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THE PLANEWALKER'S CODEX

THE FLAGSHIP ISSUE

KILLING THE
LADY OF PAIN

ADVENTURING
ON THE PRIME:
LAGUNA

KOBOLDS
OF SIGIL

INTERVIEW
WITH SHEMMY

SURCEASE
& DOLOR



CONTENTS

FOREWORD

3 THE FIRST ISSUE

FEATURE ARTICLE

4 KILLING THE LADY OF PAIN: PART I BY SCIBORG2

LOG X

11 ADVENTURING ON THE PRIME BY THE PLANEWALKER BOARDS

RACES IN SIGIL

13 KOBOLDS BY KOBOLD AVENGER

PLANAR LOCATIONS

16 SURCEASE AND DOLOR BY JEM

FACES ACROSS THE PLANES

20 INTERVIEW WITH SHEMMY BY SCIBORG2

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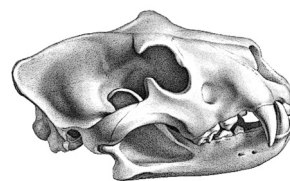
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THE FIRST+ SESSION

My first introduction to the Planescape Campaign setting was a 2nd edition rulebook about Hell that briefly mentioned the Blood War and Sigil. I didn't understand the scope of this massive setting at the time, what with being twelve and all, but I comprehended enough to realize how much I loved it. The next step was playing Torment and getting a deeper look into the streets of Sigil. Finally, came my introduction to the Githyanki; no race (besides draconic kobolds) has inspired my campaigns more. Even if I don't use them, I constantly steal elements from them. I've tried to add planar jaunts to my campaigns at every turn.

It's quite unfortunate that there hasn't been much support for planar campaigns over the last few years. That's what has made this a long time coming, and in no small part because of me. Alright, I admit it. A lot of the wait was me learning how to properly layout a magazine and write this editorial. (Why did I volunteer for all of this?!) I blame the rest on Sciborg2; I should have put the entire blame on Sci since this won't be read until it's too late. Oh well. The result is worth the wait though, and it'll only get better from here.

I've been a long time reader of Planewalker.com, and this is a great chance for me to give back to the community. Doesn't hurt that it can also add to my skillset. Still, this is a great opportunity for the whole community to breathe fresh life into an older campaign setting.

A flagship issue needs something memorable to commemorate the occasion,

and what better than an article referencing the last print issue of *Dragon* magazine? What entity is more iconic of the Planescape campaign setting than the good 'ol Lady of Pain? Of course, everything needs to add its own spin, so we've decided to tell you how to kill her!

What else do we have to share? Well, we're starting several features such as Adventuring on the Prime, Races of Sigil, and Faces Across the Planes.

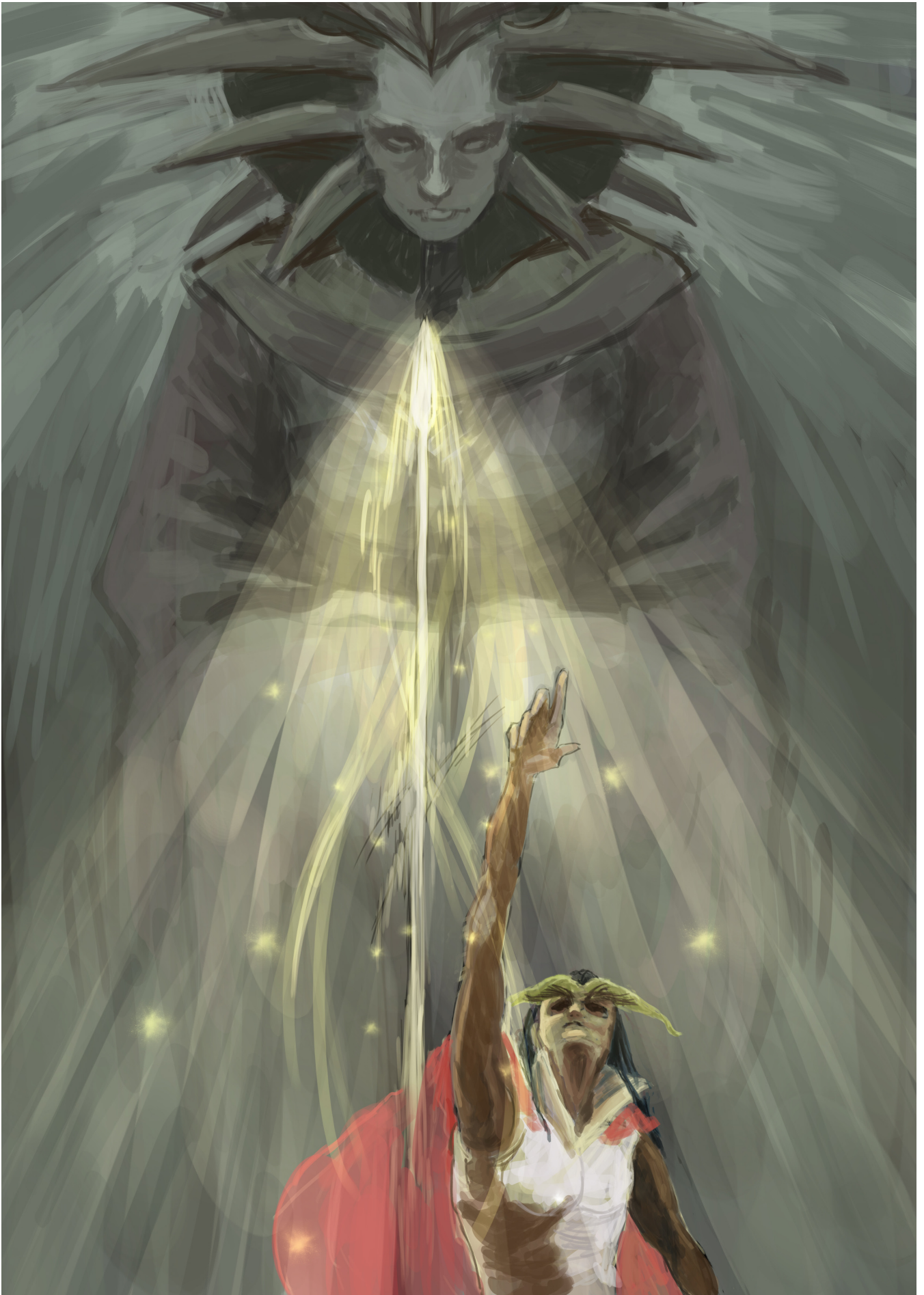
By the time this reaches you, issue 2 is already well under way, and I'm sure it won't be the last one either judging from the commitment the wonderful contributors have made to get this out.

