

HELLFROST LAND OF FIRE

• REALM GUIDE #8 •

THE EMPTY ZONE

Introduction

West of the Southern Trade Road lies the Empty Zone, so named because there are no oases and no permanent settlements. A desolate, arid wasteland of sand and ruins, it was once a vibrant center of civilization. For many who dare walk the shifting sands, all that awaits is death, and yet adventurers and opportunists are drawn here, for the countless ruins are supposed to hold wondrous treasures. This supplement expands on material found in *Hellfrost: Land of Fire*.

HISTORY OF THE EMPTY ZONE

In the days before the denizens of Hekata raised their massive burial complexes to honor their dead, the western half of the Empty Zone, now an expanse of sand indistinguishable from other parts of the desert, was lush jungle. Here dwelt lizardmen, for the jungle was part of their great empire, whose great extent still lies far to the west. Amid the dense vegetation they raised houses of stone and colossal stepped temples to honor their inhuman deity. To the east was grassland, suitable for grazing herds, but not for large scale agriculture except around the scattered oases Apsu had seen fit to place there.

Untold years passed, and humans eventually began to settle the eastern portion, drawn here by the promise of fine timber and exotic goods, for in those distant days the lizardmen had little hostility toward humans. Around the oases they too erected magnificent cities, working stone and shaping the landscape to suit their needs. Time is an unforgiving mistress, and while these cities perhaps rivaled those standing today in size, population, and majesty, the names of the founding cultures are lost even to the Bedu, whose ancestors traded here long before men built permanent settlements.

As the legends say, the end of the human cultures came about through conflict. Originally drawn by the prospect of trade, the humans quickly succumbed to greed, for the lizardmen mined gold and precious stones from the green-choked hills within their leafy borders. Seeking to own the resources outright, the humans marched against the lizardmen. Knowing little of the lizardmen culture, the aggressors made the mistake of considering them primitive creatures, easy prey for their trained armies equipped with state-of-the-art bronze armor and weapons. The campaign was an unmitigated disaster. What disease and starvation did not achieve (the jungle was unfamiliar territory), the lizardmen warriors and their thunderlizard war beasts completed.

Angered, and spurred on by their powerful priests, the lizardmen retaliated, launching a wave of counterattacks against the human cities. Brooding walls of stone were no

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Author & Layout: Paul Wade-Williams
Editing: Danny James Walsh
Graphic Design: Robin Elliott



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RULES OF THE REALM

These setting rules apply in the Empty Zone.

* **Arid:** The chance of rainfall is halved in the Empty Zone (rounded down).

* **No Landmarks:** Except around the dunes, there are very few landmarks visible from any great distance. As such, it is very easy to misjudge the distance and direction traveled. Each day, the party must make a Cooperative Survival roll at -4 to know their location with regard their starting point or destination. A failure means the party is lost, but can try again the next day. A critical failure means the party completely misjudges their location, and remains lost until it can find a landmark marked on their map (assuming they have a map).

* **Trading:** There are no permanent settlements here, and few Bedu walk the land. Trading opportunities are very few and far between. When nomads are encountered, they are rarely in the business of trading. Streetwise rolls to sell booty suffer a -4 penalty. Even with success, the buyer offers only 10% on a successful roll, with a raise increasing the value to 25%.

* **Water:** For the purposes of finding food and water, the Empty Zone is treated as dunes (-4 to Survival rolls). There are no oases outside Blue Water.

defense against thunderlizard battering rams and living siege towers, nor the righteous fury that filled the warriors' hearts. Largely devoid of any standing armies, the human cities fell one by one, their inhabitants enslaved or put to the sword (or, some say, eaten by the victorious hordes), their treasures taken in victory back to the steaming jungle. Shocked by the ferocity of the assaults and the immense army the lizardmen could raise in such a short time, no other humans dared to occupy the empty cities.

That the jinn did not trouble the lizardmen is considered fact, for no caravans of lizardmen slaves ever arrived in the heart of their mortal empire—the logic behind that train of thought being that no lizardmen were there in Suleiman's time. No records survive as to why the jinn did not head into the jungle, but perhaps, as some sages surmise, the land was simply too distant to bother with—after all, the jinn made no attempt to conquer the coastal regions of the desert, yet alone look beyond the sands. In turn, the lizardmen made no attempt to expand their borders, though it is said their priests knew magic which would enable the forest to encroach on the grasslands and so expand their borders.

Five centuries ago, shortly after Suleiman led the slaves in rebellion, the lizardmen's eastern colonies began to fall to a power their vast armies and potent priests were incapable of halting. Bedu legends, passed down the generations, tell of a fell voice heard on the wind before the disaster struck. One variant tells that the sound

was made by the remaining jinn, who as one wailed in great anguish. A few human supremacist fanatics with no grasp of legends insist the voice was that of Suleiman, who sought revenge against the lizardmen for their unprovoked war against the human cultures of the Empty Zone, and so crafted a spell of truly awesome potency.

Without warning, the life-giving rains began to fall less frequently, and with increasing irregularity. At first the lizardmen took no action, for the loss of rainfall was slight. Within a single generation, they were emptying their cities of slaves, butchering them in mass sacrifices to appease the heavens. Blood flowed like rivers down the temple steps and so many were the discarded corpses that the cities were like charnel houses. Yet the offerings went unanswered.

Parched, the eastern grasslands withered and turned to sand within a few short years or were consumed by brush fires, while strong winds of unearthly origin began to blow the desert toward the jungle. The initial pace was slow, perhaps a few hundred yards a year, but within a century the desert was advancing many miles a year and showed no sign of abating. Relentless and unstoppable, the sand swallowed everything in its path, consuming cities, temples, and jungle with insatiable hunger. What the races took years to build, the desert devoured in days.

Not waiting to see how far the desert would encroach, the lizardmen abandoned their outlying cities, laying down terrible curses against any who would seek to steal the treasures they could not carry to safety. Generation after generation has fled further west, for the desert has continued its advance. How far back into the jungle they have retreated is unknown to modern humans, for few are brave enough to cross the Empty Zone, and the lizardmen have only animosity toward humans, who they blame for the loss of their lands.

Exploration

Littered with untouched ruins and with very few predators, the Empty Zone appears to be an adventurers' paradise. While the sands are littered with many natural hazards, the greatest danger to thorough exploration is the shortage of water. Rainfall is scarce, and all but one oasis has been buried beneath the sands (and the remaining pool is cursed; see p. 5). The sun bleached bones of explorers who failed to carry sufficient water are testament to the ever-present danger of dehydration. Even vultures and jackals lurk only on the fringes, such is the near total lack of life within the wastes.

