal to one of the plane's lords, and as such they often share common traits favored by their demonic masters. But while this allows for convenient categorization, such generalization truly

underplays the horrid variety inherent within the ever-changing Abyss. Some are mindless constructs like the dangerous retrievers, others are hideous predators like the bebiliths, or others even more monstrous in form.

Abyssal Layers

Descending through any of the ever-shifting chasms in the Maelstrom's borderlands, travelers find that the demon-infested cracks ultimately open into individual, self-contained realms larger than planets on the Material Plane. Many such "layers" of the Abyss are uncharted, ever-changing wastelands unclaimed by any ruler or fought over by many. Each such layer connects to one, two, or up to a dozen others, either by natural portals or via cracks and chasms, all of which shift and change at random and at their own pace, sometimes even opening onto the inner surface of the Outer Sphere to abut other planes.

While the hordes of the Abyss pose one of the greatest threats to other planes, and each newly opened rift heralds the emergence of marauding armies of native fiends, the forces of the Abyss have a very distinct reason why they have yet to overwhelm the rest of the cosmos: the Abyss is also at war with itself. No single demon lord can truly abide the existence of its rivals, and while they make alliances and pacts, such things exist only to be broken as soon as it is convenient. As much as demons enjoy the slaughter of other races, the children of the Abyss indulge themselves in bloody sadism against one another even more often, simply because their plane provides a more immediate array of targets and threats.

Those layers claimed by a unique demon lord, prince, or queen (the titles vary and hold little difference in their meanings) are different in that their masters possess control over the landscape, much in the same way that gods control their own realms. Weather changes, terrain shifts, and the very ground becomes a pseudo-living extension of a demon lord's will; such power is one of the reasons why unclaimed layers often serve as battlefields between the demon lords of the Abyss.

Notable Sites

While the demon lords of the Abyss possess near-godlike power, a select number of true deities dwell within the Abyss as well.

The Ashen Forge: Thought dead by most dwarves, and intentionally forgotten by many of his kindred among the dwarven pantheon, Droskar, patron god of the duergar, lives within a crumbling realm deep in the Abyss. A great linked series of hastily built and continually reinforced mine shafts, the entire realm seems to always be on the verge of collapse if not for the actions of the god's petitioners and servants. Despite its nature, the realm never changes in size; as tunnels fail and cave in, others

are mined or uncovered. Their toil notwithstanding, the smithies and forge works that dot the Ashen Forge never produce any objects that live up to Droskar's desires as he endlessly searches for something that can prove to those who forced him into exile that he's capable of true craftsmanship and originality.

Basalfeyst: A pseudo-layer of the Abyss perpetually adjacent to Lamashtu's realm and reliant on her for its very existence, Basalfeyst serves as the home of the quartet of barghest demigods who created Golarion's goblins. For further information on this realm, see Chapter 4.

Diovangia: Situated in a cavern shaped like the linked, spiral chambers of a monstrous, world-sized nautilus shell, Abraxas dwells within a cyclopean stone city, carved whole from the surrounding rock. Each immense tower, keep, and library emerges as if it had always been there, obscured by a now-excavated matrix, hidden and secreted away by the surrounding stone.

The servitors and enthralled souls bound to the Master of the Final Incantation labor within the city, eternally listening to the dreams of their master's faithful, penning down each unique thought as it relates to magic. The demon lord's fiends bargain with mortal wizards, offering power in exchange for their souls or the entire contents of their libraries at a later date, usually stolen away whole at the worst moment for the victimized spellcaster. The libraries that dot the realm hold many stolen repositories of magic, each slowly being transcribed into new books, written in code upon the tanned flesh of devils and mortals alike, and finally reduced to ash once each such work is encrypted.

High M'vania: The realm of Pazuzu, demon lord of winged creatures and the sky, is one of the largest in the Abyss. Virtually endless, High M'vania comprises two distinct regions: a massive, abandoned city and a vast, windswept cliff that encircles and overlooks it. Far from being a collection of ruined structures, the city of High M'vania instead appears almost pristine, like a cold and solemn memorial to a once-thriving metropolis now emptied, abandoned and forgotten by its residents. To a mortal, the city would speak of famine, disease, or the threat of imminent invasion, but in the absence of any evidence, nothing exists but a palpable sterility—at least until one looks up at the sky. High above, nearly blotting out the overcast skies, Pazuzu and his court ride the wind, descending only to hunt petitioners newly arrived to the city and captured enemies intentionally released therein as sport.

Kurnugia: Lamashtu's realm sprawls across a gargantuan stretch of the Abyss, easily capable of swallowing dozens of planets, and according to the Demon Queen's faithful, it has done just that in the past to feed their mother's hunger. Unlike some Abyssal domains, Kurnugia largely resembles



a bizarre amalgamation of terrestrial environments: steaming jungles border parched deserts, ice-rimed forests skirt fields of hallucinogenic flowers, and so on, each region flush with monstrous life.

Befitting Lamashtu's most faithful race, the majority of her realm is populated and ruled by great packs of fiendish gnolls. Gnolls are the default form of those souls who arrive in her domain, and souls that do not adopt such forms quickly become food or slaves.

The Midnight Isles: A realm of drifting islands suspended in a black, mirror-smooth ocean of shifting qualities, the demon lord Noctula's realm is suffused by an eerie, constant silence and supernatural darkness. Each island realm exists as a fiefdom of an individual servitor of the demon lord of darkness and lust, each preoccupied with a particular perversity among its naked but silk-masked populace of petitioners and demons. Succubi and incubi form the bulk of the realms' pseudo-nobility, but unique servitors abound in the gloom, such as the ebon-skinned and blue-eyed Knight of Twelve Sashes and Tongues.

Nesh: The realm of Zura the Vampire Queen is a place of forbidding mountains and fog-shrouded woodlands,

dotted with crumbling castles of Azlanti architecture and villages housing both stolen souls and populations of mortals deluded into believing that they still inhabit the Material Plane. When night comes and the fog rises, Zura and her chosen servants—many a type of unique vampiric fiend—rise from their keeps and sepulchers. There in the twilight, they mingle with the innocent, indulging themselves in selective, ornate feasts full of baroque pomp or violent, orgiastic slaughters as Zura sees fit, only to recreate the situation until the coming of dawn.

The Rasping Rift: The realm of Deskari, the Lord of the Locust Host, exists as a twisted maze of chasms choked with a living carpet of vermin. Rats, roaches, beetles, serpents, and all manner of flying insects perpetually swarm through the realm's passages, producing a low droning sound as their movements and screams interact with the ambient acoustics, sounding like the beating wings of a great and terrible locust. Deskari, a great centaur-like insect creature with clouds of insects for wings, rules from within a ruined city, inundated by a squirming lake of agonized petitioners, each newly arrived within the realm. Those not devoured by the demon lord or his servitors slowly transform into dozens,

hundreds, or thousands of the hive-mind vermin that populate the layer.

AXIS

The Eternal City of Axis exists among the planes of the Outer Sphere as the personification of universal law, a shining example of perfect order and harmony rising out of the churning Maelstrom. Within the plane's golden barrier walls, the streets are perfectly ordered and clean, the buildings appear as paragons of their respective architectural styles from virtually every culture within the multiverse, and the natives strive to live in orchestrated harmony. Of course, some would label the plane's perfection hollow, or its beauty verging on sterility, but given the eternal city's violent history and perhaps precarious present standing, its gods and outsiders alike dismiss such criticism outright.

Dedicated to eternally expanding the city's borders to pacify the surrounding Maelstrom borderlands, the natives of Axis are ever at war with the forces of chaos, just as they have been since the plane's founding eons ago. In return for their belligerence—perhaps even for simply existing—the tides of the Maelstrom and the Abyss are ever lapping at their feet, threatening to inundate them entirely. Still, they persevere, seeking to understand the cosmos as well as see it progress into a structured, perfect future free of the taint of chaos.

Native Creatures

Outside of the plane's resident gods, their own petitioners and direct servants, three outsider races populate the eternal city of Axis: axiomites, formians, and inevitables.

Axiomites: The axiomites operate as the overseers, architects, and caretakers of Axis as a whole. Humanoid in appearance, covering the entire spectrum of civilized races, in truth they exist as beings of living mathematics, physical manifestations of Axis's laws. They raised Axis out of the raw probability of the Maelstrom, bringing order to formless chaos, and by themselves or with their construct armies and allies among archons and devils alike, they seek to establish that same order across all the cosmos.

Formians: Axis's formians exist within two distinct subspecies, the conventional so-called "centaur ants" and a flying, wasp-like variant rarely seen on the Material Plane. Extremely territorial by nature, the formians of both varieties live in peace with their neighboring residents of Axis, but only by virtue of nightmarishly complex treaties and protocols governing the borders of each individual hive and responsibilities given and owed. The situation between hives is much more violent, with an almost ritualistic state of perpetual warfare existing between the warrior castes of each hive, their queens continually jockeying for political power and prestige,

even as their hives work toward common goals as they pertain to Axis as a whole.

Inevitables: Unlike the other two native races, the inevitables are constructs rather than outsiders, and were created in order to fulfill distinct and supremely important roles. Mass-produced in enormous factories, the soulless inevitables patrol the streets of Axis, defend its portals and outer walls, act as agents of Law across the planes, and most importantly make war upon the forces of chaos, primarily the Maelstrom and the Abyss.

Notable Sites

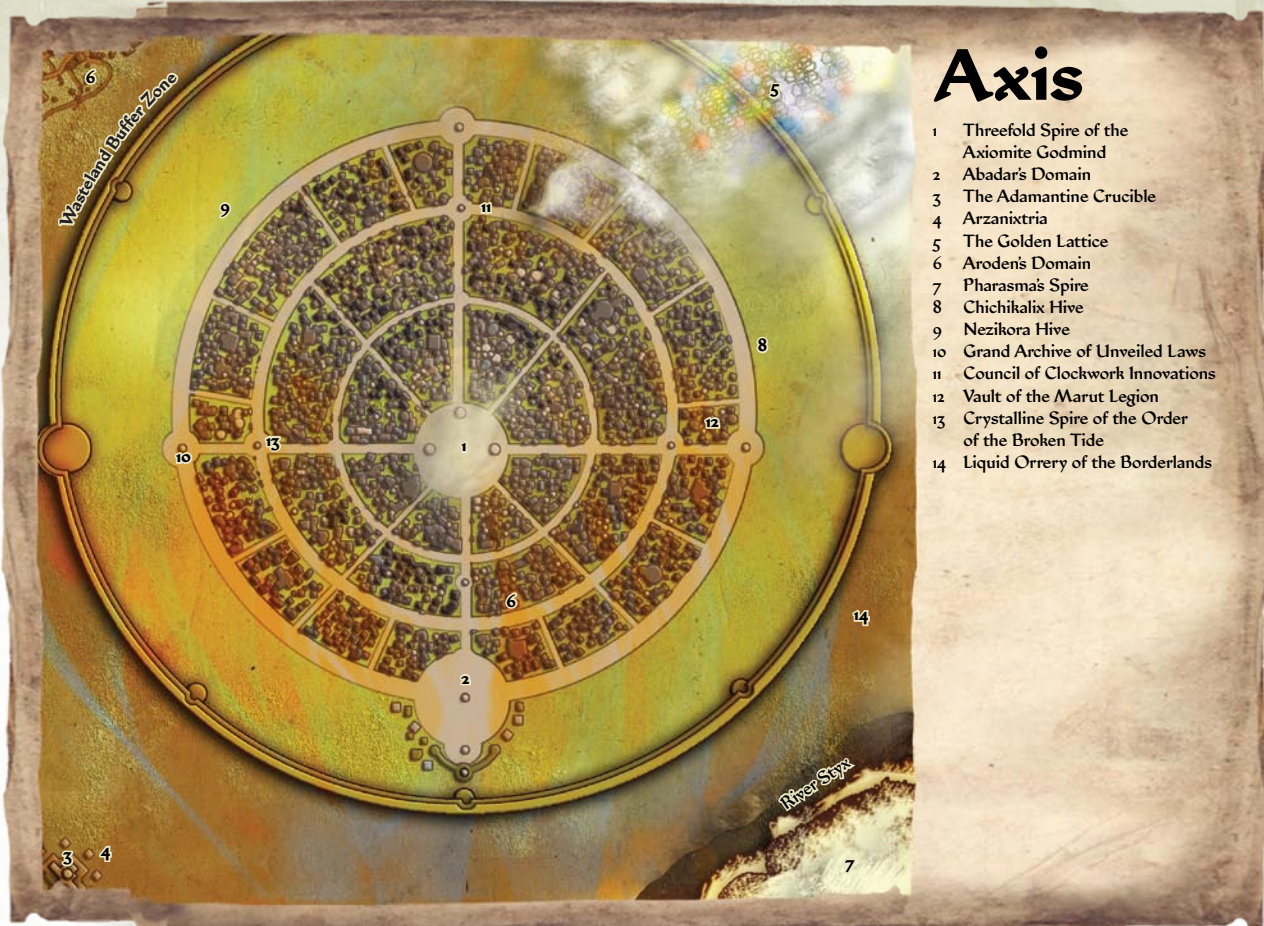
Axis has many interesting regions, most of them representing the perfection of order.

Abadar's Domain: The god of civilization holds sway over one of the largest regions in Axis, a grandiose city within the Eternal City. Abadar's deific domain is distinguished by its own unique architecture, which blends together the styles of each mortal race that holds the god of civilization in high regard, as well as indicating an obvious boundary over neighboring regions in the city.

While the domain does not possess any grand walls or barriers separating it from the rest of Axis—the god's contractual agreements with the plane's natives make it unnecessary—entry can only be attained through four points. Each such gateway is defined by a great freestanding archway of solid gold, marked with Abadar's holy symbol of a golden key and watched over by the golden colossus Lawgiver, Abadar's herald. The titan's presence graces each of the four gateways simultaneously, either by divine replication or by somehow existing in four places at once via arrangement with the axiomite Godmind. (It's likely that it exists in even more places simultaneously, since the gates are never unguarded but the titan is widely known to serve its patron on quests across other planes.)

The Adamantine Crucible: Sprawling across nearly 100 square miles of territory, the Adamantine Crucible exists as a massive fortress factory dedicated to the production of the inevitable armies of Axis. Great machines separate metal from raw ores, and vast lake-sized smelting pits further refine the materials that serve as the skin and skeletons of the machine armies. So existentially vital are the forgeworks to the plane of Axis that each production line, from raw ore to completed inevitable, operates independently from the next, comprising thousands of individual cells still capable of production even with the loss of every other should there come a truly massive assault from the depths of the Maelstrom or the Abyss.

Aroden's Domain: In Axis nothing happens without plans or contingencies, and nothing exists unbound by the intricate web of treaties and arrangements woven between outsiders and gods. Everything from the size of formian



hives to the timing of axiomite expeditions into the borderlands, and even the regular flow and distribution of petitioners, is bound by the immutable laws and contracts of the eternal city. The death of the god Aroden was the lone exception to that eternal status quo.

In the wake of Aroden's death, the axiomites hastily convened with utter secrecy, for the first time in their history manifesting the Godmind without allowing the presence of Axis's gods or the ruling formian matriarchs. Over the course of 3 days the inevitable factories ground to a silent halt and the Threefold Pillar visibly shuddered and rang like a discordant chime as the equations swirling around its body shifted, changed, and rewrote themselves with variables hitherto and since unseen. Three days later the pillars returned to their calm silence and the Axiomite Godmind declared Aroden's realm a distinct region unto itself and no longer a portion of Axis until such time as it was fully and rightfully claimed by a new ruler. Since then, the Eternal City itself has retracted from the shattered domain, with a buffer of crystalline sand and a circular golden wall demarcating the region, with the axiomites and inevitables keeping watch over the area just as intently as they do their borders with the Maelstrom.

Arzanixtria: The largest of the formian hive cities exists directly below the Adamantine Crucible, responsible for feeding the forges and delivering a constant supply of raw materials. As one of the most important points in Axis, blessed and burdened by its pivotal role, the massive hive also serves as the seat of power for the eldest formian queen. Occupied by millions of workers and warriors, Arzanixtria is ruled over by the eponymous, aging formian queen from whom all the current lesser formian matriarchs descend. The current queen will at some point decades or centuries hence be succeeded (and ritually consumed) by one of her three larval daughters, and the cycle renewed.

The Golden Lattice: Drifting high above the Eternal City, the wasp-formians' matriarch queen Delsandrianix XXI rules from her floating hive-city known as the Golden Lattice. Attended by hundreds of thousands of sexless workers and a small council of drone consort-advisors, she coordinates her children's activities and those of the lesser hive cities that populate the sky of Axis.

The wasp-formian city is constructed of what appears to be paper-thin golden fibers spun into glittering geometric designs, all partially transparent to light, suffusing the entire structure with something like the light of thousands

CLAIMING ARODEN'S DOMAIN

Several factions seek to control what remains of the god Aroden's broken realm.

Illorpha: One of the larval formian queens, this ambitious child is unwilling to wait for her mother's death or the eventual expansion of the Eternal City to provide her with virgin territory in which to establish a hive. The youngest but most ambitious of the pupae formian matriarchs intends to colonize and rule the former domain for herself, rebuilding it in her own image with the eventual goal of superseding whichever of her sisters becomes the Queen Matriarch's handpicked successor.