Here's to an exciting journey! So, come on over to Planewalker.com; let's make it a worthwhile one together.

Thanks for reading,

MM ⊕ GG E+

Head Planewalker
(It's about belief!)



KILLING THE LADY ⊕ PAIN: PART I

by sciborg2 (with credit to Gary Gygax and the Planewalker.com forums) & illustrated by Laura
(Lamp of Departed Vistas by Erik Freund)

In *Dragon* #359, the last printed issue of the magazine, “Who or What is the Lady of Pain?” was listed as one of the great unsolved mysteries of D&D. And while the truth of her identity has never been revealed, speculation on the subject has been accompanied by the questions of how you might kill her, what the ramifications of your actions might be, and who would aid you or try to stop you.

In this article, we look at all these questions and draw upon numerous ideas from various discussions that have taken place over the years in publications relating to the Great Wheel cosmology as well as various ideas that we put together in preparation for this article over at Planewalker.

Within these pages one will not find a surefire way to kill the Lady of Pain. Instead, we’ll offer up several methods you can tailor to your game, as well as supporting details for you to build a campaign around.

A lot of the ideas presented here draw on adventures, campaign boxes, and varied setting books published under the Planescape banner. In order to present this information in a clear fashion, there are many spoilers within this article, not the least of which include the endings of the adventures *Harbinger House* and *Faction War*. If you are worried about spoiling some aspect of Planescape history for yourself, definitely stop reading here. It should also be noted that the possible methods for killing the Lady of Pain tie together various publications from different authors, editions, and even eras of the game. The point here was not to find a definitive method, but rather to

provide potential seeds for GMs to build campaigns around.

Making Sure Your Group is Up for This

Killing the Lady of Pain will mean different things to different people. For some, she is another monster to take down. For others, especially Planescape fans, she defines the setting and the idea of killing her is akin to returning Athas to its Green Age or fighting the Dark Powers of Ravenloft. It can so radically shift the nature of the setting as to make it unenjoyable for some players.

Every group will handle such overturning of a setting’s premises differently, so make sure the game remains enjoyable for everyone involved. If the idea of trying to kill the Lady is too far fetched on unappealing, one could have villains attempting to employ one of the methods listed below. Even if they aren’t successful the attempt could and probably should result in major upheaval amongst the denizens of the Multiverse.

Preserving Verisimilitude

When it comes to the Lady, one must realize that control of Sigil is a goal shared not only by archmages and the leaders of world spanning organizations, but pantheon heads and archfiends as well. As such, one should not expect to simply level up, get access to some magic items and spells, and waltz into Sigil and put the Lady in the dead book. If it were that easy, one should expect that the Lady would have been murdered long before now.

Now you may have your own stats for the Lady that you know

your own players will enjoy coming up against. That’s fine, this article isn’t here to tell you how to run your game, but if you’re going by the default canon of what Sigil is, you should present a reason why the Lady suddenly finds herself so vulnerable to such conventional means when she never has been before. Of course, the Multiverse is a big place, so it’s definitely conceivable that an artifact might enable you to negate her transcendent nature. (Or perhaps there is an artifact that needs to be destroyed, similar to how destroying the shield generator on the Endor left the Death Star vulnerable to the Rebels’ star fighters.)

No matter what, anyone who attempts to kill the Lady should realize the impact of their actions on the setting. There will be those who seek to aid the PCs, as well as those who want to steal their method for themselves. Others, such as the Harmonium, will oppose them on principle, and this is a good time to mention they have the whole planet of Ortho from which to draw resources. No matter the outcome, once you decide to walk this path expect gods to die, hearts to break, souls to be cursed and worlds to burn.

Preserving verisimilitude means having a campaign based around killing the Lady that, within the logic of the setting, comes off as a plausible story. Taking a cue from history and past fiction, whenever someone is planning an assassination they should consider the means available to them and the motives of their allies, alongside the might of those opposing them and the ramifications of their actions.

Motives for Killing the Lady of Pain

While the most likely reason for killing Her Serenity is power over Sigil there are other motives that might drive her would be assassins.

Some might seek vengeance for the death or imprisonment of a loved one, others might believe that the Lady has her own plans for the planes and wish to stop her from completing or continuing them. In the novel *Pages of Pain* Troy Denning states that the Lady is responsible for spreading the Pains throughout the Great Wheel, and if this is true in your campaign someone might believe that killing the Lady will usher in Paradise.