Few reliable maps of the region exist, either from before the arrival of the jinn or made more recently by hardy explorers. Plenty are sold in the bazaars, but most are fanciful forgeries based on hearsay and myth rather than hard facts. Even on maps drawn with some knowledge of the region, distances between points are often estimated, making them wildly inaccurate. What may appear to be a day or two's march might involve a week of hard slog under the gaze of relentless sun.

Aside from two areas of dunes, the desert is flat and featureless, not counting small boulders (that are actually the tops of buried hills and rock spires). No towering hills or rock spires break the surface to provide landmarks, and the heat shimmer conceals more subtle clues at a distance. Misjudging the distance traveled is a common occurrence, and even navigating by the sun, it is extremely easy to become lost on the featureless plains, especially after a sandstorm or on an overcast day. More than one party has walked around in circles until its water ran out.

Even if one manages to reach a ruin, it may require days of backbreaking work to excavate an entrance, for the sand that swallowed the cities and temples is, in some cases, dozens of feet over the tops of the highest structures. Others are easier to reach, the coating of sand being much thinner and leaving many buildings exposed, but these have probably already been robbed.

Major Locales

Despite its name, there is much in the Empty Zone to attract adventurers. A few of the notable sites are detailed below, but many others exist.

CITY OF GHÛLS

During the lizardmen's reprisals, one city close to the Southern Trade Road managed to hold out long enough for a lengthy siege to develop. Too far away to trade with the lizardmen, the city's rulers refused to dispatch his army into the jungle. While it allowed the city walls to be adequately defended, this act condemned the inhabitants to a far more gruesome fate.

Refusing to believe the lizardmen would consider the city a target, the granaries were near empty when the siege began. Within days food ran out, forcing the inhabitants to eat what whatever animals they could find. Still the siege continued without end in sight, for the walls were thick and the defenders resolute, despite their hunger. At some point, the citizens, insane with hunger pangs and with little hope of survival if they surrendered and took their chances with the lizardmen, turned to the only edible substance they could find—the dead.

At first the consumption of the forbidden flesh was conducted in secret, families eating their kin or neighbors in dark cellars, but soon the cannibalism was rampant and in the open. Gangs of crazed inhabitants stalked the streets in search of their next meal, tearing innocent victims limb from limb in order to survive. Although the emir remained in charge, he himself having resorted to cannibalism, social order collapsed.

Eventually the lizardmen broke through the outer wall, the defending army having deserted its posts. Believing victory was assured given the deprivation the defenders must be suffering, they were horrified when the citizens, now transformed into ghûls after eating

NEW POWER EDGE

DEATHBLADE

Requirements: Veteran, Arcane Background (Khem-Hekau or Miracles: Iblis), arcane skill d8+, Fighting d8+, *zombie*

A student of necromancy, the character has learned a secret technique allowing him to deal death and grant unlife in a single action.

When the character kills a living being using Fighting, he may immediately cast *zombie* on his victim's corpse as a free action. The casting must be made in the same round as the attack. Otherwise, animating the corpse requires a normal casting of *zombie*. If the necromancer slays multiple creatures in the same attack (such as through Frenzy or Sweep), he can decide how many he wants to animate—he doesn't have to animate all of them.

In addition, if the character takes the Followers Edge, he may take permanently animated skeletons or zombies as his servants.

so much human flesh, fell upon them, ripping through their tough hide with their long nails. When the lizardman general heard what befell his troops he ordered an immediate withdrawal of his army.

Countless centuries later, the city, now partially buried by the sand pouring through the breach created by the lizardmen, is still inhabited by these fell flesh eaters. The emir still rules his corrupt and inhuman people, a king among the damned. Having long ago consumed every scrap of flesh and sucked every bone clean of marrow, their numbers have dwindled dramatically down the ages. The city now hosts around 100 ghûls.

Generally they live on meager scraps ripped from animals and birds caught in and around the ruined city, or on unfortunate explorers who see the city walls poking through the sand and whose curiosity or greed gets the better of them. The Empty Zone is widely known as a dangerous place, and no one wastes valuable resources searching for missing adventurers.

Once or twice a year, they venture out from their sunless homes, for they live amid the partially covered ruins of their crumbling city, and lurk along the trade road, patiently waiting for a caravan to make a rest stop near by. Once darkness falls, they swarm the hapless travellers, rendering them paralyzed with their filthy claws before dragging them away to become their next meal.

CITY OF THE JADE MIRROR

In 89 CJ, a traveller suddenly appeared in the throne room of the Sultan. Records indicate the air rippled and the man stepped out of nowhere. Quickly throwing himself prostrate and swearing he was no assassin, the

CLERICS OF IBLIS

The Faithful chapter in *Land of Fire* details the core aspects of the greater gods, and provides information on the clergy's duties. This entry is an expansion for the cult of Iblis, providing facts useful to both players and GMs.

Training: While citizens speak of the cult of Iblis, there is little structure to the organization. Each temple or collective of followers operates on its own recognizance, for a formalized hierarchy goes against the principles of chaos. In order to join, one must either come to a cultist's attention or successfully track down a cell, no easy feat given their secretive nature. There is no form of formal training—recruits need only swear an oath of support the cause of chaos and disharmony to be accepted. Beyond that, a cleric is free to act how he wishes, so long as his actions honor Iblis.

Prayers: There is no formal structure to prayers. A worshipper may whisper, scream loudly, carve words in a victim's flesh, or write them on a piece of paper which he then burns, all in the same day. Frequently they contain acts the worshipper will commit in the future, though being chaotic the follower might change his mind. Iblis doesn't hold this lack of guaranteed action against his believers. Rather than beseeching Iblis for aid, most prayers are actually curses against one or more gods for a slight against the cleric and his unholy cause.

Adventures: The cult never issues orders, though members may ask each other for favors, and clerics are beholden to powerful demons and undead who need mortal agents. Any act of destruction or one which promotes chaos suit clerics. They might aid the withered pharaohs of Hekata by retrieving a relic, poison a city's water supply, start a smear campaign against a powerful and popular noble, corrupt an important personage to the cause, or raid a temple of Shamash, the great enemy of Iblis. Given their chaotic nature, clerics are prone to creating adventures through their actions—summoning a demon in the center of a crowded market is going to have repercussions.