Methricandra: Also known as the Razor-Tongued Erinyes Queen, this creature formerly served as a member of the archdevil Mephistopheles's court. By seizing control of Aroden's domain, she seeks to establish herself as a minor divinity in her own right, perhaps to then rule at Asmodeus's side as his favored consort, or even challenge the God-Tyrant himself for control of Hell.

Milani: Already a minor demigoddess, Milani maintains a stable domain (if only a few square miles) near the heart of Aroden's realm, offering shelter, rest, and even divine aid to those seeking to expel the forces of evil. Of course, her actions ultimately support her divine portfolio and in the course of time would only further her claim upon Aroden's domain, something which has made her pacified sector a major target not only by infernal claimants, but by several formian hives as well.

Others: Those wishing to claim this prize include at least two other exiled minor diabolic nobles, Cormandrian (an archon servitor of Iomedae), a troupe of several dozen mortal paladins, a non-evil lich of uncertain original species, the so-called Children of the Reborn Glory (who seek to resurrect Aroden), several dragons (both metallic and chromatic), and a mad former solar of Aroden leading a wailing congregation of grief-stricken petitioners all of whom are still unwilling to accept their divine patron's death.

of stained glass windows. The hive casts a similarly prismatic, multi-hued footprint upon Axis.

Norgorber's Domain: As with all mortal cities wishing to declare their own perfection and shining status for all the world to see, there exists a dark underbelly, an illicit underworld populated by thieves and all of a society's malcontents and castaways. Axis lacks any hypocritical sense of morality, valuing only the practical, but like those mortal cities, it too contains its own version of a corrupt but thriving undercity in the form of the deific domain of Norgorber, god of thieves and murder. As intricate as the plane's formian tunnel networks, Norgorber's domain connects to disparate points across Axis, and not always in a conventional manner.

Far from facing condemnation or war, the underground domain of sprawling tunnels and caverns filled with shadows and shady inhabitants are accepted as necessary by the native gods and outsiders. While Norgorber and his servants may not always follow the letter or spirit of the laws to which they agree (laws which theoretically bind all of Axis's inhabitants), their unreliability is anticipated and planned for. The utility provided by the god of thieves (and his role as King of Thieves for the largest such guild in the largest city in the cosmos) allows most of Axis to turn a blind eye to his activities in the name of pragmatism.

Pharasma's Spire: The base of Pharasma's Spire looms over the city of Axis, partially surrounded by the pooled waters of a branch of the River Styx. Penned in by the same style of golden walls that the city's residents use to protect the plane along its borders with the Maelstrom and Abyss, the polluted waters are constantly watched by a full guard of inevitables and their axiomite overseers, as well as the occasional troupe of formians. Thanodaemons lurk on the water, selling information gleaned from the Styx. For more information, see the Boneyard section.

Threefold Pillar of the Axiomite Godmind: By far the tallest artificial structure in Axis, the Threefold Pillar of the Axiomite Godmind serves as the centerpiece of axiomite society. Each crystalline obelisk displays a constantly evolving stream of equations—physical manifestations of the axiomites' continual attempts to calculate and model the cosmos and its intrinsic laws. The structure exists at the center point of Axis itself, like a seed from which the city sprouted, emerging as a distinct entity from the roiling chaos of the Maelstrom.

The physical gap between the towers serves as the space where the axiomite Godmind manifests, usually as a burning, star-like point of light, surrounded by a swirling, obscuring cloud of symbols. When not used as such, the towers serve as the seat of mundane governance among the three segments of axiomite society, and a common ground for negotiations.

THE BONEYARD

Rising up from its base near the perfect city of Axis and stretching into the Astral Plane to an unimaginable height, Pharasma's Spire holds a unique place among its fellows within the Outer Sphere. Also known as the Boneyard, the Spire directly receives mortal souls arriving at the end of their long astral migration. There in Pharasma's courts, beneath the gaze of celestials and fiends alike, the souls of the dead receive judgment on their ultimate place within the Great Beyond.

Pharasma's Court

While the River of Souls arrives at Pharasma's domain atop the Spire, not all souls undergo the same process.



Some souls come having already made their choices via their actions and beliefs, while others with more conflicted natures—or pre-existing pacts to specific entities—make their decisions at the advice or temptation of infernal and divine suitors, who are eager to sway their spirits in one ideological direction or another, or with Pharasma's direct arbitration if need be.

Each of the Eight Courts—one for each aligned plane of the Outer Sphere—sprawls across dozens of miles and draws the souls of those whose inner natures mirror those of their linked planes, or the souls of those pledged to specific deities dwelling on those planes. Each court is centered on a large, permanent portal to its plane and a smaller number of ancillary gates to specific domains or deific realms.

The Devouring Court: Unlike the other seven courts, the part of the Boneyard devoted to Abaddon is a barren and forbidding place, devoid of any sense of splendor, and possessed of a palpable misery that emanates from the mirror-smooth and pitch-black surface of its central portal. No emissaries of the daemon lords stand in the court—they and their servitors are specifically banned—and only the rare proxies of Urgathoa and Zyphus stand out among the damned souls. Those souls destined for Abaddon that have not already been chosen by the gods face the portal and its low, visceral scream, which is punctuated by the sounds of gnashing teeth and dripping spittle.

The Graveyard of Souls: Beyond and surrounding the courts lies a vast and seemingly endless expanse of graves, crypts, and funerary monuments in the styles of nearly every race and culture across the mortal sphere, representing the ultimate destination of those souls whose very nature denied and corrupted itself: atheists. Some atheist souls escape this fate, and are allowed to exist as strange disembodied spirits in the Astral or even to reincarnate on the Material Plane, as according to complex judgements rendered by Pharasma, but most end up buried here, their imprisonment less a punishment than it is a quarantine.

For any visitor entering the Graveyard, the vast field of graves is without end. They can travel for a thousand miles and never venture beyond it, all the while passing among the cold, quiet crypts that feel suffused with a sorrow at odds with cemeteries blessed by Pharasma's clergy on the Material Plane—no glory or rebirth awaits the souls entrapped therein. Not all the spirits lead a dormant existence. Some wander in a confused, amnesiac haze, while others desperately beg for aid or curse passersby with the fury of the damned. The rare few are at peace with their fate, and wander the graveyard as custodians or guardians.

The Inner Court: The souls arriving in Pharasma's Court do not always gravitate toward a specific plane and its linked court. A soul might be split in its nature between

Axis and Hell, or at their death might have suddenly embraced the faith of Sarenrae while otherwise they had been strictly aligned with the moral precepts of the Abyss for most of their sinful life. In such cases—which occur frequently—the shuffling of souls is less an orderly process of identification and selection than it is an instance of interested parties advocating their cases to each conflicted soul within the Inner Court, which surrounds Pharasma's Palace in a collection of solemn granite forums and plazas. The arguments are often long and fierce, but violence is exceedingly rare except for souls torn between such opposing ideologies.

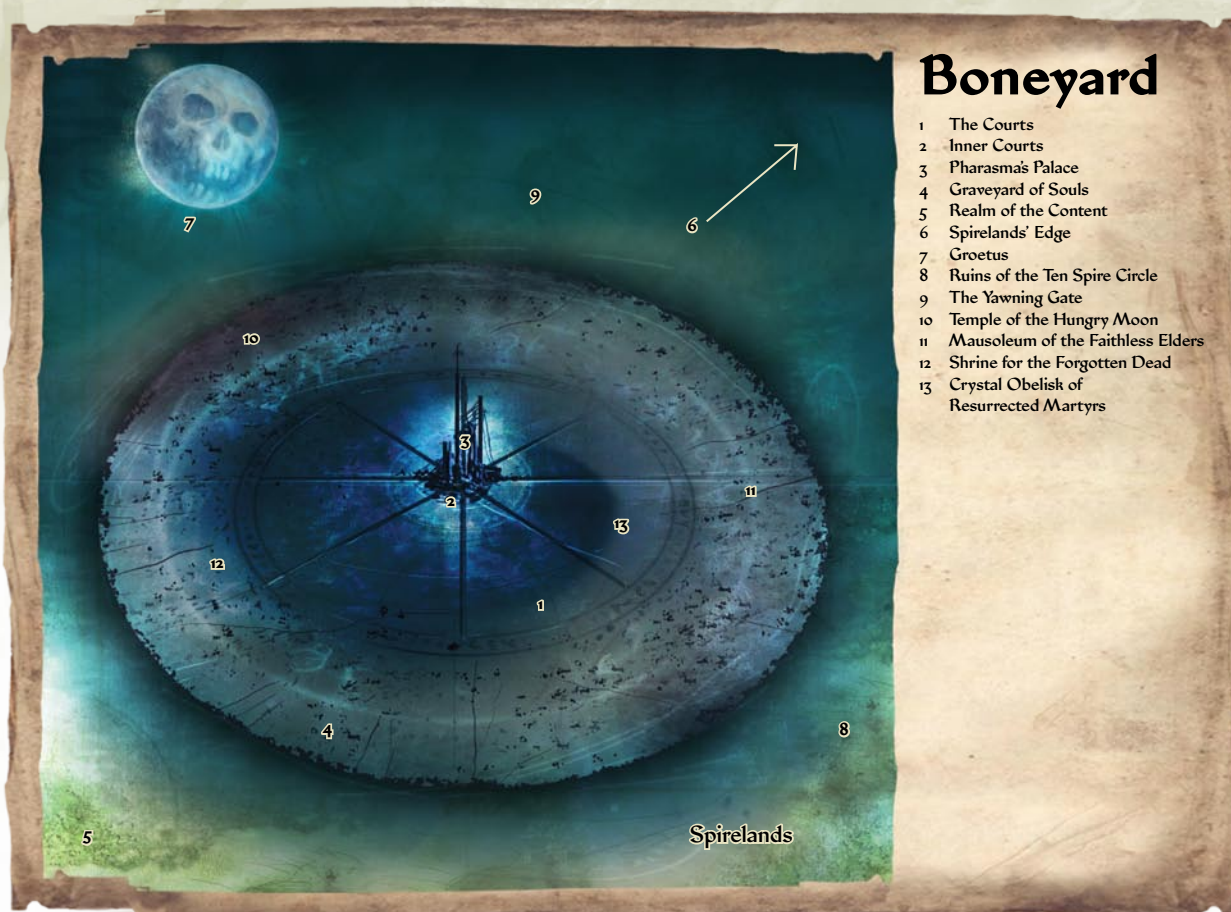
Pharasma's Palace: The Inner Court does not resolve the most difficult of cases: those of souls already pledged by contract (often to one of the infernal powers) who regretted the pact and actively sought redemption toward another alignment. The debate in such cases occurs not in the courts, but in Pharasma's direct presence within the goddess's palace, with the conflicted parties often sending their most powerful representatives specifically chosen for the task, such as the unique albino protean Ssila'meshnik, the pit fiend Dorikon the Bile-Tongued, or the solar Fallisimor the Redeemer.

Pharasma's Palace harbors the Lady of Graves and her worshipers' souls. A soaring gothic structure, the palace stands in contrast to Pharasma's often somber and dour nature, constructed of white marble glowing with an inner light and bearing floors paved in onyx, representing the goddess's dualistic power over birth and death.

Groetus

Drifting above the Graveyard of Souls like a grim judge, the demigod Groetus takes the form of a distantly orbiting moon. Known as the God of the End Times, and worshiped only by tiny cults and solitary madmen plagued with bizarre, alien visions, Groetus is an enigma. His relationship with Pharasma is unclear, as is his origin, and some speculate that Groetus actually predates the goddess of birth and death. Still, his association with the Graveyard itself is clear—if a closely guarded secret.

The demigod rotates around the Spire in a decaying orbit, ever so slowly drifting closer and closer, making his dread countenance clearer by the day, but as he reaches a certain point something happens and he ascends once more to a greater distance. The souls of Pharasma's Court draw Groetus like a magnet draws iron, but something about the souls of the self-damned bottled and trapped within the Graveyard has the opposite effect. Periodically the demigod seems to be propitiated with the poisoned gift of one such soul, as he is literally fed the essence of one of the Graveyard's imprisoned spirits, forestalling the whispered apocalypse that would occur should he ever contact the Spire itself.



Notable Sites

While Pharasma's Court and the surrounding Graveyard of Souls are among the most important and widely known locations within the Outer Sphere, they comprise only a fraction of the plane's area. Despite being named Pharasma's Spire, the domains universally associated with it are the only ones commonly visited by non-natives, and the plane itself seems to desire it that way.

The Lake of Mortal Reflections: While many of the spirits who dwell in the Realm of the Content are satisfied with an afterlife that resembles an idealized mortal existence, one free of hunger, sickness, or infirmity, there are other paths their souls may ultimately take. Each time one such spirit undergoes another cycle of death and rebirth in a new form, it finds itself on the shores of a vast body of water known as the Lake of Mortal Reflections.

Not appearing on any map of the Spirelands, the shores are always cool and cloaked with a rolling fog that obscures all surrounding features except the waters, and while the waves lap at the rocky shore, each spirit hears the scattered echoes of sounds from the Material Sphere. Looking down at the waters, each spirit sees itself as it was in life, and in the lake the spirits see neither a sandy bottom nor gloomy

depths, but scenes of their own mortality. Whatever the reaction, the scenes gradually shift and reflect the possibilities that await each spirit should it consider rebirth and reincarnation as a mortal once more. Gender, physical form, and even planet may vary depending on the mysterious possibilities and laws that govern the cosmos in such matters, and the scenes may be pleasant or ill, but above all there is a choice in the decision.

Spirits desiring rebirth reach out into the waters, touching the beckoning hands that rise like reflections from the surface before being pulled below the waves and vanishing. At times the reaching hands appear lithe and female, possibly the hands of Pharasma herself, while at other times they seem to be those of whatever reborn shells the spirits choose on the mortal sphere. Those who choose not to accept the offered reincarnation vanish back into the mists and find themselves within the Spirelands once more, knowing the offer will be extended again in due course should they seek it.

The Realm of the Content: Neutral souls untouched by any gods and not having committed any heresy worthy of drawing Groetus's hungry gaze do not remain within Pharasma's Court. While they all draw the offers and attentions of various outsiders seeking to nudge their



souls in one particular direction, only a slender minority accept such temptations. For the remainder, the Graveyard of Souls is not an endless stretch of moldering tombs and crypts, but a brief and transitory path.

Beyond the Graveyard is a vast and varied landscape that seems to encompass every possible environment of the Material Plane. Within these realms—collectively known as the Spirelands—the neutral dead carry on much as they did in life, but with the time and ability to pursue all they enjoyed or were never able to partake of during their mortal existence. Farmers labor at idealized fields, artisans perfect their craft, and warriors fight against foes they might have only dreamed of while still mortal.

Mysteries of the Spire

Often spoken of, but never examined except in passing, the Spire itself has its own unique mysteries. Some legends say that Pharasma constructed the Spire herself, forming it out of the raw stuff of the Maelstrom when the first of Golarion's gods fashioned reality. Other, older sources maintain that Pharasma claimed the summit of a preexistent Spire as her own, taking possession and responsibility over the beacon of souls which may have been constructed and subsequently abandoned by an earlier divinity, scouring away most traces of those earlier powers.

Admittedly, some of the tombs within the Graveyard of Souls display an alien iconography revolving around a pantheon of gods of whom only Groetus can be readily identified. The lands atop the Spire possess a tendency to wrap around themselves, preventing accidental egress upon the absolute edge of their boundary. However, determined travelers can literally will themselves to find that border, reaching a desolate stretch of land where the forests and fields wither away to bare rock before meeting the void and the plummeting, unimaginable drop down to the city-plane of Axis. Anyone diving from the height passes massive, yawning archways in the rock that lead deeper into the Spire's interior, broken and winding stairs that spiral up the Spire's length for miles at a stretch, and hundreds of small, vacant niches.

ELYSIUM

A plane of wild beauty and passion, encompassing the highest mountains and deepest seas within the Outer Sphere, Elysium exists as the personification of benevolent chaos. It is the plane of freedom, creativity, and artistry, unbound by convention, but also a plane of competition, conflict, and hedonism that can easily be taken to debilitating extremes by unprepared mortals. Elysium and its residents reward the worthy and the brave, but offer little to the foolish, and actively oppose those who would seek to exploit or despoil the plane and its chosen, exalted concepts of unfettered good.

Azatas

The most powerful and numerous of Elysium's outsiders, the fey-like azatas are also the most likely to be felt rather than seen. Obsessed with individual freedom and creativity, valuing independence from restrictive external obligations, the azatas are oftentimes loath to directly involve themselves in planar politics outside of Elysium. Rather, the chaotic celestials prefer to act more subtly, providing inspiration and aid to help the oppressed free themselves and better their own situations. They foster the idea that freedom benefits a mortal society over simply deposing one tyrant in favor of another.

Within Elysium, azata society is fiercely competitive, with rank and influence a reflection of acts and deeds rather than birthright. Yet despite their independence, the azatas still often pledge shifting allegiance to factions like the Court of the Muse, the Court of the Wanderer, the Court of the Burning Gale, and others whose names loosely describe their worldly calling and the character of their ruling lord. But true to their secretive nature, azata shapechangers often travel incognito, taking the forms of animals, mortals, or even weather patterns like waves or gusts of wind, and often mask their elaborate cities, holding them just out of phase or cloaking them in illusions woven from the plane itself. The only proven way to find the azatas is to be worthy of their attention, and freely and openly request their aid or presence.