Among those who believe that Sigil is a Cage for the Lady, there are some who take pity on the Lady and wish to free her by killing her. It is also possible that Sigil is a Cage not for the Lady, but for some being that powers the portals and birthed the dabus. The last followers of this entrapped entity might seek to kill Her Serenity in order to free it.

Many factions and sects believe the Multiverse to be a cursed reality, or one that must be transcended. Some among their numbers might believe that the existence of Sigil and the Lady is what keeps the Multiverse from ascending to some higher state of being.

Then again, there are those who seek to kill the Lady for no other reason than to show it can be done. For example, you might have the PCs join up with followers of Erythnul who wish to kill the Lady because they believe it to be the greatest offering they could present to their god.

Means and Resources

Killing the Lady of Pain is no easy task, but there are a resources which anyone could possibly

take advantage of if undertaking this monumental endeavor.

Potential Weaknesses Within Sigil Harbinger House, the Planarity, and The Focrux: (In the Planescape Adventure *Harbinger House*, the Focrux may be destroyed at the end of that adventure depending on the actions of the PCs. Here we assume it to be intact or, at worst, repaired following the events of that storyline.)

Run by the Believers of the Source, the faction that sought to enter into godhood over successive lifetimes, the Harbinger House rests on the edge of the Lady's and Lower Wards. The House remains much bigger on the inside than the outside but also functions as a means of traveling the planes. The portals of the House are its doorways, and the Godsmen utilizing the Planarity could enter different planes.

While the Planarity allowed one to taste a sliver of the Lady's power of the portals of Sigil, the Focrux does far more than that. Believed to be the core of the House, the Focrux deflects magic that would allow anyone from harming the House or sneaking inside it without the use of the Planarity. The greatest benefit of the Focrux is to prevent anyone from scrying inside it. Not even the Lady of Pain can look inside the House when the Focrux is in use, and during the course of the adventure she was unable to detect who was manipulating the portals of Sigil for their own ends.

Grundlethrum's Automatic Scribe: Grundlethrum is a member of the Free League who created the Automatic Scribe, a device that accepts coins and in return prints out a message that the payee dictates to it. Given the number of illiterate couriers in the Cage, Grundlethrum's inven-

tion is a boon to the businesses and government of the Cage. While this ensures his bottom line, not even Grundlethrum realizes the true value of his arcane device. The Indep planned to use an elemental to reside within his machine and type out its messages, but instead he somehow unwittingly allowed a lesser power of the Abyss to enter the City of Doors. Now, as noted in the adventure *Harbinger House*, the Lady can kick gods out of Sigil once she is aware of them. This is probably why, beyond causing some minor misfortune, the lesser power hasn't made its bid for power.

While any deal with a god of chaos and evil isn't likely to be honored, players may want to utilize the presence of this god in their own plans.

Aoskar's Last Proxy: One very promising weakness of the Lady lies in the dabus that abandoned her to worship the god of portals Aoskar, whose defection is thought to have spurred the destruction of the Shattered Temple and the death of the god himself. For whatever reason, though the god himself was killed, Fell, his dabus worshiper, was spared. Not only that, but as noted in *Faces UnCaged* Fell retains his power as a proxy - a vessel imbued with a portion of divine strength - to the deceased deity.

Utilizing varied Sites and Beings on the Planes against the Lady of Pain

Howler's Crag: A spike of piled up, jagged rocks rises up from what some believe to be the center of Cocytus, Pandemonium's second layer.

The tip of the crag is lit with bluish faerie fire, and anything spoken from its top is guaranteed to be heard by its intended recipient, no matter where they are in the Great Wheel. While

this is rather miraculous even for the planes, given the bandits and fiends lurking around this site, reaching the top is no small matter.

There are various magics in the Multiverse that depend on the spoken word, and being able to speak them to or at the Lady or the City of Doors from the relative safety of Pandemonium might be the key to defeating her.

Harmonica: Located on Cocytus, the Harmonica is a spherical, windswept cavern with columns arising out of its inner surface. Every column has various openings and hollows, making each pillar a screeching instrument played by the winds of Pandemonium. There is a legend that the Harmonica holds the secret to becoming a true planeswalker, someone able to traverse the Multiverse without the need for portals, spells, or magical devices.

Given that the Lady controls the portals in Sigil, and can bar anyone from entering the Cage through them, one who can find the power of planeswalking in Harmonica might be able to enter Sigil under their own power and take the Lady by surprise.

The Demiplane of Inphirblau: Like dabus, phirblas are thin, tall humanoids whose feet float a few inches off the ground. In fact, they look like lighter skinned, hornless dabus, and while the dabus speak in rhexuses the phirblas speak in words floating over their heads. These words always match the language of their intended recipient. The phirblas, an ancient race by just about anyone's reckoning, live upon the demiplanar metropolis of Inphirblau.

Once you are inside the city, it seems infinite in scope, yet the, at minimum, millions of phirblas are all aware of each other. If there is any truth to the theory that all dabus were originally phirblas, this might be one of the

best places from which to learn the Lady's weaknesses.

Sigil Replica on Dis: On the second level of Hell, rumor has it that the baatezu have been working diligently on a built-to-scale duplicate version of the City of Doors in order to understand how the Lady of Pain controls the varied aspects of the Cage. While some say the devils seek to utilize Sigil against the tanar'ri, others say the most likely reason for building such a place is to attack the City of Doors. There is also the possibility that the baatezu have already devised a means to kill the Lady, but need to make sure they can control the City of Doors in the aftermath of their crime.