Character Guidelines: Corruption and discourse, sly words and innuendo, are the tool of priests. They are charmers, not warriors, favoring political games over violent deeds. Persuasion is their favored skill, for they must be both subtle manipulators that work in the shadows and fiery rabble-rousers preaching to the masses. Charismatic is a powerful Edge in their hands. Paladins, by comparison, have a free reign in their choice of Traits and Edges. Intimidation should be considered, but it is not essential. Given their preference toward rash, unpredictable action, characters should avoid the Cautious Hindrance—that way lies sin. Quick and

man survived death at the hands of the Sultan's bodyguards. The man then told his story to the bemused and intrigued nobleman.

An explorer, the man had been in search of a fabled jade mirror, which he had come to believe lay in one of the lizardmen's lost cities. With a camel train and many servants, he journeyed into the wastes, whereupon he and his party met with many perils. After many months, the party entered a ruined city and began to explore the ruins. Avoiding deadly traps and lizardmen, the explorer, who by now was the only survivor of the expedition, came upon a single piece of polish jade as tall and wide as a man, a prize of untold wealth.

Before he had time to consider how to get it home, lizardmen burst into the room. Fearing death, the man thought only how he was foolish to attempt his quest, and how he desired only to be back in Al-Wazir. With that, the jade mirror became a portal, through which he could see the Sultan's throne room. Without hesitating he dived through the mirror, whereupon the Sultan knew the rest of the tale.

At the Sultan's request, the explorer drew a map of how to reach the fabled city. His pockets bulging with precious stones, he left the court a rich man. Records still held in the archives indicate the Sultan promptly despatched an expedition to recover the jade mirror, but his men returned unsuccessful, unable to find a trace of the lost city the explorer had discovered.

Scholars and savants still debate this story. Some believe the tale is true, and that the reason the city was never found was the result of a sandstorm, that buried it. Others claim the man was likely Sinbad, the most famous of explorers and a notable rogue. They insist his story was fictitious, a scam to con the Sultan out of his riches, and that his appearance can be explained away with a simple *teleport* spell.

CITY OF TALOS

Like the other human cities, the city of Talos grew rich from trade with the lizardmen. So avaricious were the inhabitants, and so fearful of robbers, that their artificers worked long and hard to construct a gigantic bronze golem. Ancient inscriptions uncovered in the Caliphate indicate they named this guardian Talos, which in their now dead language meant "One who shines like the sun." Scholars believe this indicates the polished outer shell of the creature. The true name of the city and its people is now lost to time, and its current title comes solely from its most famous denizen.

Possessed of limited intellect, Talos nonetheless deduced that the most effective way to thwart robbers was to ensure there were no thieves, and the best way to achieve that was to kill everyone. Thus, Talos went on a murderous rampage, eventually depopulating the entire city. Although stories claim the giant killed the entire population, it is more likely that many fled its unstoppable advance, abandoning their homes and treasures to their former watchman.

The city never fell to the lizardmen, for Talos proved to be indestructible by any means they possessed. Thus, he still stalks the ruins, silently guarding a vast treasure from all would-be thieves.

Talos' name has nothing to do with his sheen, though it was once highly polished. So skilled were the artisans that Talos was filled with red hot liquid gathered from the Heart of Fire, through which it could heat its body to such a degree that it glowed like the sun. Such was the furious heat that anything standing too close would catch fire or melt. The giant's bronze skin, so storytellers claim, is impervious to all weapons.

One legend says that he absorbs metal, allowing him not only to shrug off injury from weapons, but also to heal his injuries. His only weakness is a nail on his left ankle, which acts like a plug. Should this be removed, his fiery ichor would flow from his body, exsanguinating him in a manner similar to slitting a human's throat.

THE DESERT OF THIRST

Dominating the southeast corner of the Empty Zone, covering everything within an arc touching the southern edge of both areas of dunes is the Desert of Thirst. No rain ever falls here, no water can be found beneath the surface (both of which mean there is next to no animal life, either), and, due to a curse laid down by the lizardmen who once lived here, those who travel the wastes consume water at twice times the usual rate. That something is wrong is obvious by the amount of weathered animal and human bones protruding through the sand.

Unfortunately for adventurers, this region is rich in largely unexplored lizardman ruins, making it a natural draw for those seeking either knowledge or treasure. The curse was originally intended to prevent humans from raiding the abandoned cities, but today it equally serves to thwart lizardman attempts to reclaim their ancestors' treasures. Great riches (and many more dangers) await those prepared to enter the cursed land, but more likely the outcome will be a lingering death.

THE DRY OASIS

While the Bedu claim there are no oases in the Empty Zone, there is one pool of water. Situated in the northern wastes, it is a welcome sight for thirsty travellers. Birds nest in the palms (no fruit grows on the trees) that grow here, the water is still and clear, and the air is cool and refreshing. But as the Bedu say, if the honey looks too sweet, it probably cannot be eaten. Somewhat disturbing are the number of abandoned tents and personal belongings. Most are years old, and all apparently left behind by their owners for no obvious good reason.

Aside from the abandoned belongings, everything about the oases seems perfectly normal. The water quenches thirst, the shade is cool, and there are no predators to trouble those desiring rest from their journey. Unfortunately, the oasis is cursed by an unbound marid who lives in the pool.

CLERICS OF IBLIS CONTINUED

Level Headed can help with taking quick actions, for they promote higher initiative. Clerics should avoid going on Hold too often—again, Iblis expects actions regardless of consequences, not careful planning.

Note: All of the festivals detailed on the following pages are intended to appease or deceive Iblis, not directly honor him. Ceremonies in his honor typically involve human sacrifice and the committing of other sins, and can be held on any holy day.

Any water carried more than one mile from the oasis turns to dust. Liquid already consumed is not affected. Thus, the oasis becomes a sort of tomb for those with no other supplies. Those in need of succor have two choices—remain at the oasis for the rest of their natural lives, or try to cross the desert and reach civilization before death comes. After a while, most chose to enter the desert, leaving behind their possessions to reduce their burden. Some do so in the vain hope they will be rescued, but more chose to end their torment by accepting death.

The bones of those who elect to stay and die of other causes (suicide is popular) are taken into the desert by the marid and discarded, soon to be buried by the sand. She chooses to let the tents remain in the hope visitors will deduce the problem and come to the correct conclusion that previous visitors died attempting to reach safety. Such revelations can only add to their despair.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

Off the coast is a cluster of small, deserted islands. Most are craggy outcroppings, too rugged to settle and devoid of any natural resources save for the eggs of sea birds who roost here. While they have nothing to attract explorers or mariners, they are a navigational hazard, for between them and the mainland lie jagged reefs and submerged rocks whose ragged points lie mere inches beneath the waves.

On the closest spit of mainland, a stone tower rises to a height of 200 feet. None can say who built it, for it has no markings, and the construction is devoid of architectural clues. That it stands at all is testament to the skill of the builders, for the large stones weigh many tons.