Titans

Generally reclusive, living in opulent mountaintop retreats and floating palaces, the titans arrived on Elysium as refugees, fleeing a war or disaster so utterly horrific that to this day they refuse to speak of it or even say on what plane they originated. The titans of Elysium are significantly larger than those found on the Material Plane, and unlike their mortal kindred, they uniformly align with the forces of good. They are patrons of the arts, and often stock their homes with all manner of collected curios and objects of vanity, only to give things to one another or worthy visitors.

Notable Sites

From the homes of gods to the sites of ancient battles, Elysium contains numerous important regions.

Calistria's Domain: Very little exists to distinguish Calistria's domain from the lush forests and fields that populate the section of Elysium where she resides. Once inside, however, visitors may gradually notice the slight buzzing of wasps in the deep and otherwise silent forest, and then quite abruptly find themselves wandering a hedge maze of rose bushes or standing before one of the Savored Sting's palatial, baroque manors. Within her domain, lust is freely taken and given, but so are the more bitter



Elysium

- 1 Cayden Cailean's Domain
- 2 Domain of Calistria's
- 3 Realm of Findeladlara
- 4 Drifting Palace of Teurelia the Heartbroken
- 5 The Field of Broken Tyrants
- 6 Mariik's Obelisk
- 7 Wave-Walking Court
- 8 The Boundless Azure Ocean
- 9 Gorum's Domain
- 10 The Wandering City of Emerald Song
- 11 Yuelra's Domain
- 12 Court of the Muse
- 13 Court of the Burning Gale
- 14 Titan Graveyard
- 15 The Painted Forest
- 16 Mountain of Lingering Soulsong
- 17 Forest of Wild Apples and Wilder Magic
- 18 Court of Forgiving Wrath
- 19 Embassy of the Angelic Host

fruits of the experience, and unlike Elysium as a whole, benevolence is not always their primary focus. While the fickle goddess of trickery, lust, and revenge often shifts her realm's location, the fluid and indeterminate nature of its borders persists wherever she sees fit to establish herself at any given moment.

Cayden Cailean's Domain: Cayden Cailean's deific domain is split into roughly two portions, both reflecting the Drunken Hero's persona as a carefree mortal adventurer and divine patron of the same. Of all Elysium's gods, the native creatures of Elysium find Cayden Cailean's the most kindred spirit, and their support is steadfast.

At the heart of his domain is an inner, urban cityscape of mixed architectural styles filled with a multitude of bars, breweries, and feast halls where his petitioners and servitors share tales and boast of their deeds over all manner of drink. Fights are common and even expected, but always started with the full knowledge that whatever the outcome, a hangover is the worst that can befall them so long as they fight with passion rather than anger.

Matching this same attitude, surrounding the revelry at the domain's heart, stand the so-called Fields of Battle. Here warriors come not to tell their tales but to create them, testing themselves and their courage against one

another or against any unknown but suitable opponent or situation provided. While Cayden Cailean's divine servants often select the challenges, many times the native azatas perform this task as well, offering rewards commensurate to the risk, especially when mortals are involved. Cayden Cailean's herald, the five-winged celestial named Thais, frequently observes the Fields of Battle and zealously partakes in the revelry at the domain's heart.

Desna's Castle: This goddess maintains a small flying castle on Elysium, though her true home is on the Material Plane among the stars.

The Field of Broken Tyrants: A vast stretch of fields and forest lies littered with the remnants of a truly massive, ancient battle. Bones and ruined weapons break through the ground at random, while armor and the rusted husks of siege engines rest in cairn-like piles. Separated from the unknown and scattered remains, and always found within the forested portions of the field, lie blank monuments and standing stones surrounded by stacks of ancient azata weapons and armor arranged like fairy ring mushrooms, themselves surrounded by perpetually blooming wildflowers, even though the forest's tree cover provides little light for the flowers' growth. Visitors



wandering the field sense palpable sorrow and relief, like that felt by freedom fighters in the aftermath of the fall of a tyrannical regime: the elation of victory, but also the humbling sorrow of fallen comrades.

Findeladlara's Realm: The domain of this elven goddess comprises numerous mountaintop castles linked by ornate silver and glass bridges, often overlooking Calistria's domain at a respectful distance.

Gorum's Domain: As god of strength, battle, and weapons, Gorum makes his home a massive battlefield. Interspersed with fortified keeps facing daily sieges—only to reappear intact each dawn—his rolling and bloodstained plains proved a place for his petitioners to wage continual, disordered combat, the entirety of their existence devoted to the heat and frenzy of battle. Unlike Cayden Cailean's domain, where individual accomplishment and bravery are valued, Gorum and his souls care only for the heady rush of spilt blood and the violent glory of war. The entirety of Gorum's domain is encircled by a meandering line of ancient, weathered stones, each impaled with a gleaming, untarnished azata blade, and inscribed in various languages with the phrase: "Thus the pledge is sealed, and thus you are accepted, forever with our thanks, come what may."

Ketephy's Realm: This elven god's domain is an area populated by a deep forest of spruce and pine and dotted with a multitude of isolated hunting lodges and small towns. The god tends to wander, and his realm follows behind at a slow pace, defying attempts to permanently map his domain's location.

The Wandering City of Emerald Song: One of Elysium's more unique locales is not so much a city as it is the periodic gathering of hundreds of groups and clans of lillends. When they gather—never at the same spot within the plane—they briefly form a sprawling, unbound settlement of pavilion tents and open-air buildings and forums magically molded and conjured from stone, crystal, and multicolored blown glass. The city remains for days or weeks as a celebration of artwork, performances, food, and general revelry for the sake of revelry before the lillends depart, leaving the city's buildings and public works of art to slowly dissolve into nothingness over an equal amount of time.

Yuelral's Domain: This elven goddess's small realm is easy to recognize for structures of raw crystal that spring up from the ground or out of the trunks of great trees. It is home to druids, fey creatures, and azatas interested in nature and woodland magic.

HEAVEN

Towering high above the landscape of the Outer Sphere stands the plane of Heaven, the domain of the archons and the bulwark of enlightened order. A realm of law and good,

its natives see little to distinguish the two concepts: order is good, and good is order, while both chaos and evil are a perversion of the proper nature of the cosmos.

Almost as wide as it is tall, Heaven is a solitary, massive mountain rising up from the surrounding chaos of the Maelstrom. At times so gently sloping as to resemble flat plains, and other times filled with hills or spiraling cliffs and jagged rocks, the plane supports almost every lush environment possible. But whatever the environment, the landscape is filled with stately and ordered towns and cities, while forests, meadows, and cultivated fields exist in harmonious balance with one another, with the archons' fortresses and grand constructions standing among them all with a presence truly awesome to behold.

Petitioners

Heaven's petitioners arrive at the mountain's base, within view of the massive crystalline walls and golden gates that gird their new home. As they watch the archon armies marching forth, each soul is shown that his or her salvation (and ultimately that of the cosmos) only comes through sacrifice and struggle, and that such is not the struggle of individuals, but the cooperative acts of families, groups, nations, worlds, and planes. Through order good is sustained, and likewise compassion fosters order.

Each petitioner not destined to join one of Heaven's patron gods is cataloged by the plane's archon judges, who are appointed by the seven celestial paragons of their plane. The judges assign each spirit a form (usually resembling its shape as a mortal) and a specific region of the mountain that best suits its nature (if possible, reuniting it with family or friends already in Heaven). Heaven's petitioners arm the great archon armies and support their crusades to further expand their dominion, bettering the cosmos by their labor.

Archons

Unlike the other good-aligned planes of Nirvana and Elysium, only a single race of celestials populates Heaven: the archons. All the archons that have ever been began their existences as mortals. After their deaths and subsequent arrival before the judges, souls are asked, "Does our judgment suit you?" Many souls nod in agreement—such is the judges' ability to read the nature and needs of their charges—but souls destined to become archons pause, look up to the summit of the mountain, and shake their heads. Each judge knows the meaning of that response, even if the soul in question might not. The confused spirit is released from the archons' queue and allowed to wander invariably toward the mountain's soaring heights. When the spirit returns, descending from the mysterious summit, it does so no longer as a petitioner, but as an archon.

The archons are often described as a race designed from their lowest to highest ranks as the perfect army. Foremost

in the archons' eyes is the Abyss, and their armies drive deep into the Maelstrom borderlands to fight demons as they emerge from each newly opened chasm. They have even brought their holy war into the Abyss itself, though such instances are rare and hideously costly. While many archons take orders from their paragon leaders, a nearly equal number serve the lawful good gods whose domains are in Heaven.

Notable Sites

Presented below are just a few of the myriad deific realms and important bastions of goodness that have sprung up along Heaven's slopes.

The Empty Palace of Melek Taus: High upon the slopes of the celestial mountain stands a massive palace with walls of steel rather than stone, larger than any but the greatest fortresses at the mountain's base that stand watch over the Maelstrom's borderlands. Elegant flying buttresses of silver decorate the ramparts, covered with breathtaking gemstone mosaics that depict many of Heaven's greatest victories against the horrors of the Abyss and the Maelstrom. Yet for all its majesty, no archons patrol the hold's walls or man its watchtowers, the gates lie open to the wind, and no lord sits upon its throne. The palace stands empty and vacant except for the flapping pennants and standards of its lost and vanished lord. The archons in her service and elsewhere on the mountain believe that Melek Taus, the Peacock Angel, never died. Perhaps captured by fiends or imprisoned by a mortal sorcerer, or gravely injured deep in the Maelstrom and still recovering from her wounds, the chance exists that she will return in glory to reclaim her throne, and that hope drives her champions who dedicate their crusades to her name, and to the slender chance that they or another hero might find and release her one fateful day.

Erastil's Domain: The deific domain of Erastil, the god of farming, hunting, trade, and family, stands on the gentle slopes of the fourth tier of Heaven. True to his ethos, Old Deadeye's realm is filled with lush farmland punctuated by forests and rivers and populated by small, tightly knit villages of his petitioners reunited in death. His domain contains only a few cities, mostly as a way of fostering and promoting trade, especially between the petitioners of the dwarven pantheon and the plane's archons, though a few permanent portals allow for cross-planar trade in and out of his domain.

The Great Library of Harmonious Scripture: Within Heaven's fourth tier rise the nine towers that comprise this great building. Oddly structured for a library, each tower is marked by the symbol and iconography of one of the other planes of existence. Inside the massive extradimensional space stands Heaven's repository of knowledge and catalogs of its own laws and those it would

extend to the other planes. The trove of knowledge is watched over by hundreds of archon scribes and scholars of planar lore, and a select few revered mortals, who through their service to Heaven or its resident gods, have garnered themselves that privilege.

Iomedae's Domain: Despite being the youngest of Heaven's gods, Iomedae, goddess of valor, justice, and honor, has increasingly accepted more and more influence within the plane, inspired by and equally inspiring to the native archons. The Inheritor's realm sits within Heaven's second tier, near the border with the first tier, a land dotted with keeps and castles echoing the styles of Aroden's former domain in Axis and those of the native archons. Safe from direct attack from the Maelstrom's borderlands, but near enough to provide support to the departing armies of the archon crusades, Iomedae's role in Heaven increasingly blurs the line between discrete deific realm and the celestials' military hierarchy.

The Summit: Only a few square miles in size, the actual summit has no lord among Heaven's paragons, and except for the arriving mortal souls—none of whom arrive at the same time—the peak has no residents. Beyond the transient spirits, only one thing exists there: the round walls and open, broken gate of a small garden at the peak's very center. There within its walls, each newborn archon undergoes a mysterious transformation, though none of them quite recalls exactly what transpires. Likewise, no visitor to the garden at the summit sees precisely the same thing when arriving and peering through the gates. Some see a simple garden tended by unknown hands, a small and sheltered orchard, a solitary fruit-laden tree, or even a golden throne, empty and waiting for a worthy occupant.

What observers see within, however, does not explain the Summit's power over the archons, even if they don't truly understand its influence, remember its words to them, or know how to impart their learning to non-archons. Certainly something exists there to draw the attention and respect of Iomedae, and in that some scholars see parallels to the equally legendary Nirvana Dragon. Perhaps the Summit contains a personification of Heaven itself, a gestalt spirit of its archons, or—as some might heretically suggest—the dragon guiding the agathions.

Torag's Domain: The way that the dwarven Father of Creation tells it, the dwarven pantheon has always called Heaven home. They did not arrive from elsewhere like other gods; rather when they first chiseled their way to the surface of the Outer Sphere—much in the same way as their mortal children did on the Material Plane—they found themselves in Heaven, having already been inhabiting the mountain's interior. Operating much like a mortal dwarven family—indeed, most of their pantheon



Heaven

- 1 Torag's Domain
- 2 Fortress of Ragathiel
- 3 Iomedae's Domain
- 4 The Tower of Enlightened and Tested
- 5 Mirialin, City of the Justice Seekers
- 6 Grand Hall of Righteous Heralds
- 7 The Great Library of Harmonious Scripture
- 8 Erastil's Domain
- 9 Citadel of the Might Righteous
- 10 The Empty Palace of Melek Taus
- 11 The Garden
- 12 Palace of Jegudiel
- 13 Winding Tower of Salaphiel
- 14 Paramon's Orchard
- 15 Sandalphon's Court
- 16 Soaring Palace of Talmandor the Golden
- 17 Magrims' Cloister
- 18 The Golden Forge-Halls

is blood related—the various dwarven gods instruct their petitioners in mining and craftsmanship, providing a truly massive amount of raw materials and finished works to the archons on the surface, and have on at least one occasion defended the plane from below, brutally suppressing a demonic horde when their mining opened into an Abyssal crack within the depths.

HELL

Hell—translated into every mortal tongue under one name or another—has become synonymous with the mortal conception of organized torment—such is the malevolence of its deific king Asmodeus. While the other planes represent the base concepts of reality, containing those outsiders and gods who personify and promote them, most of Hell is the domain of Asmodeus, the God-Fiend, his reach so great that as far as most are concerned, Hell is both a plane and a deific realm.

The planes of the Outer Sphere are vast, comprised of distances and areas incomprehensible to mortal minds, but the fiendish geometry of Hell is something altogether different. Like warped nesting dolls, Hell encompasses nine layers, each superimposed upon the other, inaccessible

except by progression from one to another sequentially, deeper and deeper into the Pit, unless granted quicker ingress by Asmodeus, his chosen lords, or another god.

Hell is a place of torment and purification, agony and rigid perfection, a plane where reality's laws subsume themselves and kneel to a darker structure. Souls are tormented not for the sake of petty malice, but for a reason and an ultimate plan, slowly, progressively, inevitably carried out by Hell's fiendish inhabitants.

The Devils

Unlike nearly every plane in existence, Hell was designed and populated at the will and demand of a single being: Asmodeus. Over time, creatures such as kyttons, asuras, and others also came to live there or were created by gods or other powerful beings, but devils are the most common, and most mortals consider any creature of Hell to be a devil. The devils and their allied creatures possess a common goal—serving Asmodeus—and are devoted to this cause even more rigidly than axiomites at their tasks. The eight lords of Hell, each granted rulership of one of its layers, act more like administrators and governors than subordinate kings under a greater emperor. They rule in

Asmodeus's name over a land that is given to them; they arbitrate but do not own.

Avernus

Hell's first layer, the Iron Wilderness of Avernus, offers no gilded pretenses about its nature. The blasted, volcanic wasteland provides no safety or reward for the mortal souls arriving fresh from Pharasma's Court, and only the promise of swift, brutal annihilation at the hands of the proteans and demons surging from the surrounding borderlands.

Beneath a sky perpetually hidden by volcanic smoke, the arriving souls—like prospective slaves for auction—gather under the watch of lesser devils. The fiends forcibly march their collections toward any of the layer's pyrite-gilded fortress-courts that dot the landscape, looming like artificial mountains, passing barefoot atop the still-cooling lava flows. On occasion the crust breaks, miring dozens or hundreds of souls, only to be trod underfoot like screaming, agonized bridges by their fellow damned.

Within the great Fools' Citadels, devils in service to Barbatos, Lord of Avernus, brand each newly arrived soul with a mark of ownership of one of the Lords of Hell and send them off to serve their new master. Barbatos manifests as a tall, powerful figure almost entirely obscured by a dark robe untouched by dirt or time. Observers see only the fringes of a strangely animate beard, and the hints of things serpentine and writhing within the cowl.

The Mantis God Achaek keeps his realm on Avernus, and goes unmolested by devils when he wanders elsewhere in this layer. Achaek and Barbatos have little interaction and do not interfere with each other, though it is clear the archdevil dislikes having a foreign (if like-minded) power on his doorstep.

Dis

Dominated by a massive city of the same name, Hell's second layer of Dis is a land of extremes, divided between a vast, cold wilderness broken in its monotony only by the meandering length of the River Styx and fiendish garrison cities extending outward from their parent in a great and diabolic fractal pattern.

Many souls that arrive here are fated for exile into the wastes, abandoned for use as target fodder, or used as bait to lure daemons onto the shores of the Styx. Outside the city walls, such abandoned spirits slowly starve without dying, suffering from the elements and unable to find shelter, often staring longingly at the distant walls of Dis. Those not exiled are enslaved within the city for various purposes or tortured until their spirit-flesh becomes malleable and can be used as building materials for the city's ever-expanding walls.