The Elders of the Multiverse: To learn the Lady's secrets, one might seek out the varied ancient beings that walk the Multiverse, including the Le Shay that predate this version of reality. Some others who might possess knowledge of the Lady include the baer-noloths or the ancient beings who built and then abandoned the ruins on Pelion. Another possibility is Io the Ninefold Dragon, who some believe to be none other than the father of Her Serenity.

Making contact with many of these beings will require incredible foresight as well as a formidable level of personal power and myriad means of protection. For example, if one seeks to know if Io is the Lady's father, one should seek out the Ninefold Dragon's avatar. Io manifests his avatar in places where some major events involving the survival of dragon kind occur. Engendering such events on a particular world, especially if they involved Deep Dragons at the core of a planet, might be significant enough to garner his attention.

The Demiplane of Time: One of the great resources one might seek to utilize in their fight

against the Lady of Pain is the Demiplane of Time. The ability to travel through time would allow one to possibly see the creation of Sigil or perhaps learn if the Lady was once mortal or at least far more vulnerable than she is now.

The art of chronomancy is known only to a few, and even those individuals are often watched by the gods of time and the enigmatic Guardians, chronomancers dedicated to preserving the timestreams.

Though even the gods of time cannot enter Sigil, the Lady bars chronomancy in the Cage and anyone who practices the art inevitably disappears. One might attempt to travel through time outside of Sigil, and then to enter the city or seek to learn of its construction. One place that might allow safe movement through time is the city of Rempha on the sixth layer of Mount Celestia. Another option is seeking the aid of high level Doomguard members who can reexperience and possibly even travel back to a past event of high entropy. One may attempt to employ the [Lamp of Departed Vistas](#), but be advised that the shadow realities it creates may vary widely from factual history.

Players with chronomancer PCs should remember that traveling through time on the planes is very likely to attract the attention of the gods, and deities who serve as guardians of the timestreams are known to send their avatars to capture, interrogate, and often-times execute chronomancers for their hubris.

Even if one can manage to avoid confrontation with a god (or somehow be prepared for such divine retribution) the very nature of time might work against them. Going with published rules, the 2e supplement Chromomancer tells us that a chronomancer's perception of time is tied to the

plane from which they entered the timestream. So a chronomancer on the Outlands attempting to travel through time will only be able to perceive those timestreams related to the Outlands. Theoretically, one might be able to find a way to other timestreams but it is explicitly noted that such attempts are incredibly dangerous due to the differences in the flow of time between planes. Secrets to navigating the timestreams of the planes may be found in the *Chronocorsa* (*Dragon* 350), a chronomancer tome that shifts its form through varied written mediums including clay tablets and a futuristic sphere capable of projecting symbols of light.

One alternative to traveling under one's own power is to enlist the aid of beings that are natural born travelers of the temporal dimension. The time dragons (*Dragon* 359) are so powerful that they are considered to be Time incarnated into physical form, and apparently travel through the ages unimpeded by the gods. The limits of their time travel abilities are unknown, though the article states that the further a dragon wishes to go away from the present the more energy must be expended. Still, hitching a ride from a time dragon might be a way to avoid getting lost in the time streams or facing the wrath of a time god's avatars. Though chrononauts should be wary as the gods might still come calling, suddenly turning a fact-finding mission in the past into a race against time within the timestream itself!

Methods by which One might Kill the Lady of Pain

The possibilities in the multiverse are unlimited, or so it would seem, but when it comes to slaying the Lady of Pain only a few ideas regularly crop up.

Heart's Desire

The Infinite Staircase is a transitive plane that touches areas across the Multiverse connected to creative endeavors. Though the origins of the Staircase are lost to time, what is known is that it possesses the power to take one traveling its countless steps to a door behind which lies the city of their heart's desire. So if someone's true heart's desire was the death of Her Serenity the staircase should, in theory, lead them to a city that possesses the means to give them what they want.

While this might seem to be the greatest of boons, this is all taking a chance on the meaning of the phrase "city of your heart's desire". GMs are encouraged to twist intentions as one would with an overreaching wish. After all, most people desire something and their wants are built around that need. Someone might crave incredible power, for example, but what their heart might really want is safety. Another might seek to destroy the entire Multiverse, but the want behind that is to have no one around that could hurt or humiliate them. This is likely why the Staircase has never led anyone to a means of controlling the Multiverse, or at least not in way that the rest of us have come to know about. The other problem is the Staircase gives you one chance at finding your heart's desire, and during that one chance you have to travel on your own.

Anyone possessing such a need in their heart is advised not to enter the Staircase by the Gates of the Moon. The Gates are in Selune's realm, and it is very likely the goddess will sense your desire and either imprison you or perhaps just subtly shift the wants within your heart so that the Staircase takes you to some other door. If she wanted someone to kill the Lady via the Stair-

case, it's expected she'd have sent someone on such a quest long ago.

Thankfully many alternative entrances exist – in fact there are an infinite number of them. Because it touches places of creativity and development, almost every city across the multiverse connects to it, from the clockwork engines of Mechanus to the ruins of Pelion where a few dreaming souls might still be found.

Additionally, anyone attempting to use the Infinite Staircase is likely to have to contend with its celestial guardians the lillendi. However, it is possible the lillendi might be persuaded to aid enemies of the Lady, if they could be suitably convinced that those seeking to kill her are in pursuit of some greater good. While one might not be able to convince their entire race, such persuasion shouldn't be necessary as the lillendi have no monolithic society and instead gather in secret societies called mysteries, with each mystey possessing its own kernels of wisdom and knowledge. If one could find the right mystery of lillendi and win them over, it is possible they might aid a traveler in finding their heart's desire.