Each night, the very instant the sun vanishes below the horizon, a beam light bursts into life. It sweeps back and forth across the turbulent ocean for a distance of five miles, illuminating the only safe passage through the labyrinth of reefs. The instant the sun rises, the beam vanishes, plunging the ocean into the dim glow of dawn.

No ship captain or caravan master has ever admitted delivering supplies to the tower. Indeed, such a task would be impossible. By sea there is no harbor for dozens of leagues, and even if a caravan made the arduous

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trip overland, there is no door or window marring the tower's surface.

Some scholars claim the lighthouse was built by a majin and contains an ifrit, bound there by Suleiman as punishment. Many Faithful believe the tower is actually a temple of Shamash, raised in the olden days and brought back to life by the rekindling of the lost faith. A romantic, and more fanciful story, tells of how in the days when humans lived in the Empty Zone a young man went to sea, vowing to return to his beloved's arms. She in turn vowed she would shine a light to guide him home each night, building the tower so the light might shine further. The mariner has yet to return home, and his beloved has yet to give up her task.

Recently, the lighthouse was visited by explorers from the northern continent. They claimed to be searching for a lost god, and the description of the lighthouse and its magic beam seemed to excite them. Whether or not they found anything to support their claims is unknown, for the expedition is now three months overdue, and presumed lost, another casualty of the harsh desert.

THE LIVING JUNGLE

Except near the edge of the current border with the lands of the lizardmen, where the tops of trees poke through the sand, there is scant evidence that trees ever dominated the western Empty Zone, such is the depth of the desert that has rolled across the landscape. Yet there remains one verdant spot, a relic of the old days. Bedu call this site the living jungle, and avoid it like the plague, claiming it is an accursed land.

Here, in the great depression, in a landscape that rarely sees rain, grows a healthy jungle of tall trees and dense ground vegetation. Covering an area of some 100 square miles and located somewhere in the western dunes, the jungle is virtually impossible to detect from any distance, for the sand rises around it to a great height. That the dunes have not engulfed the vegetation is an obvious sign that some powerful force is at work.

Steam hangs above the trees, a constant blanket concealing all but the edge of the jungle from curious eyes, and at night tendrils of fog blanket the jungle floor, making progress even more treacherous. No wind stirs the leaves, and no bird or animal calls break the heavy silence.

While the jungle offers shelter from the merciless sun, the humidity makes it no less unpleasant to travel through than the surrounding desert. Within moments clothing is soaked and beads of sweat, a rarity in the sands, cover trespassers' skin. Beneath the trees one does feel like a trespasser, for despite the lack of obvious life, one cannot escape the feeling of being watched by some malevolent force.

The Bedu name for the place is not given lightly. While no birds or animals next here, there is much danger, for the vegetation has a life of its own. Gigantic flesh-eating plants snap closed over unwary explorers, slowly devouring their flesh in digestive juices. Vines snake down to

strangle walkers. Barbed plants unleash volleys of thorns that rip through unprotected flesh.

At the very heart of the jungle stands a stepped pyramid, all that remains of a lizardman city. No vines have crawled up its sides, not has the passage of time done much to disfigure its surface. While it looks almost as if it were raised just a few years ago, the air is heavy with the passage of countless centuries and lost culture.

Here, when the sands began to encroach, the lizardmen sacrificed ten thousand slaves. These victims were not offered to the lizardmen's god, but were instead used to imbue the landscape with magic, keeping the sand at bay and bringing the jungle to life. But the magic alone was not enough to ensure the survival of the site. Within the pyramid lives a centuries old lizardman priest, now an undead, liche-like entity. It is his chanting that keeps the flow of magic pumping.

That he chose to offer up his life to perform this centuries long duty is testament to the importance of the site. Contained within the temple are many works of lore, each written on dried plant leaves or thin pages of wood. But these are not the true treasure. Deep beneath the temple, in trapped crypts, lie the ancient rulers of the city, mummified priests of such antiquity that they were said to be among the first beings to walk the earth. To remove them would anger their spirits even further, for they are furious at the devastation wrought upon their descendants. As well as invoking the spell, the lone priest, himself a powerful opponent, searches for a way to bring the ancient spirits back to their corpses, for if they were to awaken, they would be a most potent weapon to wield against the hated humans.

THE LOST CARAVAN

The lost caravan is a mobile hazard, and one avoided by those who value their immortal soul. Bedu storytellers say that long ago, when men lived in the Empty Zone, a caravan master committed a terrible crime. The exact nature of his fell deed varies from tribe to tribe, as does his name, and ranges from engaging in slavery to ransacking temples to leading travellers into the desert and abandoning them to die of thirst after robbing them.

Regardless of the specific crimes, the caravan master and his cohorts eventually died, consumed in a terrible sandstorm (some say their death was engineered by the gods and was far from natural). For their sins they were sentenced to the Bottomless Pit. Here the canny master made a deal with Iblis. In return for delivering him a regular supply of souls, the master and his subordinates would receive eternal life.

Iblis was not so gullible as to grant immortality without a clause in his favor. He bound the caravan to the Empty Zone, where he knew few wandered, and demanded that a minimum of one soul per year be sent to him or the deal would be nullified and the caravan dragged back to the Pit, whereupon their terrible and endless torment would be increased many fold for daring to break a contract with the god of chaos and evil.

The caravan still wanders the burning sands in search of souls to this day. None can say how large the caravan is or what shape it might take. Hence, Bedu who travel in the Empty Zone rarely stop to talk to strangers or share a campfire with them after dark. If they do, they are prompt to be awake and moving away before dawn breaks, for it is said that if one sleeps with the lost caravan, Iblis will take the traveller's soul at the moment before the sun breaks the horizon.

Some storytellers say that the caravan is easy to detect, for it offers to trade with strangers, but not until the next morning, the caravan master claiming his men are tired and in need of rest before they unload their camels. Others insist the caravan is more subtle, and offers only to travel with outsiders for safety in numbers. One variant claims that those who do not post a watch may find themselves visited by the caravan just before daybreak.

RUINS OF THE IVORY KINGDOM

On the northern grasslands of old arose a culture known in Bedu legends as the Ivory Kingdom. According to the nomads, whose ancestors travelled between the ancient cities, the inhabitants were not desert dwellers of dusky skin, but humans with skin the color of ebony. They claimed to have come from a land within or beyond the jungle (different versions place their original homeland at varying distances, and any historical facts have been lost to fancy in the countless retelling of the tale).