Dis and its garrison cities serve many diverse roles, much like any other cosmopolitan nation across the planes. Planar travelers wanting to do business with Hell typically make Dis their only stop, and there are portions of the city where such travelers are absolutely safe from harassment—but also extremely limited in terms of what they can do and how long they can stay. Dispat, the archdevil ruler of this layer, is a great politician and jailer, appearing as a tall and stern man with smoldering flesh pierced by decorative iron and golden barbs, who views his realm as rival to any planar trading hub. But unlike many others, Hell's great trade city, even with all its portals, exports a corruptive ideology along with any wealth gained therein, as the devils' influence leaches into each and every merchant and visitor.

Erebus

Below the streets of Dis—like a labyrinthine sewer that makes the greatest cavern systems on the Material Plane look like a scratch in the earth by comparison—the layer of Erebus exists in nearly lightless glory. Known to many as the Eternal Counting House of Mammon, Hell's third layer serves as a vast repository of its material fortunes. In its immense vaults, petitioners chained to the ground like dogs count and pass along each object, whether coin, book, blade, or especially valuable soul or contract. Each greed-stricken slave creates a mental record of impressions that their osyluth keepers tap to ensure their accuracy and complicity. Of course, while the souls operate in a sensory void, the darkness puts no blindfold over the fiends themselves. These blind wretches are the lucky ones, as most souls arriving in Erebus face wealth-related torture (such as being crushed by gold bars or coins) or ritualized dismemberment to create soul-fragments (currency for minor transactions).

Ultimately the souls pass along the contents of Hell's coffers (and the contents of their minds) to ruling devils in service to the layer's lord, at which point their minds are wiped clean of their plunder and they are given more to record. Once collected and counted, the layer's devils sort the wealth, apportioning it to nearby vaults assigned to each archdevil. The greatest of Mammon's servitors are the Judicators of the Golden Chain, a circle of 15 devils chained to each other—primarily pit fiends, the circle also includes a trio of unique devils and a pair of erinyes shorn of their wings and fitted instead with a trailing, animate silhouette of golden chains. These manage the affairs of Erebus, deal with requests from mortal spellcasters, and arrange the transport of valuables to other layers when the archdevils need them.

Ruling over the layer is Mammon himself, best described as a genius loci infusing Erebus. Without a



Hell

- 1 Fools' Citadel
- 2 City of Dis
- 3 Fortress City
- 4 The Counting House of the Bought and Reclaimed
- 5 The Argent Prince
- 6 Idolisque
- 7 Aegrizok's Forge
- 8 Lake of Flames
- 9 Temple City of Marcionux
- 10 The Library of Oaths
- 11 Melgart Keep
- 12 Vanguard Watches
- 13 Betzebbul
- 14 Tower of the Banished Scion
- 15 Cathedral of Reflective Souls
- 16 The Hellfire Testament
- 17 Chained Aerie of the Ebon Harpies
- 18 The Iron Cyst
- 19 The Catafalque

corporeal body at all, the Lord of the Third manifests from the layer's treasures, forming temporary bodies of coins, gemstones, and any other form of wealth. Thus, far from being simply the greatest of its accountants, the wealth of Hell that flows through Erebus is Mammon, and Mammon is the wealth of Hell, omnipresent and observant should even a single coin or jewel be taken without leave.

Phlegethon

Descending from Erebus through gates of smoke and iron wrapped in the flesh of suffering souls, travelers find themselves in Hell's forges. At once a place and a thing, the Burning Legions of Phlegethon are both Hell's smelting pits and foundries and that which they produce, for the flames and hammers forge both steel and souls.

In Hell's fourth layer the hammers fall and bellows rush to the sounds of melting ore and the screams of spirits undergoing their own metaphorical separation of ore from slag. Weapons are forged, and so are the souls of the unworthy—the petitioners rendered down, purified by misery and force of will, and recast into the forms of armor, weapons, or even body piercings at their new

masters' will. These items end up in the hands of devils or the poorly trained soul conscripts used as disposable fodder in Hell's armies. The least valuable souls are used to stoke the fires of the forges or to quench red-hot metal. Directed by his master to craft Hell's arms, Aegrizok the Denuded oversees the forges, his flesh long ago shorn of its devil-spikes from the intense heat and now covered in a speckled patina of scars and splattered metal permanently bonded to his hide.

The master of Phlegethon and the mind behind its great pits of burning souls is Belial. A paragon of desire and adultery, with a level of promiscuous sophistication at odds with his role directing the forges, the layer's captivating lord is a master shapeshifter and seducer, and he makes a sport of maintaining and expanding a massive harem within his towering palace, keeping concubines of both genders and everything in between, some of whom have no idea of his true shape or even his true identity. More than anything, he prizes the seduction of the diabolic nobility loyal to his neighboring peers Mammon and Geryon, and according to rumor, at least half of Erebus's conjoined Judicators were those fiends who submitted to his desires.

Stygia

Lower still, through gates of barbed trees cast in rusting iron, yawns the layer of Stygia. A vast swamp dotted by inundated jungles and bottomless underwater sinkholes, the layer's devils and its allotment of souls reside in vast stone ruins slowly settling into the muck, or crumbling atop the few stretches of truly solid rock protruding from the tainted waters. Stygia's remnants are dominated by temples to the base sins and libraries of diabolic scholars where lies and heresies are continually devised for the purpose of corrupting religions and leading mortals astray.

The River Styx flows through Stygia as well, but its essence is weakened by the layer's waters as the river slowly winds its way like a black, blurred ribbon through the swamps. Yet the swamps remain devoid of Abaddon's daemons, who fear the swift wrath of greater beings lurking below the waters, waiting and whispering. Amid the quiet, rushing hiss of river reeds and swamp grasses, the air whispers a much more subtle hiss of serpents that lurk in the waters and hang from the trees like jungle vines, themselves answering to Stygia's master, Geryon the Serpent.

Drifting through the waters, often revealing himself in hallucinatory visions or whispers in his subjects' ears, Geryon appears as a pale, powerful warrior with three heads, three torsos, six arms, and a body made from the twisting coils of three intertwined snakes from the waist down.

Malebolge

Accessed through portals in the foundations of Stygia's cities or the deepest darkness of its flooded sinkholes, Hell's sixth layer is a series of walled territories radiating from the central citadel of Moloch, General of Hell's Armies. Within each walled section is some new harsh terrain that the devils use to practice warfare, whether fields of jagged rock, staggered cliffs, scouring deserts, frozen tundra, or stranger places where contrasting adjacent terrain creates strange localized weather, such as hail made of frozen blood or rains of carnivorous frogs. Moloch's favored diabolical warlords keep their personal fortresses in outlying areas beyond the hub of the General's command center. For sport, Moloch and the generals bring souls here under the pretense that they are being rewarded, only to betray and exile them so they can be hunted like animals.

While the terrain variance continues near these officers' territories, as a traveler gets farther from Moloch's citadel, more of the walled territories contain what are called the Smoldering Forests. These poison-blackened woods constantly give off smoke, ever on the edge of combustion. The charred trees—themselves damned souls—leak curls of smoke beneath a constant and eerily beautiful snowfall of white ashes. Slaves and

minor devils constantly hew down acre after acre of the trees to create open fields for battle maneuvers. Vast armies of devils camp within the layer's clear-cut regions, waging war on one another and training to march out into the more hostile walled regions, the warped lands of the Maelstrom, the depths of the Abyss, and even the upper planes. Some of these camps are little more than places for the devils to recuperate in between battles, while others have crude shelters, forts, and siege towers built out of the still-smoking trees.

Moloch is personally involved in the brutal, horrific training of Hell's armies. Never seen without his ornate, soot-blackened armor bristling with horns and spikes, Malebolge's lord is rumored to lack a physical form of his own. This is only partially true, however, as Moloch's baroque armor obscures not a conventional body, but a flowing form of raging, living flames, like bones to the flesh of his armor.

Cocytus

Opposite Malebolge's lurking flames, and one layer deeper into the Pit, Cocytus is a realm of frozen, ice-choked seas and jagged glaciers. Mountains of pure ice spew cold lava (liquid rock colder than the darkness between the stars), while a few constantly leak trickles of conventional lava, melting paths across the ice and warming the air enough that mortal visitors do not immediately expire from the cold. Entire villages of damned souls eke out a long-suffering existence near these lava banks, grateful for the warmth but wary of the lava turning on them. Overhead, floating glaciers wander through the sky, casting black, cold shadows on the ground beneath them, sometimes colliding with each other or plummeting to earth for no apparent reason. Some of these sky-glaciers are the warrens of the gelugons, masterminds of Hell, while others are capped with cities filled with other devils and damned souls. These cities, built of ice and brittle steel twisted into exotic shapes, are where fiends taunt the dead locked away in the icy floors and walls, sometimes chiseling them partially free to inflict pain and suffering, only to let them freeze solid again.

One of these floating glaciers is Betzebul, the Lofty House, home of Baalzebul, Lord of Cocytus. Tethered to the glaciers beneath it by massive chains, it never falls unless its lord wills it, and only upon enemy forces that dare approach by land. Obsessed with the destruction of purity, Baalzebul wanders amid his subjects in the form of great masses of buzzing flies, only rarely appearing as a tall devil comprised of countless insects amid tarnished angelic armor. Like his underling fiends, the archdevil takes pleasure in taunting the souls in their prisons of black ice with his excess, forcing them to watch the devils feast as they in turn starve, or chewing off a frozen limb of



a particularly delectable soul, leaving its owner to scream silently within its icy prison.

Deep under the planar surface, having passed through mile-long stairwells carved through the ice, Cocytus's devils meet in devotion and great debasement within cavernous, sculpted cathedrals. Surrounded by darkness and the slow creak and shudder of shifting glacial ice, the soft light of their candles reflects back from the open eyes of the millions of damned trapped within the walls, glittering like frozen stars. In one of these cathedrals, barely visible through a glass-like wall of ice, the eye of some immense creature stares back, rarely blinking, perhaps a primordial entity who once challenged the lords of Hell.

Caina

Hell's penultimate layer, the endless chains of Caina stretch across a seemingly bottomless void of glowering darkness. Comprised almost entirely of iron bridges and labyrinthine arrangements of island-like stone platforms, the layer bristles with a network of hanging cages and suspended, screaming forms. Hung by hooks with their tongues removed, starving in isolation, or dissected and skewered without the mercy of a final end, the layer's mortal souls suffer the worst of fates as tortured sacrifices to the yawning void below.

Caina's lord, the archdevil Mephistopheles, accepts his allotment of souls, if only to punish, defile, and condemn them to enforced silence. The dark-haired, red-skinned embodiment of many mortal visions of devilkind, the silver-tongued devil is the keeper of Hell's secrets. Mephistopheles's handpicked chorus of gelugon servitors torments the souls in an ornate display of warped faith. Above the moving, whispering void, like the scuttling of roaches heavy with eggs, the torturers of the eighth layer whisper to each of the damned a single, horrible secret, and then condemn the souls to think on those secrets as they sway like hideous chimes on the cold, bitter wind.

Foolish or desperate visitors try to bargain with Mephistopheles or his chorus, offering wealth for secrets, but the Black Son is willing to reveal little except at great cost. Some more clever mortals have tried to steal imprisoned souls to squeeze the knowledge from them, but often end up lost among the maze of cages or imprisoned along with those they would free or exploit.

Nessus

A place of dark majesty and even darker mystery, Hell's final layer of Nessus is swathed in suffocating darkness. With the exception of the eight lords of Hell, no others know with any level of certainty just what awaits within Hell's innermost realm, other than it is the heart of the domain of Asmodeus. If the entirety of Hell is his realm, Nessus is his palace and bedchamber.

Among the furiously suppressed rumors that escape Hell, Nessus is described as a searing volcanic wasteland, a realm of formless darkness (as it appears from Caina), or a realm of pure light cloaked from the eyes of an unworthy cosmos. Little is known, and excepting the archdevils and those devils summoned there by Asmodeus himself, none return from that place. The archdevils refuse to speak of it, and the others have difficulty describing what they experienced, if they remember anything besides their orders, burned and searing within their minds.

Strongly suspected, however, are those wonders and horrors created and kept by the God-Fiend or given to him for safekeeping, such as the key to Rovagug's prison. Unlike Abadar's First Vault, Asmodeus keeps no relics or tokens from the Material Plane, but only those of a world yet to come, should he reshape the cosmos to his designs. The contents of that nameless vault of future things weigh prominently in the archdevils' dreams, and mortal prophets gone mad speak Asmodeus's rhetoric with poisoned tongues: that everything that will change is for the betterment of all, and that the role of mortals is simple—accept, comply, and suffer.

THE MAELSTROM

The Maelstrom is a plane of unformed and ever-changing potential, a plane of chaos that surrounds the other planes of the Outer Sphere like a vast, unplumbed ocean, a swirling sea lapping at tiny islands of stability. The Maelstrom is also perhaps the only plane that can truly be called infinite. While others may encompass massive, virtually unimaginable space, or bend the constraints of geometry and encompass a limited but unbounded region, the Maelstrom is beautiful, deadly, and without end; it is an infinite plane large enough to surround and contain multiple infinite planes.

Beyond the unstable and fantastical (but ultimately rational and familiar) borderlands, the Maelstrom's depths grow more and more detached from the familiar tropes of reality as most mortals and immortals understand it. As the borderland shallows gradually transition into deeper realms, the environment grows prone to greater and more whimsical changes, and the distant sky takes on a blue sheen until ultimately the region called the Deep Maelstrom reveals itself as a formless cerulean void. Walking transitions to something between flying and swimming, with the air possessing an almost liquid viscosity.

Native Creatures

As a physical manifestation of creative and destructive potential, the Maelstrom continually generates new and bizarre forms of life. The vast majority of such creatures live transient, mayfly existences before the Cerulean Void subsumes them once again, but in a land of manifest



inconsistency, there exist some paradoxical constants. The Maelstrom's borderlands, adjacent to the other, more stable planes, harbor their own bizarre ecologies filled with creatures native to those neighboring planes and their chaos-touched descendants. Additionally, the Maelstrom's shallows harbor transient groups of celestials, fiends, and even axiomite and inevitable armies crusading against the chaos.

The Cerulean Void harbors such beings as chaos beasts and the plane's most populous (and perhaps original) natives, the serpentine proteans. Enigmatic creatures of chaos, the three protean races are creatures of creation and destruction in equal measure. The bestial naunet proteans emerge from the borderlands like a living, seething tide, seeking to break down the infection of more stable realities. The imentesh proteans seek the same, but through subtlety and persuasion, like wandering prophets of chaos infecting minds, philosophies, and even religions. Finally, the kekatar proteans dwell within the Maelstrom's fluid heart like a race of priest-kings communing with the plane itself, seeking to divine its will.

Scholars describe the proteans as living embodiments of the Maelstrom, crafting the chaos like artists before tearing it down again in a natural cycle of instability.

Others say the creatures behave not unlike the Maelstrom's immune system, viewing the chaos like a living thing seeking to reabsorb the reality that it spawned, or which was carved out of it and stolen by the gods or other powers—and the proteans indeed view their plane as a living thing, worshiping it as a dualistic being called the Speakers of the Depths. This pair of entities might be actual gods, primordial protean lords, or simply a personification of the Maelstrom itself given form by the proteans' worship.

Notable Sites

Despite the instability of the Maelstrom, there are several sites that remain stable, usually backed by the magic of a powerful entity.

Besmara and the *Seawraith*: Rather than possessing a defined deific domain, Besmara, the Pirate Queen, wanders the Maelstrom aboard the idealized pirate ship, the *Seawraith*. While each depiction of her vessel varies with the source, reflecting each observer's cultural notion of a warship—everything from a galleon to a longship to a junk—the *Seawraith* uniformly inspires fear and respect. Sometimes Besmara leads an armada or drags floating wreckage, loot, and crazed, undying sailors in her wake.



The Ossuary: Deep within the Maelstrom's shifting borderlands, close to the transitory edge of its cerulean, fluid depths, this structure waits, forever changing location within a region that defies mapping. The massive, ancient temple—or rather the broken, abandoned shell of one—appears to be of protean architecture, inasmuch as the crumbling statues and eroded reliefs depict members of that race in ritual activities or worship. Beyond the iconography, however, no writing exists to show its purpose or any other relevant historical details. The Ossuary gets its name from the debris littering its floors—the bones of an uncounted number of races, both mortal and outsider alike, with the latter apparently kept in distinct form rather than dissolving into nothingness.

At the temple's very center stands a trio of shallow pools, possibly serving as ritual baths or strange sacrificial altars. Two of them are empty, while one of them is filled by a golden liquid with a bizarre, unstable consistency that alternates between a syrupy thickness and that of normal water, all the time feeling both cold and hot at once. No remains mar the trio of pools, and if so debased, the debris vanishes as soon as the vandals look away. Rumors say that touching the liquid and speaking your heart's desire may grant a wish—or kill the visitor and add its bones to the thousands that fill the temple interior and spill out upon its exterior steps.

Realm of Nethys: Golarion's god of magic resides in a domain of thousands of wizards' towers perched atop a massive shelf of stone drifting within the deep Maelstrom, and given the All-Seeing Eye's proclivities, the plane and its natives readily embrace its presence. The domain's stable base and its elaborate, often madly designed and precariously perched towers exist in a state of constant growth and destruction, reflecting the god's dual aspects. Additionally, the domain has the wild magic planar trait, operating according to Nethys's whimsy, something that the surrounding depths more often than not mirror for hundreds of miles. Surrounding the domain is a hurricane of magical energy formed by the Maelstrom as a frenzied and constant reflection of the turmoil within the realm. Beautiful, hazardous, and wondrous, the hurricane sometimes spins off cyclones with similar wild magic effects, which experienced travelers use as a warning that they are near the mad god's realm.