Yet do not expect such aid to come cheaply, nor should one expect to pay in anything material. It is stories the lillendi value, and to receive help in such a task as great and dangerous as killing the Lady of Pain one should come prepared with several tales of epic exploits performed by oneself and one's comrades. Attempting to assassinate Her Serenity is the quest of a lifetime, and one should expect to pay for a mystery's aid with a lifetime's worth of adventures.

Following in Vecna's Theoretical Footsteps

According to the events of *Die*

Vecna Die!, the archlich enters Sigil by controlling the power of Ravenloft's Mists. It is believed the tendrils of the Mists are capable of kidnapping anyone from any part of the Great Wheel. Additionally, the hotly contested adventure claims that at his moment of entry Vecna was not a god. We could assume that he was a proxy to his own burgeoning divinity, that it is only after he takes a step into the Cage does his divinity wax to its fullness within his own being.

In your campaign, if Vecna did enter Sigil, but was defeated, you open up another possibility for your PCs to take down the Lady of Pain. If one can gain some knowledge of the magics Vecna utilized, along with the lich god's own past, one could then take steps to reenact the deity's plans with oneself in his place.

As Raistlin took the place of Fi-standulus, so might an enterprising magus also utilize chronomancy to enter the past of Oerth and take over Vecna's intended destiny. (One might even steal the Bloodstone from either of these Black Robe mages, though take heed that entering Krynn's past might shunt one into a divergent timestream.)

The supplemental guide to the 2e Chronomancy volume tells us that Oerth's past is guarded by the Monitors of Infinity, temporal guardians "drawn from all places in Time." The book further advises that many of Oerth's deities possess either the means of traveling through time or the knowledge of chronomancy, and it's plausible one of those gods is Vecna himself. Attempting to spy or interfere with his past is likely to lead to a confrontation with an avatar of the Maimed God as well as the avatars of several other gods including Istus, the Balkunish goddess of Fate and Lendor, the Suel god of Time.

One artifact that may aid in escaping the attention of these deities is the Pin of Oghma, an artifact of the Toril god of knowledge, which he gave to a loyal follower tasked with guarding another artifact known as the Cyri-shad, a book that would convert all who read it into a worshiper of Cyric the Mad. The Pin obscures its wearer from the sight of the gods, though whether an artifact designed to hide its owner from the eyes of Toril's deities would even work on Oerth is questionable.

Even if the PCs manage to obtain the Pin and ensure its efficacy extends into Oerth's past, they should still have to contend with the quarut inevitables, constructs tasked with hunting down anyone who is damaging the timestream. However, one may be able to negotiate with them and even obtain their aid if Vecna has already been killed off, for to preserve much of Oerth's timeline someone must exist in the archlich's place and play his role in history.

There exist other means of time travel whereby one might enter the past of Oerth with less interference than if one directly utilized the magic of chronomancy, though each of these possess their own dangers and mysteries. These include the standing stones of Tovag Baragu, the celestial bodies known as the Nine Sisters in the dead-magic sargasso of Greyspace, and the houses of the quasi-powers Heward and Murlynd.

Become the Right Kind of Power while in Sigil

The two gods who have a chance to be born at the end of the Harbinger House adventure are Trolan, a lesser power of love and peace and Sougad, a lesser power of chaos and murder. Neither can prevent the Lady from kicking them out of Sigil after their

apotheosis takes place. It might be that any god who enters Sigil is easily booted out, but perhaps a god of intermediate or greater power might stand a chance.

Another possibility that possesses circumstantial evidence is that having a portfolio that relates to the City of Doors enables you to contest the Lady. After all, if Aoskar posed no threat to the Lady, why did she put him in the dead book? How was he able to convince a dabus of all beings to be his proxy, and how could he otherwise have made such a creature a vessel for his own divine essence? It makes sense that as a god of portals Aoskar was able to exert the power of his domain over Sigil, though whatever the extent of his control was it clearly wasn't enough to keep his corpse from floating in the argent expanses of the Astral.

If PCs are thinking of achieving apotheosis in Sigil, you might have NPCs advise them to become powers over portals, cities, or perhaps even pain. If they achieve divinity outside of Sigil, a generous GM might allow them to learn the secret of planewalking amidst the screaming columns of the Harmonica, or find some other way to break into Sigil without using any of the Lady's portals.

To be continued...¶

ADVENTURING ⊕ ON ⊕ THE PRIME

Art by Kobold Avenger, Article compiled from Planewalker board discussions.

Credit to Jem for Laguna.

In the Planescape setting, primes were often regarded as “clueless”, derided for coming from worlds that possessed little knowledge about the workings of the infinite planes. In many ways, this is the logical way of things as a finite location isolated from the Wheel is unlikely to have a population knowledgeable about the planes.

Of course, any GM looking to introduce the Great Wheel – or the Great Beyond, or the 4e cosmos – to their players isn’t necessarily looking forward to the idea of their campaign world suddenly being relegated to the status of a penny in the pocket of a god. On the flip side are those GMs whose campaigns started on the planes – what reason, beyond the fetching of an occasional McGuffin, would the PCs have for wandering the Prime Material Plane?

Both concerns are addressed in this article, which seeks to provide justification as to why the Prime worlds in general offer special opportunities for planar games as well as how to lend importance to a particular campaign world the players might be arriving from.