Recent historians have argued the settlers may have originated on the Isle of the Elephant God (see *Realm Guide* #5), perhaps being shipwrecked explorers, outcasts, or colonists in search of new sources of ivory.

Whatever their origins, their city grew rich not from trade with the lizardmen, but on the ivory they harvested from the great elephant herds that once walked the land, or so the popular tales go. Another story says that the elephants were not slaughtered for their tusks, but that the ivory came from deep within the jungle. Here supposedly lies a vast graveyard, where elephants go to die. From here, and with the blessing of their chief deity, the inhabitants gathered great bundles of tusks.

Such was their wealth that the king's palace was said to be carved in the shape of an enormous kneeling elephant, its outer walls lined in polished ivory plates and its inner surfaces clad in beaten gold. Even common citizens wore ivory jewelry and, if the stories are to be believed, are from ivory bowls with ivory spoons.

The inhabitants worshipped no god known to the desert folk, but instead offered praise to an elephant-headed deity whose name is not recorded in legend. In the center of the city, at the end of a wide avenue, stood a magnificent ivory temple, wherein elephants clad in gold decoration walked freely.

Elephants were certainly important to these people, both ceremonially and for their livelihood. Occasionally, a Bedu trader sells a piece of carved ivory dug up from the sand, on which are inscribed scenes of elephants being worshipped as living gods, or carrying nobles in a

FESTIVAL TO IBLIS

DISEASE NIGHT

Ansbi Yaus al-Hamala Ansbi Alak Paret

Among the peoples of Al-Shirkuh it is held that Iblis sends fell spirits of disease into the mortal realm to spread sickness and misery. In order to fool Iblis' servants into thinking they are already ill, and thus in no need of being infected, citizens paint blotches or glue oatmeal to their skins to mimic the appearance of horrible diseases. They cough, splutter, and groan, bemoaning their luck for falling ill. Apothecaries, barbers, masseurs, and the public baths are closed for the day, thus ensuring no citizens can receive medicine for his "ailments." Temples to Marqod remain open, but they offer no services concerned with the prevention, relief, or treatment of diseases. To actually fall ill on this day is a very bad omen, for it means Iblis has singled the individual out for special treatment.

Once the night ends, the paint is washed away and the "plagues" cured. Clerics of Marqod offer to wash away the sickness in herb-infused water for a small donation. It is widely held that having this service performed keeps away real diseases for the year.

howdah. The date of such objects is hard to verify, and there are no writings on such pieces to help piece together when they might have been worked.

The Bedu have two tales concerning the fate of the Ivory Kingdom. First, while it fell to the lizardmen, they did not take the ivory as war booty, for they saw no value in the material. Thus, the houses, temples, and palaces are still likely bursting with vast stocks of ivory objects. Second, while the exact location of the city is lost, the Bedu claim elephants instinctively know the way to the city, but only if they are injured.

THE TOMB OF DJEDKARA

Hekata lay a long way from the lush jungles of the lizardmen, but word of their riches reached even the ears of the pharaohs. In -1557, Pharaoh Djedkara led a mighty army south in search of exotic slaves and treasure. Inscriptions on crumbling stelae protruding from the sands of Hekata clearly show his departure, but after this the pharaoh and his men promptly vanish from historical records and arrive in the realm of myth and hearsay.

Bedu legends tell that the pharaoh achieved his goal, at least in part, but died before he could return home. His priests and warriors chose to bury him on the grass plains in the ruins of an ancient temple to a long-forgotten god rather than carry him home. Duly mummified in accordance with the necromantic rites but given only token grave goods, Djedkara was laid to rest in a foreign

FESTIVAL TO IBLIS

FAMINE NIGHT

Varies

Famine is a very real threat in Al-Shirkuh, and most citizens will feel the gnawing pain of true hunger at some point in their lives. Aware that Iblis could strike at any time and curse the crop, the cult of Ashtart never publicly announces when the harvest is ready. Instead, the local high priest approaches the ruling noble and tells him the granaries have X many days of food left, with X representing the number of days until the crops can be reaped. Usually the number is between two and five days. Heralds then spread the word through the settlement, alerting everyone to the fact that they will be working in the fields soon, and that Famine Night has come. It should be noted that the government never reveals when the granaries really are running low, so as to prevent riots.

In order to fool Iblis into thinking they are starving to death, citizens stay up all night, wandering the streets begging for food, clutching their bellies (many stuff clothes up their shorts to resemble swollen stomachs), loudly cursing the gods for the poor harvest to come, and wailing that the granaries are almost empty. Most citizens take the added precaution of burying their remaining food stocks so Iblis does not see through the ruse. It is considered a bad omen to eat anything between dusk and dawn (drinking water is permitted), or to go to sleep.

Come dawn, when Shamash drives Iblis back to his dark abode, the citizens celebrate their fooling of the vile god with huge feasts, gorging themselves on the last of their winter stores to the point of bursting. During times of real famine, the ceremony is more than symbolic—weak and desperate for food, citizens eat what scraps remain so they have the energy to gather the harvest.

land, no pauper, but certainly not in a manner befitting a mighty pharaoh.

Why he was buried in such a strange way is unknown, but storytellers suggest he was killed not by disease or lizardman blade, but by the daggers of his own rebellious commanders. Perhaps, they hint, his army suffered catastrophic losses in the deep jungle and his men desired revenge for fallen comrades. Maybe the treasure they carried proved too much to resist, for the soldiers knew they would receive but a pittance for their sacrifice. Various tales account for the death of the remaining survivors, but none returned home to enjoy the spoils they carried with them. The Bedu believe Djedkara still walks the Empty Zone, his withered corpse desperately seeking adequate treasure to stock his humble tomb, as well as living victims he desires to turn into undead servants.

PERSONS OF Note

Although virtually lifeless, there are those who call the Empty Zone home, or who frequently venture into the interior. A handful of such persons are detailed below.

BARAKA AND NIMR

Baraka and Nimr are an odd couple. Nimr appears to be a Bedu girl in her mid-teens. She moves with a certain natural grace, but is also clumsy, as if she is not fully used to her body. Her eyes, a deep green, are usually open wide, and her pretty face carries a near permanent mask of wonderment. She speaks only falteringly, and does so in a deep, guttural growling tone. However, she rarely deigns to speak without first consulting with her companion, into whose ear she frequently whispers. Constantly at her side is Baraka, a large tiger. Strangely, the animal has a habit of hanging and shaking its head whenever Nimr does or says something wrong, almost as if it is embarrassed. But appearances can be deceiving in Al-Shirkuh.