Sivanah's Realm: True to her ever-mysterious nature, Sivanah's realm never appears in the same place, nor does it appear the same way twice to any visitor except for a preponderance of mirrors. In fact, some frequent planewalkers may have happened upon the Lady of Illusion's realm more than once and simply not realized it. Whether the same deception holds for her worshipers and divine servitors is an open question, but it does seem to hold true

for the native proteans. Unlike Nethys, with whom they share common ideals, or Besmara, who bargained her way to acceptance, Sivanah seems to be intentionally hiding from a number of protean choruses. Theories range from the notion that she possesses something that belongs to them, or that her true nature might justify their antipathy. Others speculate she might have once been a keketar, a risen demon, or a fallen azata. Regardless, there is no love lost between her and the proteans.

NIRVANA

As the plane of benevolence untouched by either law or chaos, the paradise of Nirvana exists as a balance between the extremes of good as represented by the celestials of Elysium and Heaven. Curiously though, its natives pursue a more interventionist and active role across the planes than their ideological neighbors, while its blessed souls seek to achieve a personal enlightenment free of care and worry. Contrary to the opinion of some, Nirvana is not a plane of the elect, the enlightened, and the virtuous to the exclusion of all others; it is a place of respite, a sanctuary for the weary soul, and a place of redemption for any who would willingly seek it out—even the damned.

Native Creatures

The pastoral wilds of Nirvana support a myriad of natives, including petitioners, all manner of celestial wildlife, mortals, gods, agathions, and angels. While the plane's agathion celestials frequently visit their favorite places in the mortal world, the plane itself—or some other force—seems to ensure that Nirvana's once-mortal souls let go of their worldly shackles, perhaps worrying that their rest or enlightenment might be hindered by mortal influence.

As for the petitioners, most spirits of the mortal dead that arrive on the plane do so with something of a clean slate. While on other planes the dead may retain their mortal memories in various states of completion, and gods have full control over the memories of their dead faithful, Nirvana's petitioners uniformly shed their memories, either all at once, or slowly discarding their burden memory by memory. Free of the shackles of mortal concerns and worries, they pursue a sheltered, idealistic afterlife, growing ever more attuned to their plane and its spiritual ideals before they vanish, ascending to a higher state of existence hidden deep with Nirvana's core, or achieving a divine unity with the plane itself.

Comprising such races as the avorals, leonals, vulpinals, and other such beast-aspect outsiders, the agathions embody the metaphorical concept of the peaceable kingdom. Each group pursues a deeper understanding of Nirvana's mysteries while serving a specific role within the plane. Leonals serve as guardians of the plane's gates and portals. Avorals watch over the monastic



mountaintop aeries or serve as prophets, warriors, and liaisons to the plane's gods. The wandering vulpinals act as itinerant sages, bards, and storytellers. Although the agathions lack any rigid hierarchy, each group possesses a number of unique individuals granted power by their plane; the common agathions look to these individuals for leadership, following their wisdom. Korada-of-the-Dream-Lotus, Kelumarion-the-King-Over-the-Mountain, and Lady-Taramyth-the-Singing-Flame lead the avorals, leonals, and vulpinals, respectively. Though none of these have openly claimed their position, they do not deny their status either.

While the agathions serve Nirvana from within, the devas, planetars, and solars serve their plane's ethos beyond its borders, hurling themselves at whatever threats to its sanctity might exist in the realms beyond. Most often the angels are found watching over the River of Souls and assaulting the fiends of the Abyss whenever its chasms open near any of the good-aligned planes. Unlike Heaven's archons, the angels believe preemptive crusades into the depths of the Maelstrom against the protean tide are pointless, ideological genocides; of greater importance is finding and rescuing those souls of any alignment stolen and denied their proper place in the Outer Sphere,

whether a consequence of theft by infernal contract, the depredations of night hags or daemons, or the actions of evil mortals.

Notable Sites

The plane of absolute good holds many sanctuaries, godly realms, and places of interest.

Hall of the Slumbering Kings: Long whispered to hold some connection to the leonal paragon Kelumarion, the Hall of the Slumbering Kings is a place of legend, spoken of in hushed and reverent tones by mortals, and given no other acknowledgment than a knowing smile by Nirvana's celestials. Hundreds of anecdotal tales exist of mortals wandering through the trackless wilds only to happen upon an entrance to the Hall, appearing alternately as a cave mouth behind a glistening waterfall, a door set into the side of a mountain, or a set of stairs ascending into the sky at the center of a deep forest. Those finding the entrance are invariably those not intentionally seeking it out, but rather those with some inner need for the greatest of Nirvana's virtues: hope.

Venturing forward, the tales speak of a vast hall stretching out as far as eyes can see, populated by the peaceful, slumbering forms of the greatest of mortal heroes.



Every ancient king or queen who promised to return to their people at the time of their greatest need, every figure of legend said to return in the last days to save their world from catastrophe, every hero who died a martyr's death but whose body was never found—all of them are there, waiting for their time of need.

Watching over the heroes and keeping their possessions at the ready are agathions of all types, including some unknown elsewhere within Nirvana. In all such stories, the protagonist wanders in an overwhelmed daze among the sleeping ones, catching sight of such storied figures as Namzaruum, Kahotep (the Pharaoh of Tomorrow), and others. Eventually, one of the watching celestials approaches him and guides him to the exit, telling him that the time is not yet right for the heroes to awaken, and the Hall is not meant for visitors. But then, there is also the tale of the mortal hero Alamar who found the Hall. One of the guardians (either a powerful leonal or a towering dragon watching alongside the celestials) told him, "Heroes are not lost and forgotten, and should the need arise, the greatest of them will stand again and walk the planes once more. But until that time arrives, they rest. But go, this place is not yet ready for you." A decade later, after overthrowing his land's vampiric tyrant, Alamar vanished, seemingly a martyr in the conflagration that ensued in the destruction of the undead's animate castle.

Isle of the Penitent: From time to time, a soul appears in Pharasma's Court who is torn between the deeds of a wicked life and one final spark of regret, and in those cases such a spirit almost always finds an advocate among the celestials of Nirvana. Little is known about just what happens to such souls afterward, but ultimately they arrive on the Isle of the Penitent, a prison without walls, boundaries, or guardians—only a path to freedom for those who open their eyes.

Bound by their own regrets, each soul is gradually given the option of regaining their mortal memories in full and observing the consequences of their actions. The process is anguishing for each soul, and an air of misery often hangs over the forested and fog-shrouded island—strange for the plane of unsullied good—but with true regret comes a chance at redemption, and each soul that emerges from the Isle invariably becomes one of Nirvana's angelic crusaders.

Kurgess's Field: Less well known than Sarenrae and Shelyn, Kurgess, the demigod of strength and prowess, makes his own domain adjacent to the deep reaches of the Forest of Whispered Longing, only a day's travel from the mortal city of Worry's-Rest. Along the edge of the god's realm, the fields often fill with petitioners and mortals eager to test themselves in games of skill and physical strength arbitrated by Kurgess's divine servants in a scene reminiscent of a carnival. Beyond such competitions, the

demigod's faithful openly seek to spread his doctrine to the visiting mortals.

The Nirvana Dragon: Appearing in the stories and legends told by the plane's celestials and its mortals alike, and repeatedly featured in heraldry and other imagery throughout the plane, the Nirvana Dragon remains a figure of mystery and grandeur. Only those with a need to find him unwittingly do so, and those that do either fail to remember where they discovered an entrance to his lair, or find that the location itself changed when they return. He exists to help others find enlightenment, and they only find him at the moment when they can best benefit from his wisdom.

Sarenrae's Realm: This goddess's domain exists on the far side of the Sea of No Shadows, a crystal-clear inland ocean whose visibility extends down to its sandy bottom, perpetually illuminated by the bordering realm's brilliant golden light. Sarenrae's domain is largely sealed except to petitioners, her divine servants, and the native celestials who willingly serve her as a way of accomplishing shared goals—and even those who do not serve her treat her with great respect and admiration, for she was once an angel. The only known details of its interior are the silhouette outlines of golden watchtowers visible on the horizon, a sight tantalizingly out of reach to ships on the sea regardless of how far they sail.

The city of High Ninshabur rests on the far side of the inland sea, perpetually drenched in the sunlight of its patron goddess. Populated by mortal worshipers of the Dawnflower and the descendants of her worshipers from an ancient Keleshite nation destroyed by the Tarrasque, the city is one of the largest in Nirvana. It does not bar entry to other faiths, and remains popular for the sale of magical implements of healing, inspired by Sarenrae and often crafted by her priesthood in order to spread her ideology by action.

Shelyn's Domain: The goddess of beauty, art, love, and music makes her deific realm within a vast and remote valley high in the Dragonmane Mountains of Nirvana—so named for the jagged peaks' resemblance to the spikes along the ridge of a great dragon's back and tail. Within the valley, Shelyn's petitioners celebrate her dogma of selfless love and appreciation for acts and creations of beauty, and in this respect she and her faithful find ready collaboration with the native agathions. Crowning the mountains that overlook her realm stand dozens of avoral keeps and monasteries, and those same settlements produced one of Shelyn's most favored servants and proxies, Phoenix Tail, the avoral bard.

Concealed from most, a second, equally idyllic valley exists adjacent to Shelyn's domain, standing in wait for Shelyn's half-brother, the mad god Zon-Kuthon, in the expectant hopes of his eventual redemption.



Other Dimensions

The term “demiplane” usually refers to a small, finite dimension connected to the Astral Plane or the Ethereal Plane. The difference between astral demiplanes and ethereal demiplanes is largely academic, as both form when the structure of reality is sufficiently distorted, causing small amounts of its substrate to break off and self-aggregate, creating a stable region in the process.

Ethereal demiplanes usually arise from the opposing tidal forces of the Positive and Negative Energy Planes; these fluctuations are responsible for the ethereal mist, which can form localized eddies that spawn ethereal demiplanes. Astral demiplanes are created by a combination of the turbulence of the River of Souls, the proximity of the Maelstrom, and the distant action of the fires of Elemental Flame, which create astral storms that, like hurricanes,

usually have eyes of stability at the centers. These eyes sometimes turn into demiplanes. While these two classes of demiplanes comprise the majority of their kind, any sufficient warping of reality—such as very powerful spells, the actions of artifacts, or the will of deities and other powerful planar entities—may spawn them.

All demiplanes can be manipulated and traversed with the same magic—for example, planar travelers do not need one set of spells for astral demiplanes and another for ethereal demiplanes. The only relevant difference is that the nature of astral demiplanes is often influenced by the memories of the dead within the River of Souls, while ethereal demiplanes are often influenced by the dreams of sleeping mortals or the actions of the plane’s resident night hags, so magic keyed to these traits may be slightly more effective.

Demiplanes are not the only class of alternate realities or pocket dimensions that falls outside of the major planes' neat categorization. Some realities simply don't fit within that rubric, defying current explanations as to how or where they exist, yet existing nonetheless.

The following list catalogs the most prominent demiplanes and other realities known to Golarion's sages, with much of the knowledge gleaned from such sources as the lillend-authored *Reflections of Silver and Tarnish*, the scrolls of Ylerimon Azhvin the Reformed, and the Nidalese text *Tableau of the Void Between*.

BASALFEYST

Not a traditional demiplane, Basalfeyst nonetheless holds a unique position as an adopted layer of the Abyss. It is the home of Hadregash, Venkelvore, Zarongel, and Zogmugot—the four barghest demigods that comprise the goblin pantheon and who once called the Nine Hells their home. Seeking to expand her influence among their people, Lamashtu the Demon Queen promised them a new home and freedom from Asmodeus's grasp in exchange for their fealty.

Rather than providing them with a distinct layer of the Abyss, something yet beyond Lamashtu's capacity (or that of any other god or demon lord), she used the fractious nature of the plane to provide a solution. Reaching into the infinite malleability of the Maelstrom, Lamashtu forged a planar conduit from a stolen bubble of its essence. Poisoned with the touch of the Abyss, the Demon Queen siphoned the barghest realm through this conduit and placed it adjacent to her own domain. As a result, Basalfeyst retains some of its ancient legacy as a child of Hell, littered with the crumbling ruins of diabolic keeps and fortifications of the style found on the layer of Avernus.

Each of the four demigods resides within a domain filled by a fractured amalgamation of hellish architecture, chaotic styles adapted from the Abyss, and simple buildings inspired by their own mortal worshipers. Between their individual regions of the demiplane, vast stretches of disputed territory stand, mostly a mixture of volcanic wasteland and sparse, scrub-filled plateaus cut by turbulent, boiling rivers. Standing apart (and frequently fought over by the nominally allied demigods) are the so-called Screaming Pyrelands, which dominate the central reaches of their shared domain. This is a massive, twisted forest of trees that ooze thick, tarry sap like coagulated blood, existing in a state of constant conflagration. According to goblin legends, each tree was grown from a seed granted to their gods by Lamashtu, inserted into the flesh of those devils and goblinoid souls that refused to break with Asmodeus. As a result, each of the trees grows like a woody prison around the agonized, screaming figure of its host, with the flames emerging from its body

to set its tree alight, roasting its flesh for eternity without allowing it the mercy of oblivion.

THE DEAD VAULT

In central Casmaron, in the heart of the Whispering Wastes, the yawning Pit of Gormuz stands as a reminder of past tragedy, ancient triumph, and a looming threat to Golarion's future.

During the world's dim prehistory, Golarion's gods banded together to rid themselves of Rovagug, a deity dedicated to the destruction of all things the gods had set into motion. Through an alliance of necessity between Sarenrae and Asmodeus, who were aided by more than a dozen other divinities, Rovagug and his servitors were trapped within a demiplane thrust down through Golarion's crust—buried and sealed, it was said, at the planet's very core. The Pit of Gormuz descends down and out of sight, burrowing through the planet's crust and plunging through each layer of Golarion's Darklands. The massive shaft provides a direct path to the surface for their denizens, while simultaneously threatening them with the leaking influence of Rovagug's fury.

The demiplane, known ever-after as the Dead Vault, is a thing of awesome power. Unlike many demiplanes, its exterior is crafted and defined, combining Sarenrae's burning fury and the dark pragmatism of Asmodeus. It appears as a massive globe of cut and faceted golden topaz, a chunk of yellow stone fossilized around a deific insect, with rings of black iron coiling around its periphery and embossed with a terrible litany of binding runes. It sits lodged within the planet's core, visible to any capable of pushing back the surrounding magma, but curiously untouchable. Any person attempting to physically reach the demiplane's exterior experiences a strange warping of space that pushes the offending party away from the apparent physical boundary. Rarely, such an attempt may be successful, but only inasmuch as Asmodeus sees fit to reward such success and perseverance by causing the Vault to swallow the intruder whole, trapping him inside as well.

Though such unfortunates are indeed imprisoned, the seals that hold Rovagug were crafted in haste, and the gods did not yet truly understand just what Rovagug was, nor of what the Rough Beast was capable. As such, the seals are imperfect, and cannot fully contain his power. Like a great sieve capable of holding back certain things while letting through those of finer size, the barriers block Rovagug's escape but cannot fully prevent its influence from leaking out into the surrounding Darklands, eventually gaining in potency to the point where they trigger a monstrous, transformative malignancy within one of the Darklands' natives, creating a monster and infusing its tortured spirit with that of one of Rovagug's servitors.

This influence first came to a head in –3923 AR, giving birth to the first Spawn of Rovagug, and over the next 5,000 years the cyclic eruption of horrors continued to issue forth from the lip of the Pit, with such beasts as the Tarrasque—also known as the Armageddon Engine—and its kindred Vulnagur, the great beetle Ulunat, Chemnosit the Monarch Worm, Xonati the Fire-Bleeder, and others emerging to rain down the wrath of their “father” upon the face of the world.

Many have wondered about the Vault’s interior; as no divine servitors of Rovagug encased within have ever escaped, only dreams and visions sent by the imprisoned god provide a clue. Much larger than the 20-mile-wide lip of the Pit of Gormuz, the Dead Vault resembles a gigantic hollow world, thousands of miles in diameter, utterly devoid of light, and literally swimming with a chitinous ocean of the Rough Beast’s frenzied, self-cannibalizing servitors. But other things exist: entire sections of the Darklands have been subsumed and absorbed into the vault, especially parts of the lowest layer and the bizarre creations of the Vault Keepers, as well as packs of devils and others that somehow survive amid the devouring anarchy.

These last prisoners raise yet more questions: Has Asmodeus used the Vault as a repository for more than just Rovagug? Does the god-fiend exercise his power over its gates to condemn enemies to a certain, swift death or eternal silence trapped within a realm to which only he possesses the key?

THE DIMENSION OF DREAMS

Most planar travelers to the Ethereal easily recognize those points at which the Dimension of Dreams intersects the ethereal shallows. These regions, literally bubbling with the manifest dreamscapes of slumbering mortal minds, produce thousands or millions of temporary demiplanes, each linked to a single mortal’s dreams and capable of offering access to the greater Dimension of Dreams for those with the right knowledge and ability. But such fantastical creations exist only for so long as their dreamer maintains each dream, as with their dreamer’s rise from slumber, each pocket reality bursts like a soap bubble on the wind and subsumes into the ethereal froth.