Prime Cosmologies

As introduced in the Spelljammer setting, the 2nd Edition version of the Prime was massive jet crystal spheres containing planets floated in a flammable rainbow ocean called the phlogiston. Some crystal spheres had heliocentric systems, others had a central planet around which the sun revolved. Some even had worlds hanging from a great tree or held up by a

gargantuan monster.

The stars in Spelljammer could also vary between spheres, so that in one sphere they were portals to the Plane of Radiance and in another they were the fires of long dead gods. With the arrival of 4th Edition, the focus centered around prime worlds, but the edition did propose the stars were related to mysterious beings such as those from the Far Realms, though some stars may be or be connected to more benevolent beings. Warlocks could make pacts with these distant entities, the consequences of such a binding creating a great opportunity for adventure.

Traveling through the phlogiston, or seeking to support or disrupt the machinations of the powers among the stars are two great ways to make the Prime a compelling place for adventuring.

Greater Differentiation from Convention

Though Sigil and the rest of the Great Wheel offer varied opportunities for adventure, in some cases the planes are D&D’s common conventions writ large. The elves are the shiny ones, the dwarves the mead loving warriors, the halflings pastoral, and the gnomes the inveterate tricksters. This only makes sense, as the pantheons of these races determine how their creations are depicted in the majority of the D&D worlds.

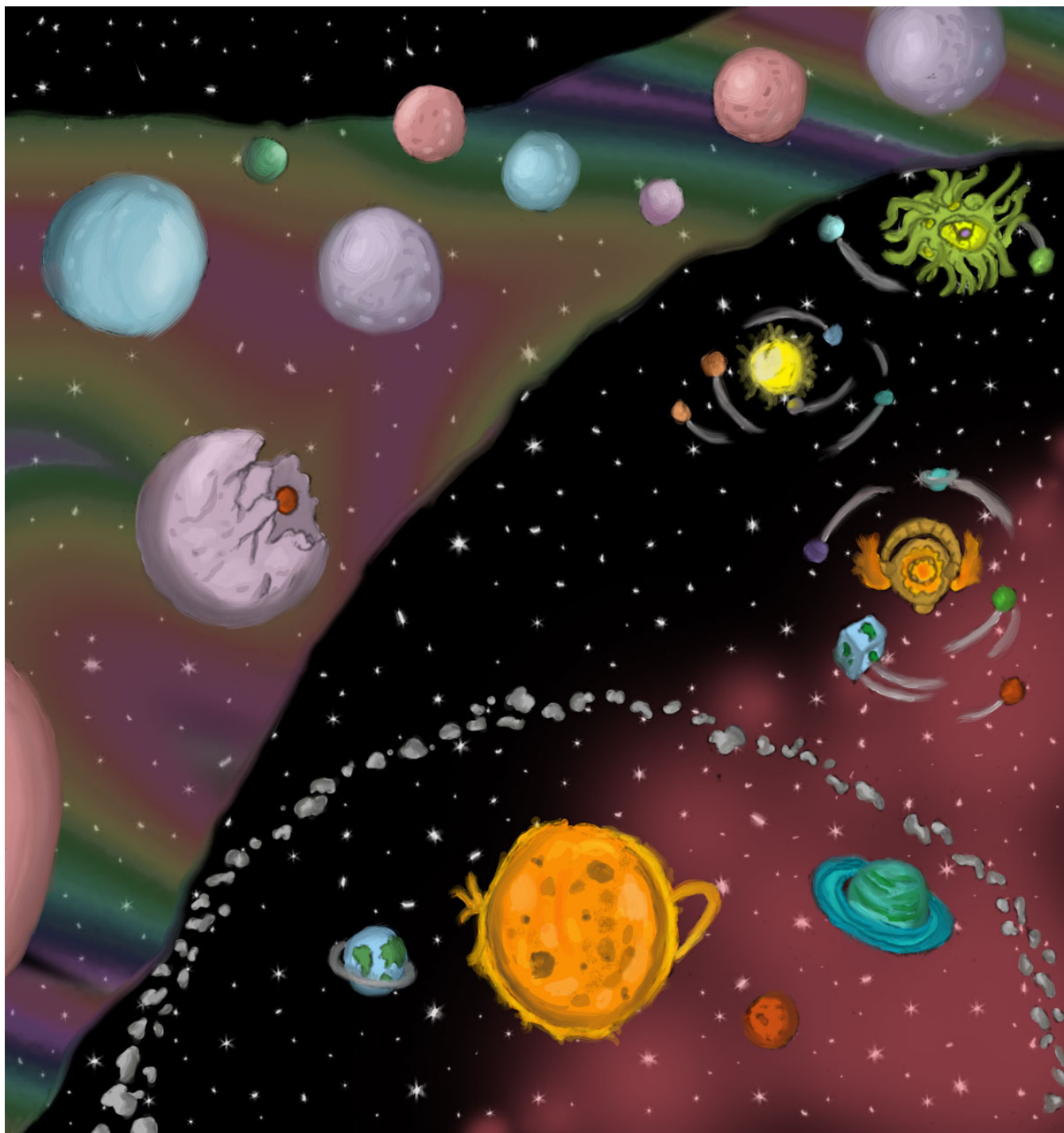
Visiting Prime worlds then offers the opportunity to flip things around and challenge the expect-

ed. Perhaps the greatest example of this was Athas, though one need not go to such extremes. Let the players explore a world like Ortho, where everyone left alive – from dwarf to beholder – exists under the banner of the Harmonium faction. Another option is to have peoples of different races and ethnicities worship the great pantheons of the planes. Imagine a world dominated by the gods of ancient Egypt, or one ruled over by the gods of Asgard – players might be surprised to find those of different racial and ethnic backgrounds paying homage to these deities in rituals and prayers subtly or remarkably different from the norm.