A decade ago, a Bedu jinn mage by the name of Baraka made the mistake of offending a powerful greater jinni. Incensed at the mortal's lack of respect, the creature transformed her into a tiger. Her pet, Nimr, a young tiger cub, was changed into the appearance of a Bedu girl. The jinni promised to remove the curse, but only if the pair recovered a certain relic, a gem known as the Tear of Shamash, from one of the lost cities Empty Zone. Unfortunately for its victims, the jinni refused to reveal any further information about the precious stone.

During the hot summer months, they are found in the Caliphate, scouring libraries and questioning storytellers and scholars for clues as to the location of the gem. Each winter, they gather supplies and head once more into the barren desert in search of salvation. Embarrassed by their current state rather than afraid of reprisals, neither discusses their curse openly with strangers.

Despite appearances, Nimr is still an animal, and thus can be affected by spells such as *beast friend*. Baraka, on the other hand, remains a human in spirit, and is thus immune to such enchantments. Both radiate magic if subjected to *detect arcana*.

NU'MAN THE UNDYING

There are few ways to avoid death, but this does not stop men from exploring such doom-laden paths. Few succeed, for the pitfalls are many.

One such traveler on the road to immortality is Nu'man the Undying. A student of khem-hekau, Nu'man (undoubtedly an alias, since it means "blood" in Al-Waziran) has no wish to become a mindless undead, slave to some greater fiend. His path is the quest to learn the secrets of the liche-wizards, to retain his mind and spirit in an undying body.

Nu'man's journey began long ago, when he survived a sojourn into Hekata. Emerging with several scrolls concerning necromancy, he began his studies and sacrifices. Three centuries have since crawled by. While he has yet to reach his goal, he has travelled far. His body, withered yet still clearly alive, ages only slowly, a trickle of water in comparison to the flowing river of a man's normal life.

For the last 50 years, Nu'man has lived in the Empty Zone. He came here not for ancient knowledge, but for privacy, for the rituals he must undertake are complex, and a single error may condemn his soul to the Bottomless Pit, or worse, eternity as a mindless zombie.

He does not spurn the outside world entirely, for his rites require regular sacrifices of sentient beings. Unwilling to risk his own skin, Nu'man has spent what little hours his days allow in raising an army of skeletons. They stalk the land in search of victims, clubbing them unconscious and dragging them back to Nu'man's lair, where death on an altar of darkness awaits them.

Why Come Here?

The Empty Zone is a featureless, lifeless expanse of desert. Water is more precious than gold, and a single misjudgment can prove fatal. Given there are so many other areas of the desert affording better survival chances, why would adventurers come here?

* **Reward.** Whether one seeks financial reward or to plumb the knowledge of ancient cultures, the Empty Zone has the most unexplored ruins outside Hekata. While many of the human cities of old were sacked, the lizardmen did not find value in the same things as humans, and thus left much of value behind. Conversely, when the lizardmen fled west, they were forced to leave behind many precious objects.

* **Orders.** As the old saying goes, he who pays the storyteller picks the story. Members of certain organizations, notably the cults, might be sent here as part of their duties. Clerics of Tammuz may come in search of undead to slay, for instance, while a cleric of Qedeshet might be sent to recover lost scrolls. Regardless of why they are sent here, the organization is likely to supply money to purchase plenty of water—there is little point sending an agent unless he is going to come back.

* **Passing Through.** Only an idiot elects to pass through the Empty Zone, for all that awaits on the other side is the lizardmen-infested jungle. More likely, anyone forced to pass through has been shipwrecked along the coast. Since few ships travel along this stretch of coast, the best hope the survivors have is to follow the coastline to Hulwan, City of Gardens and avoid the interior.

* **Glory.** There is little glory to be earned from slaying beasts, for few dwell in the Empty Zone. However, a man who could fashion accurate maps of his route would undoubtedly be hailed by explorers across Al-Shirkuh. Such a map could also fetch a high price from the right buyer, especially if it showed lost cities with intact treasures.

Gods & Monsters

These section details three minor deities tied to the cult of Iblis, as well as four new creatures.

BAALZEBUL

Titles: Lord of Flies, Pestilent One, The Sickening Swarm, He Who Drools Pus.

Aspects: Pestilence.

Affiliation: Iblis.

Symbol: A bloated fly.

Priesthood: Pestilent Hands (priests); Pestilent Swords (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Days: The first night of the dark moon of each month of Alak Shemu is a holy day.

Duties: To spread disease and sickness.

Sins: (Minor) bathing, entering a temple of Marqod except to desecrate it or murder a cleric, failing to cause disease once per month, killing a fly; (Major) aiding a cleric of Marqod, curing a disease; (Mortal) being cured of a disease (except through unassisted Vigor rolls), failing to kill a cleric of Marqod once per year.

Signature Power: *Disease.*

Powers: *Aura, deflection, fatigue, fear, lower trait (Agility, Smarts, Spirit, Strength, and Vigor only; no boost), summon demon (plague only), stun.*

Trappings: All trappings save for *aura* and *deflection*, which take the form of a swarm of flies, involve diseases or their physical effects, such as boils, lethargy, or hacking coughs.

While mortals associate many flies with disease, there was a time when flies ate only fruit and were loyal to Ashtart. During the God War, Iblis unveiled his new weapon, disease, which he had found in the Bottomless Pit. Iblis' first victim was Ashtart, goddess of life.

As she lay stricken with sickness, a fly landed on her skin and licked at the pus, thinking it was nectar. The diseased ichor, imbued with Iblis' magic and Ashtart's divine blood, transformed the fly into a bloated monstrosity, Baalzebul. The new minor god would have devoured Ashtart entirely, but Marqod drove him away with charms of power, thus starting the animosity that continues to this day. Flies quickly fell into two groups during the Qar. Fruit flies remained loyal to Ashtart, whereas the brood of Baalzebul swore allegiance to Iblis.

Baalzebul lacks temples and has few permanent shrines. Instead, worshippers give praise at fly-infested corpses and piles of fresh dung, in dank sewers, at the beds of the diseased, and other places associated with pestilence. When portrayed in art, he is shown as a gigantic fly, his skin covered in oozing pustules. His wings are the rags of lepers. In temples of Iblis, he is commonly shown as a swarm of flies buzzing around Iblis' backside, or less commonly as a single, bloated fly.

The cult exists to spread pestilence and combat

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Marqod's worshippers. Traditionally, priests spend their days infesting innocent victims, while paladins wage perpetual war against the goddess of healing. Although Baalzebul demands disease be spread constantly, his primary concern mimics that of Iblis—causing chaos. Thus, his priests tend to be selective. For instance, toward harvest the clergy target farmers in the hope of ruining the reaping, while should war threaten they will endeavor to infect defending soldiers (or better still, their officers). Throughout the year there is always some group deemed suitable for their attention.