Extending beyond the myriad temporary realms of mundane dreams, built up from their gestalt, gathered from every dreaming mind across the Material Plane, the Dimension of Dreams stretches out parallel to and yet at strange angles away from the architecture of the cosmos. At first the landscape is one of the most prosaic and common archetypal dreams culled from a traveler’s cultural background. Progression deeper into the plane reveals more and more fantastical places, and all the while the traveler’s subconscious molds the landscape around him, often carving out a personal fiefdom of his own most

intimate and cherished dreams if he stays away from the waking world for too long.

The demiplane is a seductive place, but it has a dark side as well. Along with its wonders, nightmares lurk as living things within its depths, their empires carved out by lucid dreamers gone mad. Among such interlopers, three feuding night hags endure like demigods among the physical dreams, warping them by sheer malignant force of will, countered in their marauding only by an equally powerful azata sorceress, Fiorindria the Longing, who dwells within the dreaming kingdom of her catatonic mortal lover.

Entry into the dreaming lands differs from other planes, and the few rare spells associated with it only aid a traveler’s entry, rather than guaranteeing it like *gate* or *plane shift*. Various artifacts exist to grant travel beyond mundane dreams, such as the *Key of Celephais*, *Mnemoka’s Flask*, and the *Golden Liao Censer*. Mysteriously, all of them appear to have originated within the Dimension of Dreams itself, transported back into the waking world by means and persons unknown. Others have managed to hone their ability to dream lucidly to such an extent that regular travel to and from the Dimension of Dreams is possible, and tales exist of such gifted individuals abandoning the material world for those of their dreams.

THE DIMENSION OF TIME

For many years planar scholars have speculated upon the existence of an “elemental” plane of time itself, also known as the Hidden Dimension. Certainly such creatures as time elementals exist, rare as they might be, and thus (like the true elementals) it is supposed that time elementals have a native plane associated with their element. Still, the other planes have only scattered information on the subject, much of it from the *Book of Serpents, Ash, and Acorns—Shadows of What Was and Will Be*, a bizarre and possibly intelligent tome discovered for sale in the markets of the City of Brass, cold to the touch and penned on pages of compacted, flexible ash.

From the collected lore, the Dimension of Time is thought to be distinct in form from both the elemental planes and the various transitive planes as well, existing tangentially to the Inner Sphere as a whole, but with the Outer Sphere remaining outside of the bounds of its influence. Curiously enough, the plane appears protected from deific access and intervention, yet mortals, shackled to it in a way that gods and immortals either transcended or never knew, may call upon and temporarily manipulate its denizens. Sages speculate that the gods exist beyond the reach of time; fate seems to pull like a tide upon mortals swimming through its waters, while gods may only watch from the distant shore. Given that metaphor, through the use of rituals described in the *Book of Serpents*, mortals may enter the dimension

by conjuring and crawling up the manifest expression of their own timelines.

The dimension's interior always appears the same to visiting mortals, at least those entering by the methods the book describes, with mortals deposited within a glassy bubble surrounded on all sides by a chaotic whirlwind of sensations and manifest instances from random times and places. At the bubble's center, a solitary doorway exists, providing the visitor with access to any moment in his own life, provided he remembers it and can focus on the memory long enough to stabilize the doorway. Travelers through the doorway possess translucent cords radiating from their torsos back to the doorway like insubstantial leashes, similar to the silver cords of astral projections, tethering them to their only method of exit.

Those who visit such fragments of the past and make attempts to alter their own history never return. Something happens to them, and time zealously self-corrects at any cost, even erasing the offending party from the timeline or trapping him within a closed paradox loop as a peculiarly cruel sort of damnation. But for those not seeking to disturb the past, only to visit it and learn, the doorway and the plane are invaluable tools.

Many scholars who visit this dimension speculate that other methods of entry exist that allow manipulation of the past or future, and that the most common method provides a sort of filter or buffer, insulating mortals from possibly lethal sensory overload. Without such aid, travelers might be lost in time, constantly affecting their own timelines by accident, provoking a swift response from the plane's mysterious inhabitants. The nature of the author of the *Book of Serpents* remains in question, as well as his or her seemingly benevolent intentions (as abuse of the book's methods has led to more death than not), but a puzzling epilogue scrawled on the last page reads only: "In Stethelos, I am waiting."

THE FIRST WORLD

Lurking within many of Golarion's darker and more fantastical myths and fairy tales are references to the so-called First World. A place untouched by civilization and possessed of a life all its own, the First World is something more animate and dramatically distinct from the warped shadow presented by the Plane of Shadow. While the Shadow exists as a pale, mocking reflection of the Material, some hold that the Material does the same for the First World, or even that the First World was some manner of "rough draft" fashioned in the dim twilight of the cosmos, and later set aside or abandoned.

Regardless of its origin, the First World exists out of phase with the Material Plane, overlapping its boundaries yet



existing entirely independent of the Ethereal and Shadow. Magic can provide transportation between the two planes, but only in places where their boundaries already run thin, such as in the wild places untouched by civilization, or those rare places the fey see fit to mark as theirs, placing mounds, stones, and rings of earth or mushrooms like boundary fences between the planes. Within the First World stand ancient forests as tall as mountains, living lakes and rivers, traveling faerie courts alternatively benevolent or sadistic, and landscapes of all manner separated by rolling, animate banks of memory-eating and time-shifting fog.

Among the denizens of the First World, two groups stand foremost in the collective body of Golarion's mythologies: gnomes and the fey. The gnomes remember little of their ancient home, or even why they left, almost as if they voluntarily chose to forget the circumstances—and given how harsh the Material Plane has been to them at times, those circumstances must have been horrific. In any event, as a people the gnomes seem incapable or unwilling to return, and as such the realm's other inhabitants, the fey, alternatively pity or resent them—though if the fey have a deeper knowledge of the conditions that predicated their egress, they uniformly refuse to speak of it.

Unlike the gnomes, the fey natives of the First World exist on the Material Plane only temporarily, stepping between it and their home plane with the ease of a child

skipping across a puddle. As creatures that possess an intrinsic link to the natural world, their vision of nature is one altogether more primordial and alien than that of the material world, something that even druids find confusing, if not disconcerting, to contemplate. Ranging from pixies to redcaps, sidhe to rusalka, and many others, the fey personify the wild excesses of nature.

THE IMMORTAL AMBULATORY

A mobile demiplane, the Immortal Ambulatory is less of an enigma, if only because the true nature and power of its master is patently obvious. While most gods occupy a set realm within one of the larger planes, or possess no defined realm at all as they wander the cosmos, Apsu, the patron deity of good dragons, grants his realm mobility possessed by few others.

Viewed from its exterior as it drifts among the planes, Apsu's realm appears as a massive, translucent globe filled with drifting stars and floating islands, dominated by a central island with a great, vaulted cathedral of pearlescent, almost metallic marble. As for the surrounding islands, some of them reach barely a mile across, while others stretch for hundreds. Each island centers upon a fantastic castle or some manner of classical draconic lair, such as a mountaintop cave, a ruined city, or a cavern woven from clouds.

Shifting between them at his leisure, Apsu shares his domain with several dozen consorts, supposedly at least one for each metallic dragon type. Blurring the line between divine servants and lovers, Apsu's chosen each lay claim to one of the larger islands, populating it and its surrounding constellation with the Waybringer's petitioners, both draconic and otherwise. Of course, with dragons being rather territorial by nature, more islands appear to fit his worshippers' and consorts' needs as they arise.

LENG

Scurrying about across the Material Plane as buyers of slaves and sellers of curiously flawless rubies, always keeping their own counsel and refusing to speak of their port of origin, the so-called denizens of Leng represent an intrusion of the unreal and nightmarish into the tangible, waking world. Their rumor-shrouded home exists as some manner of bizarre demiplane either located within a pocket of the Dimension of Dreams or accessible through it, populated by themselves and their less-humanoid fellows, all of whom thirst for the living quarry they ferry back on their black-hulled ships.

As for the plane's interior, only fragments of information exist, gleaned from half-remembered mortal dreams or the lucid nightmares of those under the influence of certain drugs obtained at great price from the robed merchants. It is often described as cold and arid, with the

crumbling remains of an ancient civilization dotting its desolate and barren landscape. Such dreams also speak of a culture steeped in human sacrifice, and the propitiation of an entity known as the High Priest Not to be Described, a curious figure swathed in dirty yellow silk, its face obscured by a bloody, voluminous mask of the same.

Two theories exist as to Leng's nature. The first supposes that Leng was a physical location, possibly on the Material but more likely from the Outer Sphere, though precisely where isn't clear. Perhaps it was a physical place that belonged to a deceased plane, the seed of something destroyed during the formation of the present cosmological order, and the Outer Sphere had yet to extricate itself from the chaos of the Maelstrom. The other possibility is that Leng was a place that never existed, but yet endured as a gestalt of many aberrant things that did once exist, having pulled so greatly upon the collective fears and nightmares of mortals that in their darkest dreams they gave it substance once again.

Something took that dreaming facsimile and gave it life, allowing its curdled horror into the universe once again—or for the first time. This second explanation might, of course, be worse, because it would imply that Leng's existence was partially the fault of mortal life, and that something exists upon the planes that saw some value within that abomination. Some suspect a kindred being to the night hags' patron Alazhira the Dream Eater, something similarly possessed of callous, malevolent disinterest, or an entity that entered the multiverse from an undefined elsewhere.

OTHER DEMIPLANES

By no means is the previous list comprehensive. What follows are other, lesser demiplanes, about which much less is known.

The Circle Between

The vast, unmapped wilderness of this Ethereal demiplane serves as a planar link between druidic circles across the Material Plane. Tended by a mysterious entity known as the Bramble Maiden and a circle of planetouched druid followers, the forests serve as a sanctuary for many animals and plants long vanished on their original worlds. The demiplane's standing stones are under the druids' protection and harbor dozens of portals, including one to Golarion's Isle of Arenway during the summer solstice, while the rest link to other worlds entirely.

Crypt of the Dying Sun

Swathed in the light of a red, dying sun, this demiplane contains the reconstructed tomb of a vampiric sorcerer, Larynsang the Wasted, long exiled from his original world on the Material Plane. The brooding undead sorcerer uses

several artificial portals of his own creation to return to the Material Plane in order to abduct victims without the risk of sunlight, while also enriching his material fortunes with stolen wealth now littering the landscape amid a carpet of desiccated bones.

The Fleshwarren

Seemingly carved from the interior of a massive corpse, this morbid demiplane houses dozens of creatures from various planes, trapped and unable to leave. Most transport magics below that of *gate* fail, and in the absence of any sources of food or water, the trapped have only the plane's tissue itself to consume. Yet the flesh carries a curse, and significant consumption leads to a debilitating addiction, binding the trapped to the demiplane as the only food source capable of sustaining them from that point forward. More mysteriously, the demiplanar corpse's exposed bones appear artificially carved and inscribed with golden letters in an unknown tongue—a trait that eventually manifests itself in the flesh and bones of creatures trapped within it.

Freehold of the Rogue Angel

Littered with the skeletons of celestials and fiends alike, this demiplane is ruled by a shining angelic being calling itself the Forsaken Martyr. As best as any visitors can tell, the celestial was once a powerful deity's chosen servitor, but it refuses to divulge its former master's identity, and expresses equal contempt for both good and evil. The Martyr seems disturbingly curious about the moral views of any guests, and has at times exchanged objects or information it possesses in exchange for specific actions, often on distant planes, spanning the moral spectrum from benevolent to vile, without obvious rhyme or reason.

The Lost

This ethereal demiplane appears as a wonderland of its occupants' and visitors' childhood memories. The idyllic landscape supports a population of never-aging children of many species and races, watched over by Grandfather or Grandmother (the gender varying with each the telling), a being never once seen by visitors but spoken of in glowing, loving terms by the children, who seem steadfastly convinced of its reality. Visitors find the landscape shifting to accommodate aspects of their own nostalgic memories, especially places that would otherwise no longer exist, giving them a compelling urge to stay and drawing them deeper into the pocket realm. Worryingly, some of the lost children speak of a time "before they were children again," or "before they handed away their burden."

The Machine Armory

Inhabited by beings reminiscent of inevitables—thousands of them arranged into cold and silent ranks, like soldiers

awaiting their general—this demiplane appears to have been constructed not by magic, but by technology. Visitors report a sense of being watched and a periodic buzzing in their ears, as well as golden clouds lurking at the edge of their vision, always observing them, looking much like discorporate axiomites. Looming at the demiplane's center, and the object of most visitors' curiosity, stands a massive metallic tower with no visible entrance, emitting a constant thrum of moving gears. Divination magic reveals that an unknown intelligence residing within the plane calls the realm "Iteration 375," though most planar travelers refer to it by its common name.

Mnemovore

This quasi-sentient demiplane was created by bizarre, freakishly powerful magic, quite possibly as an unexpected emergent property of multiple failing and frayed enchantments present at its founding. Mnemovore devours other demiplanes, growing as it generates portals into other artificially created realities and subsumes them, specifically hungering for those utilized as wizards' studies and extraplanar libraries. Whether its creator is alive is unknown, as is whether its predation is a task its creator gave it. While it prefers to absorb only vacant and abandoned demiplanes, sometimes a trove of knowledge is too tempting for the living plane to wait.

The Prison of the Laughing Fiend

This Astral demiplane moves of its own accord, flirting with each of the evil and neutral planes and less frequently with their good siblings. Resembling a temperate material world of forests and fields, centered upon an archaic castle and surrounding villages, this realm is outwardly pleasant, but the air is oddly chill, and something seems subtly wrong. The seasons never change, sunlight seems frozen on the air, and no birdsong or insects' buzzing reaches the ears within a landscape best described as sterile. The demiplane's interior is a snapshot of a single moment in time, captured and preserved, frozen and isolated. The central keep serves as the lair of a loquacious reptilian demon by the name of Tegresin, the Laughing Fiend.

Tegresin's history is a tale of twisted, reciprocal vengeance, though details seem prone to flux, and he always paints himself as the victim. Thousands of years ago, Tegresin agreed to a pact with the wizards of a powerful warlord's clan. With his help, the clan inflicted horrible defeats upon their enemies, but in the end they refused to fulfill their end of the bargain, and the demon destroyed them with some great magic. Somehow, the demon was bound to this demiplane, though the souls of the clan's descendants flow here, doomed never to reincarnate or reach their gods. Oddly, the creature has never harmed his stolen souls, nor sold them, though he remains open to negotiations.

Bestiary



ASTRADAEMON

Diving out of the silver haze, this translucent, faintly phosphorescent humanoid appears to be some fusion of a gaunt, eyeless giant, eel, and a monstrous jellyfish. With exaggeratedly long limbs and nearly a dozen ghostly tentacles that extend from its back, shoulders, and upper arms, the creature grasps about at everything near it, tentacles twitching like the sensory organs of a deep-sea predator.

ASTRADAEMON

NE Large outsider (daemon, evil, extraplanar)
Init +2; **Senses** telepathic senses; Listen +20, Spot +20
Aura death knell (10 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 15, flat-footed 20
 (+6 Dex, +11 natural, -1 size)
hp 142 (15d8+75)
Fort +14, **Ref** +15, **Will** +11
Defensive Abilities natural displacement; **DR** 10/good;
Immune acid, death effects, disease, poison; **Resist** cold 10,
 electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 24

CR 13

OFFENSE

Spd 90 ft., fly 90 ft. (good)
Melee 2 claws +20 (1d6+5 plus energy drain) and
 bite +15 (1d8+5 plus energy drain) and
 tail +15 (1d12+2 plus energy drain)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Special Attacks devour soul
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)
 At will—*greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb.)
 3/day—*plane shift* (DC 20)

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 22, **Con** 20, **Int** 15, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 16
Base Atk +15; **Grp** +24
Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring
 Attack, Weapon Finesse (claw)
Skills Hide +24, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (the planes) +20,
 Knowledge (any two others) +20, Listen +20, Move Silently
 +24, Search +20, Spot +20, Survival +20
Languages Abyssal, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment any non-good plane
Organization solitary, pair, or pack (3–6)
Advancement 16–20 HD (Large), 21–30 HD (Huge)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Death Knell Aura (Su) The astradaemon's body automatically absorbs power from nearby bodiless souls. Any creature that dies within 10 feet of an astradaemon automatically gives it 1d8 temporary hit points and a +2 profane bonus to Strength for 10 minutes. This ability sometimes (Will negates DC 20) affects bodiless undead and spirits traveling outside the body (such as a person using *astral projection* or *magic jar*), dealing 1d8 hit points of damage per round the spirit is in range of the daemon's aura.

Devour Soul (Su) As a standard action an astradaemon that begins its turn with a pinned opponent can attempt to draw out and consume the soul of its victim, killing it instantly. This ability only works on living creatures, which may resist with a DC 22 Fortitude saving throw. The save is Constitution-based. For every 5 HD of the slain creature, the daemon gains a +1 profane bonus to attacks, saves, and checks for 24 hours. This ability does not consume all of the soul, and pieces of it still exist after the daemon completes its feast (enough to be able to raise or resurrect the slain victim normally).

Natural Displacement (Su) An astradaemon appears to flicker in and out of its current plane, giving it a hazy, translucent appearance much like frosted glass. Creatures attacking it suffer a 50% miss chance. A *dimensional anchor* spell negates this ability for the duration of the spell.