Little Ponds Make Nice Cubbyholes

An exiled devil lord may decide to stick around on Avernus, but really hanging out on the planes is a good way find oneself in the dead book if the Lords of Nine have made it clear you no longer enjoy the protection of Hell. Disgraced members of the infernal nobility looking to return to Asmodeus’s good graces might be better off stationing themselves on the Prime. Others may voluntary leave, tired of Hell’s dismal lands, and choose to live in a place of beauty that still benefits from their tyrannical rule.

PCs might become involved with such a devil, or perhaps a titan or celestial guarding a precious artifact meant to be hidden from the darker powers of the Multiverse. An entire society might spring up around such be-



ings, and while they enjoy the relative safety of the Prime they may maintain portals back to their home planes.

A Nexus of Power

Oerth has a great deal of magical energy, which is one of the reasons it attracts so much attention from the varied exemplars and pantheons. Toril also seems to function as a nexus between the planes. Such worlds are rare gems, especially given that they

produce heroes and villains who've risen to tip the balance of the Multiversal scales. Even the most cynical Sigilian has to give respect to mortals who've risen to the level of gods, and all planars should give thanks that it was the forces of Oerth that stood against the release of the chained deity Tharizdun.

GMs should consider making their campaign world fit a similar place on the planes - a small pearl, to be sure, but one that has great value on the planes and one

whose natives command great respect from the planars. This way when PCs step through the portal, they might still be clueless, but at least they won't have to feel like every NPC is demeaning them.

Every Prime is Precious

Really, any world on the Prime is an alchemical miracle, its matter the combination of elemental forces, its life cycles driven by the forces of the Positive and Nega-

tive, and its peoples the seedlings of future petitioners whose worship and mortals can spell victory or defeat for gods and exemplars alike.

Its important not to let a snooty planar get you down. Your world might be an ignorant backwater, but its your ignorant backwater.

Introduction to

Log X: Laguna

In the future we'll be providing examples of Primes that one can enter from Sigil and might serve as useful trading partners or adventuring locations. In this installment we offer up the world of Laguna from the Log:

Name: Psionic image from underneath sunlit water (Common name, Laguna)

Access: A two-way portal in a public bath-house in Sigil; the key is a piece of coral worth at least 50 gp.

Prevailing conditions: arrival point is in water in a sheltered, tropical lagoon with shore neaby. Fresh water is nonexistent and requires magical sources, or slow desalinization.

Inhabitants: Planet's native inhabitants are a sessile, psionic sponge culture. Ecology is typical shallow-water ecosystem. A few nonnative aquatics have taken up residence.

Description: For several thousand miles around the arrival portal, Laguna is a network of shallow marine shelves and beaches, never more than a few hundred feet deep in water or a few dozen feet high at the center of the reef islands. A wide and deeper ocean beyond this is not inhabited by the locals, and little explored by outsiders who have usually arrived for resources found in the large photic zone.

Laguna is claimed by a sponge race, which developed intelligence and psionics at the dimly

remembered beginning of their history, several millennia ago. The sponges have blurry individuality, being capable of combining neural networks or splitting into multiple, smaller individuals in the fashion of oozes, without apparent significant harm. The sponges vary in their psionic abilities but adults' manifester levels are a minimum of 3, and all members of the race can use *far hand*, *sense link*, and *missive* as psi-like abilities at will. (They may use *sense link* on animals, and developed their first cognizance of the world this way.) Sponge individuals may occasionally adventure in watery worlds, but are extremely fragile bodily and require major mobility preparations. The 5th level psionic power *adapt body* allows a sponge individual to survive in air and move with a perfect fly speed of 50 ft.

The typical settlement is a coral reef containing a dozen to a hundred or so individuals, though the region of the portal from Sigil has become more thickly populated. About 5% of the race possess psychic warrior levels. They rarely move – the task requires significant teleportation or other abilities – and care very little for material possessions, preferring to pursue intellectual studies such as the arts of psionics, magic, mathematics, poetry and other arts. However, as outsiders have shown up and begun settling, the race has laid organized claim to the planet and constitutionalized. Settlers must now acknowledge the laws of the race's legislative body, which is primarily concerned with the conservation of natural resources.

There is very little room for land-dwellers to settle on the rare islands, which are almost entirely fed by the ocean. All of those within a fortnight's sail of the ar-

rival portal are claimed, usually by a business or city-state that desires an embassy. Merfolk, tritons, and other aquatic sorts are more likely to settle underwater on Laguna. Outsiders are typically interested in harvesting coral and pearl, of which the planet boasts an abundance. A single distant volcano has an obsidian outcropping, but this is more easily available on other planes.

An influx of locathah and sahuagin is leading to racial tensions, and some of the settlers who had established prospecting businesses before the sponges formalized their government are objecting to limitations on their practices. Recent stirrings from the one deep area in the settled shallow region, a long, thin crack several hundred miles south of the arrival portal, are causing uneasiness among the locals as monster attacks are becoming more frequent.¶

RACES ⊕ OF SIGIL: K⊕B⊕OLDS

by Kobold Avenger & illustrated by Gremile

The kobold community of Sigil is a very large and varied community, that is basically invisible in the eyes of most Sigilians. Whether it be the Hive, the factories of the Lower Ward, the catacombs of Undersigil, or even the servant quarters of the Lady's Ward, kobolds can be found everywhere in Sigil. But they are barely noticed, and it's said by some that:

"If Sigil wasn't kept by the Dabus, the kobolds would take over their job. Though it wouldn't it really be a good bleedin' job, if those little blighters took over."