Ceremonies usually take the form of destroying healing herbs. This is achieved by urinating or defecating on them. The cult practices human sacrifice, but only offers followers of Marqod to their deity.

The unfortunate victim's skin is subjected to hundreds of small cuts, into which filth is rubbed. Flies are then encouraged to lay their eggs in the wounds. Death can take many days, sometimes weeks, as the flesh is ravaged by disease and hungry maggots, but the effort is considered worth it, for Baalzebul thrives on the moans and groans of the dying victim. When time is short, the victim is suffocated by having filth forced down his throat.

Character Guidelines: An uncaring deity, Baalzebul grants his clergy no special immunity to the diseases he expects them to spread. Thus, Vigor is a very important attribute. Baalzebul makes few demands of his followers, and thus they may take any Skills and Edges that suits their chosen role.

BIRDU

Titles: The Will of Iblis, He Who Must be Obeyed, Enslaver, He Who Dominates the Heavens, The Whispering Voice, Worker in the Shadows.

Aspects: Iblis, Tamarni.

Affiliation: Domination.

Symbol: A pair of manacles bound by a chain.

Priesthood: Hidden Masters (priests); Slave Masters (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Days: Each Amt Yaus al-Niwt is a holy day.

Duties: To impose your will upon others for any purpose, to support slavery.

Sins: (Minor) being successfully Intimidated, Taunted, or subjected to *puppet*, not making a Test of Wills or using *puppet* once per combat, not getting your own way; (Major) not owning a slave (the sin is cleansed the moment a new slave is gained), failing to punish disobedience toward you; (Mortal) granting a slave freedom.

Signature Power: *Puppet*.

Powers: *Beast friend, entangle, fear, lower trait* (no boost), *sluggish reflexes, slumber, stun, telekinesis*.

Trappings: Caster's voice becomes deeper and more powerful, and his eyes glow with unholy light.

Special: Clerics who take Stubborn treat it as a Major Hindrance.

At first, Birdu's cult seems contradictory being its tied to Iblis. While Iblis promotes discord and disobedience,

Birdu focuses on domination, which naturally leads to obedience. However, Birdu has no interest in installing widespread social order (that is one of Shamash's aspects), only in allowing mortals to fulfil their desires through the manipulation of others. If that leads to some sort of order, then so be it, but those who follow him quickly succumb to corruption (another of Iblis' aspects) if not already on that dark path, and their victories are short-lived on a cosmic scale.

Shrines tend to be personal, rather than communal. Most often they take the form of a symbol of dominance, such as a pair of manacles or length of chain, but even a binding contract constitutes a form of dominance, so long as it is in the cleric's favor.

Birdu is patron to bullies, usurpers, spoiled children, corrupt rulers and wizards, leaders of personality cults, and puppet masters, the hidden powers behind thrones—all of whom seek to impose their will on others in order to get their own way. Followers of Tamarni who honor Birdu are sexual deviants and sadomasochists, taking pleasure from dominating their partners.

Clerics are free to carry out their own goals and desires, though naturally these always involve domination. Some are subtle, slyly manipulating events from a position of seeming weakness or inconsequentiality through gossip-mongering or whispered innuendo. Others are bullies, imposing their will through force of arms or will and inflicting cruel punishments designed to break the their victims' spirit. Most use their power for self-gain, if not outright evil, for domination is rarely ever a tool used by the good of heart. Owning a slave is compulsory, and many clerics earn a living through the slave trade. It should be noted that clerics are not required to be cruel masters, only masters whose orders must be obeyed without question. Of course, disobedience requires swift punishment, lest any dissension spread or the slave permanently break his master's hold over him.

Clerics rarely gather for ceremonies—their need to dominate others leads to too much sinning and bitter reprisals. On holy days, clergy are expected to totally dominate another being, though to what end is left for the cleric to decide. Prayers are always demands, for pleading for aid is a sign of subservience.

Character Guidelines: With their preference for dominating others, and with being dominated a sin, Smarts and Spirit are the most important attributes. Intimidation, Persuasion, and Taunt are their primary skills, and Strong Willed is a must-have Edge.

UKUR

Titles: The Word of Iblis, Bringer of Misfortune, Speaker of Curses, Denier of Fortune, Worker of Evil, He Who Lays Heroes Low.

Aspects: Curses.

Affiliation: Iblis.

Symbol: A dice with one dot on all visible sides.

Priesthood: Hands of Misfortune (priests); Swords of Misfortune (paladins).

Herald: None.

Holy Days: Clerics must pick one day a year as a personal high holy day. Every first new moon of each month is a personal holy day.

Duties: To bring misfortune and misery to others, to spread discord and chaos.

Sins: (Minor) failing to kill a cat, giving charity unless it causes direct misfortune, not cheating at games of chance; (Major) not inflicting misfortune on a cleric of Tammuz or Tamarni; (Mortal) wilfully aiding another in achieving a goal, aiding a cleric of Tammuz or Tamarni.

Signature Power: *Lower trait* (no boost).

Powers: *Entangle, fear, jinx* (no luck), *nightmare, panic* (no bless), *stun*.

Trappings: All trappings are seemingly natural, such as sudden bouts of panic or unfortunate accidents. Miracles take the form of spoken curses.

Special: Clerics may not take the Common Bond or Luck Edges.

Ukur took physical form when Iblis uttered his first curse against the gods, though one obscure legend claims he is the result of a union between Iblis and Tamarni, a corrupted child who took after his father. Ukur is a bitter enemy of both Tammuz, god of balance, and Tamarni, goddess of luck, for he seeks to sow misfortune without regard for cosmic balance.

Ukur is the god of both divine and mundane curses. Mortals who believe themselves cursed may arch their fingers into claws and scratch at their clothing. This act represents Tamarni scratching away the misfortune. A better solution is to rub oneself with a cat, preferably a temple cat belonging to the cult of Tamarni (these can be rented for this very purpose for 10 dinars). When the cat next licks its fur, the curse will be consumed.

Proclaiming that someone “speaks like Ukur” directly implies his words are spoken with evil intent, and thus should not be trusted. Being cursed is often seen as being breathed on by Ukur, another reason why personal hygiene is so important to the desert dwellers.

The god of curses is never shown as an individual deity, for he is the word of Iblis. Wherever Iblis is depicted, Ukur is always present. On very rare occasions he may be shown as a die in Iblis’ hands, with single dots on every face. This is a direct reference to his aspect. As such, he has neither dedicated temples nor shrines in his honor.