Telepathic Senses (Ex) Astradaemons are blind, but their



constantly weaving tentacles emit subtle, telepathic signals. This provides them with blindsight. *Mind blank* and similar magic blocks this sense, rendering the target invisible to the astradaemon. This sense is strongest regarding living, thinking creatures; objects, constructs, undead, and vermin have 20% concealment against the daemon.

Astradaemons appear as ghostly, faintly phosphorescent, rail-thin humanoids with exaggeratedly long limbs. The fiends also have a seemingly random number of translucent tentacles trailing from their backs, shoulders, and upper arms, which wave and weave through the air. Their bizarre forms possess heads that are skeletal, elongated, and vaguely piscine, reptilian, or canine, always bearing hungry rictus grins. Wicked, curved claws sprout from their hands and feet, and their tails move in rhythm with their tentacles, typically hanging toward the ground and almost doubling their length.

As the perpetually ravenous servitors of Abaddon's archdaemons, the astradaemons' touch is corruptive and damaging to the spiritual material of souls. Their touch and especially their bite can cause horrific damage, akin to that of a wraith, to anything they attack. Most feared, however, is their ability to utterly consume the souls of those killed in their proximity, feeding off of their essence or dragging it back to their fiendish overlords.

Appearing blind at first glance, astradaemons have no visible eyes—what might have once been eye sockets are covered over by translucent hide. However, while any other creature might be considered crippled by such a deficiency, Abaddon's soul-harvesters are unhampered by their condition. The fiends more than make up for lack of sight, sensing their environment through the constant movement of their tentacles—like the “vision” of many creatures who live in pitch darkness—and a supernatural awareness of souls.

Perhaps most disturbing, astradaemons exist in a uniquely translucent, semi-incorporeal state. This property also allows them to somehow transition between planes with ease, and they often use the ability to flee pursuit, especially after glutting themselves on stolen souls.

Astradaemons never speak and rarely use their telepathy to communicate with anything other than daemons.

Ecology

Astradaemons are the artificial creations of more powerful daemons—the archdaemons, their greatest servitors, and a select number of non-aligned daemoniac nobles. Though the gruesome and blasphemous details are restricted to the most powerful daemons, the process by which astradaemons form begins with the forced amalgamation and rendering down of dozens of mortal souls into a screaming, conscious

slurry of quivering soul-stuff. Over days and weeks, the soul-mass experiences unimaginable tortures, until at the apex of its maddening experience its masters fuse it with the spirit of another daemon (always a sacrifice rather than a willing act, usually as a punishment). Once combined with this daemoniac essence, ritual magic and their creators' raw force of will then transmute the damned into their final twisted and blindly obedient form.

Just who first created the astradaemons is a mystery. Though the secret has since spread beyond the archdaemons, none of them claim the act as their own, leading some to attribute the act to one of their long-since deposed and now nameless predecessors, or even the mythical Oinodaemon.

Habitat & Society

While not known to have any true society, astradaemons prefer to travel and hunt in packs, if only to increase the efficiency of their soul hunting upon the Astral. Separate packs do not necessarily cooperate, however, and when in the thick of battle against guardians of the River of Souls, their opponents have observed astradaemons using each other as unwilling cover, pushing rivals toward their enemies, or even on rare occasions killing and devouring their own kind.

The distinction might be lost to any non-daemon, but astradaemons give unquestioning loyalty to their original creators, and only grudgingly obey any of their servitors. The majority of their brood were created by and serve the archdaemons, hunting and collecting on their behalf, and their tactics and behaviors reflect the nature of those masters and their servitor deacons—astradaemons created by Szuriel subtly mimic the behaviors of purrodaemons, those created by Apollyon ape the behaviors of leukodaemons, and so on. As astradaemons return to their creators from time to time, it is likely that some aspect of the souls they consume remains within them, something tangible that the daemon's creator can extract and use for another purpose.

Regardless of their ultimate master, the carnivorous astradaemons all fight with cold, uncaring abandon when hunting for souls. Even more chilling, a pack may try to overrun a group of guardians defending the River of Souls—regardless of celestial or fiendish nature—and carry off soul and outsider alike for eventual consumption and oblivion. In many cases, however, the guardians suffer a worse fate, as astradaemons collectively play with them, slowly tearing them limb from limb in a sick display of what can only be described as pleasure—the only time these daemons display any emotion whatsoever—devouring them bit by bit as if given sufferance by the archdaemons to keep those meals to themselves rather than rendering them up to some greater purpose.



AXIOMITE

This creature resembles a flawless, perfect example of an elf. When it moves, parts of its body dissolve into golden, crystalline dust, swirling without wind, condensing into winding, artistic coils of symbols and equations before reforming into flesh a moment later.

AXIOMITE

LN Medium outsider (axiomite, extraplanar, lawful)
Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot +17

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16
 (+4 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 68 (9d8+27); regeneration 5 (chaotic or magic)

CR 8

Fort +9, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11

DR 10/chaotic; **Immune** disease, electricity, mind-affecting effects; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 19

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (good)

Melee longsword +10/+5 (1d8+1)

Special Attacks summon inevitable

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th)

At will—*dispel chaos* (DC 20), *hold monster* (DC 20)

2/day—*haste*, *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *order's wrath* (DC 19),

telekinesis (DC 20), *true seeing*, *true strike*

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 18, **Con** 16, **Int** 21, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +9; **Grp** +10

Feats Dodge, Empower Spell-Like Ability (*order's wrath*), Improved Initiative, Mobility

Skills Concentration +15, Craft (any) +17, Diplomacy +17, Hide +12, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Knowledge (religion) +17, Knowledge (any two others) +11, Listen +17, Move Silently +12, Sense Motive +17, Search +17, Spellcraft +17, Spot +17, Survival +17

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal

ECOLOGY

Environment Axis

Organization solitary, pair, or team (3–12)

Treasure standard

Advancement by character class; **Favored Class** expert

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Alternate Form (Su) As a free action, an axiomite can shift between its normal, humanoid form and a cloud of golden, crystalline dust, appearing as a shifting mass of mathematical symbols and equations. Within this form, the axiomite is incorporeal and can fly.

Regeneration (Ex) If an axiomite loses a limb or other body part, the lost portion regrows in 1d6 minutes. The axiomite can reattach the severed part instantly by holding it to the point of injury. After 1d6 minutes, severed body parts decay into inert, crystalline dust and cannot be reattached.

Summon Inevitable (Su) Once per day as a full-round action, four axiomites may join hands to summon a zelekhut inevitable.

The lords, caretakers, and architects of the eternal city of Axis, the axiomites possess a wide variety of outward forms, oddly unlike the uniformity displayed by their fellow natives, the hive-dwelling formians. A random cross-section of axiomite society contains those who resemble flawless, perfect humanoids of all descriptions—typically humans, elves, tieflings, dwarves, halflings, giants, and gnomes—but these outward shapes belie their true forms, which can be seen briefly whenever the axiomites move or perform any complex actions. During such moments, their bodies partly dissolve into glowing clouds of golden, crystalline dust. The



clouds move and contort on their own accord, temporarily congealing into twisting lines of mathematic symbols and complex tangles of equations. Each axiomite is actually an immortal personification of living, intelligent mathematics approximating a humanoid shape.

Regardless of their outward appearance, axiomites are all of the same general mold, save for a number of unique variants elevated from their common base as members of their ruling hive-mind council, to specialize in such pursuits as merging with and controlling their construct armies of inevitables, and other, more difficult tasks.

Ecology

The first outsiders to populate Axis, the axiomites claim to have emerged from the raw mathematical underpinnings of the laws of the cosmos; in effect, they are the cosmos made manifest in order to understand itself. As such, the axiomites predate the formians, and while such prehistory is often the stuff of myth, they claim their civilization was already thriving when the first of Golarion's gods made their presence known. Although their history would indicate that they originated independently of the existence of mortal souls, much like the proteans, demons, and others who were among the first outsider races to populate the Outer Sphere, such is not the case.

Unlike the forged and constructed inevitables, and also in contrast to the hive-mind formians (who form both from adopted mortal souls and, like terrestrial insects, from their queens' eggs), new axiomites form from the souls of mortals. This might not have always been the case, and the axiomites speculate that as the cosmos further develops and evolves, they themselves will continue to reflect any emergent laws and paradigms, such as the rise of mortals and their impact upon the fabric of the Outer Sphere. In other words, the first axiomites may not have come from mortal souls, but new ones do.

The transition from mortal soul to axiomite is as mysterious and opaque in many ways as the byzantine mathematics their race obsesses over. Souls unclaimed by Axis's various gods, as well as those not bound by treaty and territorial agreement with the numerous formian clans, migrate naturally toward one of the great axiomite constructions, describing their pilgrimage as "answering the Resonance" and "the call of the Godmind." Rising into the sky, each of the axiomites' metallic and crystalline monoliths thrums with the whirl of internal clockwork mechanisms and reverberations of almost musical tones, like those of great tuning forks. Each structure revolves around a single class of laws and its underlying equations, and each attracts mortal souls who, upon touching and merging with it, reemerge days later as coalescent crystalline motes, wearing their original mortal guise as the pattern for their axiomite incarnation.

THE ORIGIN OF THE INEVITABLES

Tens of thousands of years ago, Axis was eternally expanding and forging agreements with Heaven and Hell about its role in the multiverse. A trio of proteans—two keketars and one of an unknown albino type—emerged out of the borderlands and pronounced an ultimatum: "The infection that is Axis—rigidity, solidity, inflexibility of form and spirit—shackles the potential and innate freedom possessed by creation's cradle. Axis will cease its expansion from this day forward, or as with a festering wound, we shall see fit to cauterize it."

The axiomites and the ruling formian matriarchs dismissed the threats and prepared themselves for the expected war, but it did not come as they anticipated. "So be it" was the only response on the proteans' part, spoken by the albino. Twenty-four hours later, the outlying lands on a quarter of Axis's borders glistened blue, a trait normally found only in the utter depths of the Maelstrom, and without warning the plane's walls began to crumble as a pair of abyssal cracks tore open through the borderlands' fabric, spilling out legions of demons. While Axis survived the onslaught, the destruction was massive and widespread. Rather than serving as a warning against the continued expansion of Axis, the proteans' actions only spurred the axiomites to arm themselves against the forces of Chaos. Thereafter, a portion of all axiomite resources was assigned to building and maintaining an army of indefatigable defenders and champions of order: the first inevitables.

Habitat & Society

Unlike the formians, who largely occupy themselves with the endless perfection of their hives (and by extension the eternal city of Axis itself), the axiomites are focused as much inward as they are outward. Their society is broken into three parts, one of which devotes itself to the construction, maintenance, and command of the plane's construct armies of inevitables; another to the expansion and construction of Axis; and the last to exploring, calculating, and understanding the ultimate laws underlying Axis and all of reality.

As a whole, the combined race is ruled by the decrees of the Transcendental Council of the Defined Infinite, usually called the Godmind of Axis, a periodic meeting of the greatest of all three parts of their society. These superior axiomites undergo a union of mind and spirit, temporarily embodied as a single super-intelligence that calculates the race's course of action and then divides itself again into its component citizens, who put the Godmind's plans into action. When enough variables change, or when the previously calculated plans fall short of their intended goals, the axiomites reform their self-constructed god to plan a new or refined future course.



LURKER IN LIGHT

This small humanoid lurks at the edge of illumination, its fine features bleeding away at the edges, making it appear blurred and out of focus. Moving into the light, it vanishes, but its invisible presence is tangible as a feeling of being watched.

LURKER IN LIGHT

CR 5

NE Small fey (extraplanar)

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +9, Spot +9

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13

(+4 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 33 (6d6+12)

Fort +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities blend with the light; **DR** 5/cold iron

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average)

Melee 2 claws +8 (1d3+1) or dagger +8 (1d3+1 plus poison)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th)

At will—*dancing lights*, *flare*, *light*

1/day—*daylight*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *mage hand*

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 18, **Con** 15, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +0

Feats Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Finesse

Skills Escape Artist +11, Hide +13, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Listen +11, Move Silently +13, Search +11, Spot +11, Survival +9, Use Rope +8

Languages Aklo, Common, Sylvan

SQ daylight door, light tolerance, ritual gate

ECOLOGY

Environment any land

Organization solitary, pair, or gang (3–8)

Treasure standard

Advancement by character class

Level Adjustment —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blend with the Light (Su) In areas of bright light, lurkers are effectively invisible. As with *greater invisibility*, they may attack and still remain invisible. In shadowy illumination, a lurker loses this invisibility, though like all creatures in shadows they have concealment unless the viewer has darkvision. If the lurker is flying, it only has partial concealment (20%) rather than total concealment.

Daylight Door (Sp) Once per day a lurker can use *dimension door*, transporting only itself and up to 50 pounds of material. The start and end points of the teleport must be areas of bright light; if the destination lacks sufficient light, the teleport fails but does not expend the ability for the day.

Light Tolerance (Ex) Lurkers are immune to blinding effects caused by bright light.

Poison (Ex) Lurkers typically coat their daggers with shadow essence poison (injury DC 17, primary 1 Str drain, secondary 2d6 Str damage).

Ritual Gate (Su) By sacrificing one or more humanoid victims, a lurker or group of lurkers can create a *gate* to the First World, the Plane of Earth, or the Plane of Air, either to return home or to conjure allies. Creating a *gate* from Golarion to the First World requires the sacrifice of five victims, and all lurkers participating in the ritual can use the *gate* to return home. Creating a *gate* to bring allies from another plane to Golarion requires one sacrifice for every HD of the creature intended to pass through the *gate* (so five sacrifices can bring a normal lurker or a Medium air elemental, eight can bring a lurker with three class levels or a Large earth elemental, and so on). The sacrifices do not have to be killed at the same time; as long as no more than 24 hours pass between each murder, the magic continues to build until it reaches the required total. A ritual requires a minimum of 1 hour to complete.

Thin, almost emaciated humanoids dressed in muted and sun-bleached colors, the lurkers in light resemble jaundiced elven children stunted in their growth by malnutrition.



They have large, white eyes, tiny head-horns, and an eerie inhuman grace. Lurkers have pale wings but usually leave them folded against their backs, as the rapid motion of their wings outpaces their ability to blend with the light.

As beings of the First World, the lurkers don't interact with the Material Plane in the same way that other creatures do. Rather than being obscured by darkness or shadow, dim illumination is the only time they become fully visible. In anything brighter than torchlight, the creatures simply vanish, leaving only the eerie sound of their footsteps, or possibly a mocking chuckle to betray their presence.

Lurkers turn conventional wisdom on its head in terms of what mortals of the material world consider safe or frightening. Normally, darkness and night are the times when monsters prey and safety is a rare commodity, whereas the bright light of day or the sheltered bubble of illumination from a torch or candle offers protection. With lurkers, precisely the opposite is true.

Ecology

Lurkers act as solitary stalkers or as a group to prey upon multiple or more powerful targets, most commonly acting in the roles of thieves or brutal, quixotic killers. At times the fey may simply steal objects of their fixation, while other times they might specifically harm their owners even when presented an opportunity to steal without risk. When attacking a group, the creatures often present themselves as a lone individual, hiding their true numbers and using that one to lure their quarry into reach, typically toward heavily illuminated areas. Strangely, they seem to act upon some sort of inscrutable code or notion of justice. Like a huntsman's hounds, predators loosed from the hand of a distant lord, they appear to fixate on certain enemies or objects, not resting until the target is slain or seized. Given their planar origin, the analogy might be closer than anyone knows.

If killed, a lurker's body decays over the course of several minutes into 2d6 pounds of pale, glowing dust. A pound of lurker dust radiates faint evocation magic and sheds a cold light equal to a candle for 1d6 days. Lurker dust damages shadows as if it were holy water (1 pound of dust is the equivalent of a flask of holy water).

Habitat & Society

While native to the First World, lurkers make no appearance in the historical records of Golarion prior to 200 years ago, with encounters first confirmed in central Cheliah and northern Ustalav, and others occurring across the face of Avistan in the subsequent decades. Chelish reports at first assumed them to be some manner of creature from Nidal, but no evidence existed to support such claims. Other reports in Ustalav took them to be spectres or possibly demonic stragglers from the Worldwound far to the north.

COURTS OF THE FIRST WORLD

Within the shifting, fantastic lands they inhabit, fey of all types congregate not into nations defined by borders, ethnicity, or species, but rather courts of ideological allegiance, wandering wherever their capricious whimsy carries them through the First World or the Material Plane. Some of these courts devote themselves to joy and laughter, others to cruel tricks, theft, and jealousy.

The size and relationships of these courts remain largely unknown, but some of their names are known, found scratched into the glass of a merchant's window when he fails to leave a saucer of milk at the door during a new moon, or trampled into a farmer's grain when he disturbs the stones half-buried beneath a curious mound of earth at the edge of his fields: the Court of Scattered Moonlight and Broken Mirrors, the Court of the Hungry Sun, the Court of Dancing Raindrops.

Initially such encounters were restricted to simply observing and shadowing people in outlying farms, but the creatures quickly became more brash and violent as they realized the unique advantage they possessed over mortals. Tales persist of villages depopulated in the course of a single day, left untouched except for their deceased inhabitants arranged into ritualized positions of public feasting, cryptic phrases written in blood, or bodies arranged in spiral patterns in town squares, the designs perhaps of ritual significance to some fey overlord.

While in those first few years, the lurkers attacked soft targets of multiple races brutally and indiscriminately, since that time their actions have become much more selective, and also more daring. Mages with dealings in the fey realms, druids, and occasionally noble humans draw their ire, but the lurkers continually exhibit a preoccupation with gnomes. More than any other race, gnomes—even entire communities of their kind—have become targets of vicious attacks, leading some to suggest that their race, originally from the First World, might have been running from something, and that the lurkers represent whatever it was they fled. Yet at other times, lurkers pointedly leave gnomes alone while targeting others around them, possibly pointing to a vendetta targeted not by race but by bloodline, or something even more insubstantial.

Lurkers hate darkmantles, shadow mastiffs, shadows, and yeth hounds, and go out of their way to attack these creatures and those they serve. Some have been known to join forces with vampires, wraiths, or spectres, acting in the daylight hours when their employers are helpless, though in most cases the lurkers view these creatures with contempt and have been known to sabotage or abandon the undead at inopportune times.



PROTEAN, KEKETAR

The terrain shudders and shifts from forest to ocean to arid desert in quick succession as a thirty-foot-long serpentine humanoid slithers forward, appearing to simply jump between points rather than actually moving and carrying the fabric of the Maelstrom along with it. Its scales slowly shift in color and pattern, iridescent on a glossy black surface. The only constant features are its smoldering violet eyes and a crown-like cloud of symbols that swirls about its head.

KEKETAR PROTEAN

CR 17

CN Large outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, protean, shapechanger)

Init +6; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; **Listen** +30, **Spot** +30

Aura spatial riptide (30 feet)

DEFENSE

AC 35, **touch** 15, **flat-footed** 29

(+6 Dex, +20 natural, -1 size)

hp 270 (20d8+180); **fast healing** 10

Fort +21, **Ref** +18, **Will** +19

Defensive Abilities amorphous anatomy, *freedom of movement*; **DR** 15/lawful; **Immune** acid, polymorph; **Resist** electricity 10, sonic 10; **SR** 28

OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (perfect), swim 40 ft.

Melee +3 *dancing heavy flail* +33/+28/+23/+18 (2d8+19/17–20) and 2 claws +28 (1d8+5 plus transmutation) and bite +28 (2d6+5) and tail +28 (1d8+5 plus improved grab)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks bonded weapon, change shape, constrict 1d8+11, reshape reality

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 17th)

At will—*chaos hammer* (DC 21), *detect law*, *greater dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lb. of objects only), *major creation*, *move earth*, *quench* (DC 20), *shatter* (DC 19)
3/day—*quicken confusion* (DC 21), *dispel law* (DC 22), empowered *chaos hammer* (DC 21), *ethereal jaunt*, *polymorph any object* (DC 25)
1/day—*disintegrate* (DC 23), *prismatic spray* (DC 24), *prismatic sphere* (DC 26)

STATISTICS

Str 33, **Dex** 22, **Con** 28, **Int** 20, **Wis** 25, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +20; **Grp** +35

Feats Combat Expertise, Empower Spell-Like Ability (*chaos hammer*), Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (heavy flail), Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*confusion*)

Skills Bluff +30, Concentration +32, Hide +25, Intimidate +32, Knowledge (arcana) +28, Knowledge (any 3 others) +28, Listen +30, Move Silently +29, Sense Motive +30, Spellcraft +30, Spot +30

Languages Abyssal, Protean; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ change shape

Gear +3 *heavy flail*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Amorphous Anatomy (Ex) A keketar's vital organs shift and change shape and position constantly, granting it a 50% chance to ignore additional damage caused by critical hits and sneak attacks. A protean automatically recovers from physical blindness or deafness after 1 round by growing new sensory organs to replace those that were compromised.

Bonded Weapon (Su) A keketar can bond itself to a weapon by gripping it in its claws for 1 minute. Once bonded, the weapon gains the *dancing* quality (with no limit on how long it can remain dancing), and the keketar can conjure the weapon into its hands as if using *instant summons*, even if it is held by another creature. Most keketers bond with a +3 *heavy flail*.

Change Shape (Su) Once per day, as a standard action, a protean may change shape into any Small, Medium, or Large animal, elemental, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, ooze, plant, or vermin. A protean can resume its true form as a free action, and when it does so, it gains the effects of a *heal* spell (CL 17).



Reshape Reality (Su) Once per hour, a kekatar can reshape reality as a full-round action. This ability functions as the spell *mirage arcana* (CL 17th), except the changes created are quasi-real, like those created by *shadow conjuration*. Reshaped reality remains in its new form for an hour; if the kekatar is still present, it can use this ability to seamlessly maintain an area of reshaped reality. A creature that interacts with reshaped reality may make a DC 25 Will save to see through the semi-real illusion. Terrain can provide concealment, and against foes who do not make the Will save to see through the facade, the reshaped reality can also provide cover. For disbelievers, quasi-real objects and terrain have only 20% their normal hardness and hit points, and break DCs are 10 lower than normal. Dangerous terrain (such as acid lakes or lava rivers) cannot exceed 5d6 points of damage per round (1d6 per round against disbelievers). This ability cannot damage existing structures, nor does it function in areas where planar travel is prohibited. The save DC is Intelligence-based.

Spatial Riptide (Su) A kekatar's aura interacts strangely with teleportation effects. Any creature teleporting into the creature's aura must make a DC 29 Fortitude save or enter a state of suspended animation (identical to *temporal stasis*) for 1d3 rounds; success means the creature is merely nauseated for 1 round. Creatures teleporting out of the creature's aura must save against this effect; those that fail are in suspended animation for 1d3 rounds and then teleport to their destinations automatically. While in suspended animation, the creature is fixed in time and space; it can be released with a *freedom* spell, and *freedom of movement* provides immunity to its effects. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Transmutation (Su) A creature struck by a kekatar's claw attack must make a DC 29 Fortitude save or be affected by *polymorph any object* (CL 17th). The kekatar usually opts to polymorph victims into statues or harmless animals (duplicating the effects of *flesh to stone* or *baleful polymorph*). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Proteans are snake-like creatures native to the Maelstrom. Believing that true chaos is the natural state of the multiverse, they oppose order in all its forms and seek to unmake the planes back into their primordial state (for more information on other kinds of proteans, see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #22). Keketars are the prophet-lords of the protean race and architects of the Maelstrom's metaplastic reality, dedicating their existence to discerning and carrying out the will of their plane's mysterious rulers.

Individual keketars range from 7 to 40 feet long, though they constantly shift and change like the unformed reality of the Maelstrom itself, altering color and serpentine banding patterns, shrinking or elongating, and undergoing even more radical physical changes. However, a kekatar possesses two key features: first,

whatever configuration its body takes, its eyes are always a piercing shade of amber or violet; and second, a whirling ring of ever-changing symbols floats above and around its head like a shapeshifting crown. The cloud's symbols coil, snarl, and intermingle with one another, gradually merging and mutating without apparent pattern. Each kekatar is marked by unique stylistic elements within the symbols and the general orientation and appearance of the crown—useful for distinguishing between different individuals. They can hide or manifest this crown at will, but they usually leave it visible.

Ecology

Keketars exist as a separate protean species as well as a distinct functional caste within the Maelstrom's fluid, shifting environment. What is not entirely understood about keketars is whether they exist as such from birth, spawned either from the mating of other keketars or produced under chance or rare circumstance from the unions of their lesser kindred, or else are elevated to their status by the touch of divinity or exposure to some chance energy from the deep Maelstrom. Usually hidden within the unmapped depths of the deep Maelstrom, keketars are isolated from the rest of the multiverse, though sages have gleaned some—often contradictory—information from the imentesh proteans.

According to the imentesh Saeleshissik, keketars are chosen by foreordained chance—paradoxical as that might be—and the elevation of the worthy. Stating that the crown is by birthright, the protean was evasive when asked directly if members of its own imentesh caste were capable of ascent or promotion to the ranks of the keketars, answering only that the Maelstrom contained no impossibilities.

Habitat & Society

Keketars serve as a racial priesthood for the protean deities known as the Speakers in the Depths, operating as intermediaries between the other protean castes and the entities they collectively worship. Other proteans treat keketars as nobles, though keketars rarely use this status to rule others. As with many mortal religions, dogma and theology is prone to interpretation and change, and among the proteans the situation is perhaps even more pronounced. Whatever the nature of their mysterious god or gods, separate keketars may come to dramatically different conclusions as to their will and intent. Once they pass on to their kindred proteans just what paths of action they perceive as necessary, such groups may come into conflict with others tasked with the opposite. Curiously, such conflicts in vision or interpretation only occur between individual keketars and discrete groups, but never within a gathered group.



VULPINAL

From the black “socks” on its cheerfully bouncing legs to its large, perked ears and the whiskers at the end of its muzzle, this creature looks like nothing so much as a small, humanoid fox. Bits of clover and dew cling to its loose traveling clothes in places, but dirt and dust are nowhere to be seen, even on its feet and hand-like forepaws. Its amber eyes radiate a sense of supernatural calm as it puts a golden flute to its lips and plays a hauntingly beautiful melody.

VULPINAL

NG Small outsider (agathion, extraplanar, good)
Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +16, Spot +16

Aura *calm emotions* (30 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 21, flat-footed 20
 (+6 Dex, +4 armor, +5 natural, +1 size)
hp 43 (8d8+8)
Fort +7, **Ref** +14, **Will** +11; +4 vs. poison

CR 9

DR 10/evil; **Immune** electricity, petrification; **Resist** cold 10, sonic 10; **SR** 20

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +14 (1d3+1) and bite +9 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks pounce

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)

At will—*detect evil*, *invisibility* (self only), *mage armor*, *remove disease*

3/day—*charm monster* (DC 20), *dispel evil*, *flame arrow*, *holy smite* (DC 20), *teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)

1/day—*major image* (DC 19)

Base Statistics Without its *mage armor*, a vulpinal has AC 22, touch 17, flat-footed 16

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 22, **Con** 13, **Int** 19, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 23

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +9

Feats Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +17, Concentration+9, Hide +17, Jump +9, Knowledge (any) +12, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Listen +16, Move Silently +17, Perform (any) +17, Search +12, Spellcraft +10, Spot +16, Tumble +14, Use Magic Device +12

Language Common, Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; *tongues*

SQ bardic knowledge +8, lay on hands, *speak with animals*

ECOLOGY

Environment Nirvana

Organization solitary, pair, or team (3–12)

Treasure standard plus masterwork musical instrument

Advancement 9–16 HD (Small), 17–24 HD (Medium)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bardic Knowledge (Ex) Vulpinals have the bardic knowledge ability (+8 bonus to the check). Actual bard levels stack with this ability.

Calm Emotions (Sp) Vulpinals radiate a feeling of placid serenity, acting like a permanent *calm emotions* spell with a radius of 30 feet. Any creature entering this area must make a Will save (DC 20) to resist the effect. A creature that makes its save is immune to that vulpinal's aura for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Lay on Hands (Su) As the paladin class feature, except that each day, the vulpinal can heal an amount of damage equal to its full normal hit points.

Pounce (Ex) If a vulpinal charges, it can make a full attack that round.

Skills Vulpinals have a +8 racial bonus to Jump checks.

Speak With Animals (Su) This ability works like the *speak with animals* spell (caster level 8th) but is a free action and does not require sound.

Tongues (Su) Vulpinals can speak with any creature that has a language, as though using a *tongues* spell (caster level 19th). This ability is always active.



Among the smallest of Nirvana's agathion celestials, vulpinals tend to be the most reclusive of their kind, and also the most far-ranging across the plane. While their avoral and leonal kindred might restrict themselves to mountaintop aeries and monasteries, as well as to the guardianship of the plane's gates, portals, and other important locations, vulpinals can be found anywhere.

Like other agathions, vulpinals look like humanoid animals, specifically bipedal anthropomorphic foxes that stand about 3 feet tall. Individuals may vary in coloration, length of ear or muzzle, and so on. True to their roles as wandering bards, sages, and unassuming sorcerers, they typically dress in loose clothing, usually of a simple and functional appearance. Despite this, their often brilliantly colored fur (usually red or red-brown, though silver is also common) more than makes up for any sense of drabness, especially with tails as long as the vulpinals are tall. In addition, they tend to have a flair for the dramatic, and individual vulpinals often pick a single article of clothing and grant it some signature artistry as an expression of their creativity and personality.

Ecology

True children of Nirvana, vulpinals possess a unique status among the mortal souls that enter their native plane. As with all the agathions, vulpinals began their existences as mortals, those who at their core possessed a spark of goodness that called them to Nirvana as they stood in Pharamasma's courts. Vulpinals usually appear to be adults, but some look younger (with larger eyes, shorter stature, and kit-like proportions) or older (with an overall leaner look and gray fur about the muzzle and tail). Vulpinals say they appear as the age they felt most defined them during life, or the age at which they were most happy during their mortal existence, though they avoid the question of just how much of their mortal lives they still remember.

While there are male and female vulpinals, and they are affectionate among their own kind and with other good creatures, vulpinals cannot reproduce; they only originate directly from mortal souls arriving in Nirvana. This also means that every vulpinal is a unique individual, and they do not have strong family ties to other vulpinals (though they of course form friendships with other vulpinals and other good creatures).

Habitat & Society

Vulpinals tend to be solitary creatures, perpetually wandering across Nirvana, experiencing whatever they find, sharing, teaching, and learning from whomever they come across before moving on to continue their temporal and spiritual journey. Despite this wandering life, like-minded vulpinals inevitably find that their journeys cross

KELIFIX AND THE DRAGON

Kelifix the vulpinal bard spent years looking for the Nirvana Dragon, and on the verge of giving up his search, he awoke one morning within a great cavern filled with tapestries, books of all kinds, and ancient musical instruments. Looking down at the tiny celestial stood the Dragon, inspiring not fear, but radiating a sense of almost unfathomable age and patience.

Puzzled and amazed, Kelifix asked his burning questions: "Who are you? How long have you been here?"

"I have always been with you, and I will be here in the last days, and afterward once again, if that is my burden."

"Where did you come from?" Kelifix asked.

"Elsewhere," came the Dragon's reply.

"Did you create Nirvana? Did you create us?"

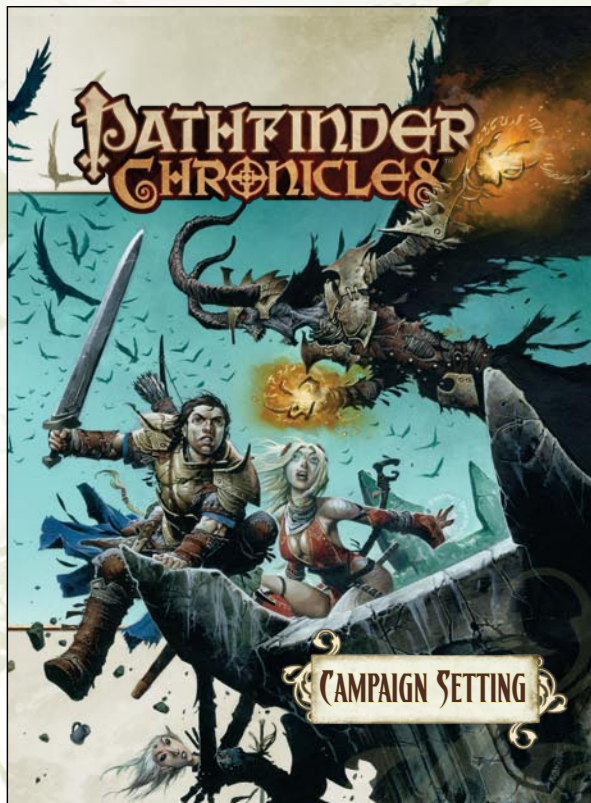
"No, child, you made this place. All of you made this place. And in that, know that I am proud of you."

paths time and time again, especially for those who form more intimate or romantic associations (including such pairings outside of their kind). Such meetings allow them to share their journeys and new insights, and once they part ways once again, they do so knowing that their plane will guide them back together. Vulpinals are kindred spirits to lillend azatas; both are wanderers and devotees of art and music. Because vulpinals are small and light, it is an easy matter for a lillend to carry one while flying, and they sometimes take soaring journeys together, appreciating the scenery, and composing poems or songs about the beauty of the natural world.

Rather than engaging in a self-absorbed journey of personal enlightenment, vulpinals freely share their collected knowledge as sages, perform songs, dances, and stories as bards, and spread a thousand miracles as sorcerers. Some vulpinals gain particular renown in their chosen vocations, such as the bard and poet Marrowyl of the Auburn Flute, the scholar and astrologer Virrom Starseeker, and Lady Tarawyth the Fire-Crowned, one of the most powerful evokers of her race.

Though they usually travel alone, vulpinals within a given area often congregate together, collaborating in their music or storytelling, debating in their areas of focus, and even sharing spells. Such meetings are not exclusive to their own kind, and as they travel, their ears and whiskers remain keen to the needs of the plane as a whole, and they feel drawn to such places in times of need. When a flood of proteans emerges from the Maelstrom borderlands or an Abyssal chasm erupts near Nirvana's borders, groups of vulpinals inevitably appear to provide aid to the besieged leonal and angelic defenders, oftentimes with a zeal and ferocity that stands in stark contrast to their small stature and mellow reputation.

GOLARION NEEDS HEROES



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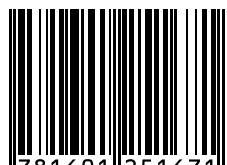
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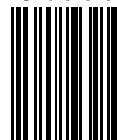
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