While some misguided souls dismiss Ukur’s clerics as harmless tricksters, the misfortune they bring often has greater, hidden consequences. One of the cult’s creeds is, “Think big, but act small.” For instance, a messenger’s horse may throw a shoe, a seeming innocuous occurrence. Yet if failure to deliver the message leads to war or a cancelled trade agreement, then the misfortune is much greater and affects many others.

Clerics never use their miracles to educate or amuse—their sole aim is to sow chaos and misfortune at the direct expense of others. This need not involve death—bringing a powerful hero or ruler to his knees through misfortune is far more rewarding than a single, life ending curse. Paladins tend to focus on heroes and

FESTIVAL TO IBLIS

SNAKE BEATING DAY

Amt Yaus al-Nefar Ansbi Alak Arkhet

Iblis sends many creatures to torment mortals. Among his most deadly mortal servants are snakes. With the crops now growing taller, snakes begin to slither through the fields in search of rodents and farmers’ bare feet. This ceremony is a multi-faith one, and opposes Iblis.

While clerics of Ashtart lead the farmers in banging drums to scare the serpents out of the vegetation, clerics of Shamash are waiting at the boundaries to kill the snakes. Meanwhile, clerics of Upuaut use trained hawks and eagles to snatch up snakes who escaped the eyes of those on the ground. In the evening, the snakes are cooked and eaten, a welcome addition to the farmers’ meager diet.

other combative types, causing them misery in battle, while priests favor less capable victims.

Both types of clergy are expected to strike down clerics of Tamarni, and to a lesser extent Tammuz. While death is always an option, most prefer to curse their opponent first, thus ensuring Iblis’ taint is upon them when they stand before their deity.

Ceremonies involve sacrificing cats, creatures associated with Tamarni and good luck. Direct slaughter is considered base. Instead, causing death through misfortune is preferred, as this infuriates Tamarni. Many clerics deliberately subject themselves to misfortune on holy days, out of fear their god will punish them if they have been too successful in their endeavors—everyone is equal in Ukur’s eyes, and thus everyone must suffer a curse at some point. Better to choose the day, clerics believe, than fall prey to their god’s evil whims.

Character Guidelines: Tricks, which lower Parry, are better at representing general misfortune than Tests of Wills, and thus Agility and Smarts are useful attributes.



Muscular and bestial, allus are covered in thick, shaggy fur. Instead of fingers, their hands end in long, metal blades. More horrifying is the creature’s face, for it has absolutely no features, a blank mask of solid bone. Allus, devout servants of Iblis, exist solely to cause destruction. They have no morals, no conscience, and no concept of pity. Such is their power that they can sever the link between mortal and the hereafter, preventing the souls of those who die in their presence from ever journeying to the next world. Such spirits are condemned to remain on the mortal realm until the end of time, at which point they will simply cease to exist. Most go insane within a few decades, the knowledge of their fate gnawing at their

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sanity; stronger souls may last centuries before succumbing to enduring madness.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Blades:** Str+d6+1.
- * **Fearless:** Immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- * **Improved Frenzy:** An allu can make two Fighting attacks each round at no penalty.
- * **Revel in Destruction:** If an allu kills a creature, it may immediately make another single Fighting roll against one adjacent creature. It may do this once per round, no matter how many creatures it slays.
- * **Sire Ghost:** The soul of a creature that dies adjacent to an allu cannot proceed to the Afterlife. Instead, it returns as a ghost 1d4 rounds later. These ghosts are immune to *banish*.

DEMON, AESHMA

An aeshma is a demon of anger, violence, and destruction. Although capable combatants in their own right, these fell creature delight in filling the hearts of mortals with murderous rage. Those affected by the demons' perverse aura commit terrible acts of bloodshed against their kith and kin. Aeshmas have a variable form—each viewer sees the demon as a parody of himself, his features twisted with deep-seated rage.

Aeshmas cannot stand the smell of burning fish. According to one legend, the jinn summoned an army of aeshmas to corrupt Suleiman and turn his phenomenal powers against his followers. They found the prophet cooking a simple meal of fish. One version claims that Suleiman, unaffected by the demons' fell aura, turned his full might against them, slaying not just their physical form, but also their eternal spirit, thus ending their existence. Another says Suleiman was so pure of heart that he turned the demons' aura back on them, causing them to slay each other in a murderous rage. Regardless, aeshmas have never forgotten Suleiman, nor the smell of burning fish that pervaded the battlefield.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6/8

Gear: Mace (Str+d6)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Aura of Anger:** At the start of each of the demon's turns, any living creature within 5" must make a Spirit roll or go berserk (as per the Edge). While enraged, the victim must move toward and then attack his nearest ally. All attacks must be Fighting Wild Attacks.
- * **Demon:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; immune to poison and disease; +2 Toughness against non-magical attacks, except for star metal.

* **Weakness (Burning Fish):** Whenever an aeshma enters an area filled with the stench of burning fish, it must make a Spirit roll or immediately send itself back to the Bottomless Pit.

* **Weakness (Star Metal):** Demons have lower Toughness against star metal weapons.

PAIRIKA

Pairikas are female spirits given corporeal form. Servants of Iblis, they delight in seducing men, corrupting innocents, and spreading misery. Immortal, in that they do not age, they work subtly, slowly weakening a mortal's resolve before leading him onto the path of damnation and into the clutches of the god of evil.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d4, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Treasure: None.

Special Abilities:

- * **Powers:** Pairikas know 2d4 spells of the GM's choice from Iblis' spell list.

SERPOPARD

Aside from a neck that stretches an impressive 12 feet, a serpopard has the appearance of a leopard. One story claims that the serpopard was once an ordinary leopard, a devoted servant of Tamarni. While stalking through Ashtart's garden in search of vermin, it came across a long snake. Hungry, the leopard tried to devour the snake, but this was no ordinary serpent, but Iblis in disguise. The more the leopard tried to swallow the serpent, the longer its neck grew. Eventually it spat Iblis out, leaving it with a serpentine neck.

Another fable claims the original serpopard was an extremely curious beast, always poking its head into tight spaces to see what lay inside. Iblis tricked the leopard into peering inside a small vase, in which the evil god claimed lay a great treasure. The leopard squeezed its head into the narrow aperture, but found the vessel empty. On trying to withdraw its head it realized it had been tricked, for it was thoroughly stuck. The more it pulled and struggled, the longer its neck grew. Tamarni eventually heard its howls and released it, but the damage was done.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d4, Reach 2.
- * **Claw:** Str+d4.
- * **Fleet Footed:** A serpopard rolls a d10 when running, rather than a d6 as normal.