So how is it that Sigilian Kobolds compare to the rest of their kin across the planes? Well for one thing, Sigilian Kobolds come from many different clans and lineages; it's reflected in how their scales are a wide variety of different colours. Many are red or blue, some are gold or silver in colour, their appearance reflecting the untold varieties of dragons across the planes, whether they be Chromatics, Metallics, Gem, Catastrophe, and other varieties of dragons. Though it's always one of the biggest mistakes that a non-kobold makes in assuming a kobold's disposition is much like their draconic counterpart, as there have been plenty of despicably dishonest silver kobolds, and many valiant and noble red kobolds.

Legend speaks of the special spawn of the dragon powers that hatched and became a loyal companion to each one of them. The most infamous one of these loyal companions is of course Kurtulmak, who was said to be the last thing that hatched from Tiamat's brood. In Sigil, Kurtulmak is only

one of the powers that kobolds who have religion tend to worship, as the companion known as the "Twice Named Ascendant One" is another that's followed, in addition to many of the dragon gods including Bahamut, Tiamat, Chronopsis, and Io.

In Sigil, kobolds are renowned as hard workers, who are extremely industrious and enthusiastic about their work. They tend to be a large part of the labour force throughout Sigil, seemingly tireless and doing many thankless jobs, as they tend to be paid the least. Some would almost call them slaves based on how lowly they are rewarded or paid. But most kobolds don't seem to mind the fact. As a people used to living in large often overcrowded clan-based groups, most kobolds tend to work in groups of six or more. They are quite mechanically proficient, though many of the things they put together tend to be held with the cheapest and most unstable of methods.

Kobolds are known to be loyal to those who can hold them in awe, and it's quite trendy in the Lady's Ward to have a staff of kobold servants among the Golden Lords. Many kobolds can also be found in the entourage of powerful dragons living in Sigil or with dragonborne thanes that they look up to.

But among all of this there is a small subculture of kobold rebels, who have taken to forging their own paths outside the influence of others. Many become adventurers and planewalkers of the most determined type, and many become crafty criminals sometimes called "Piranhas" known for swarming attacks where they strip away anything of value and

more from their overwhelmed victims.

It's said that the kobold people have always lived in Sigil for untold eons, it's just that most don't seem to recognize them, when they're scurrying out of the way of larger races. Even in the Age of Goblins, they were ignored at best, and treated as annoyances at worst, much like how it is with humans. But as ages change in Sigil, it seems to remain the same for the kobolds.

Kobold Neighbourhoods

Kobold-Land: Also known as Miyak-ylak, this neighbourhood in the Hive is one of the most overcrowded in Sigil. Located very close to the Slags, it's residents are a little paranoid of outsiders trying to get into their community, especially based on the horrors of the Slags escaping and the occasional raids by goblin gangs from the Slags. Thus Kobold-Land is one of the most dangerous places to be in Sigil if one wanders there unaccompanied by one of it's residents. One wrong step will bring misfortune as Kobold-Land is saturated with an excessive amount of traps.

Beyond having one of the deadliest security defences in all of Sigil, the residents of Kobold-Land are fairly welcoming once a guest is invited in. It takes up a number of blocks containing large rundown buildings and a large network of tunnels and catacombs down below. As it's a neighbourhood built exclusively for kobolds, it's a cramped place where most larger races would have trouble finding places to stand. Kobold-Land happens to be cramped even by kobold stan-

dards.

Many who live in Kobold-Land make their living by scouring the rest of the Hive and taking anything of use back. There's always a need for more materials there, and anything else is often sold through their small merchant building to the outside world. The residents of Kobold-Land are some of the most reliable scavengers in Sigil, and it's the place to be to find obscure objects and missing items lost in the Hive. Though one of it's more unscrupulous businesses is that the residents of Kobold-Land are more than willing to hire out as Stone-Pirates, and are well known for being able to strip a building clean in the matter of minutes.

The Servant District: This neighbourhood in the Lady's Ward is mostly inhabited by kobolds. It's perhaps the most affluent of any neighbourhood that kobolds live in. As it's name suggests, the Servant District is home to many of the serving staff of the rest of the Lady's Ward. Here the houses are of a modest size, completely hidden away by the massive mansions of the rest of the ward. The kobolds here have enough room to live in compared to the other cramped neighbourhoods, are well fed and well educated, and have a modest wealth.

For the most part life in the Servant District is quite a happy one, as most of it's residents are more than happy about getting a chance to live in the Lady's Ward. A unique subculture has been created in this district, as it's residents have their own forms of cant to describe their duties and the whims of the Golden Lords and Ladies. While the kobold servants of the Lady's Ward seem to be diligent and loyal, even they have grown cynical of the lords they serve and have made it quite a culture of talking behind their

backs and ridiculing them. As the kobolds are generally ignored by their masters, they've heard a lot about what really goes on in the Lady's Ward. As a result many of them are more than happy to engage in games of spying against all of the Golden Lords. And while they mostly share such chant among themselves, some of the kobold servants are more than willing to let that information go for the right price.

The Stackhouses: These four massive buildings of the Lower Ward, house many of the kobolds of Sigil. Thousands live in this neighbourhood, and most of them go to work throughout the rest of the Lower Ward. Known for their large smokestacks, these former factories instead have become a home to many of the Lower Ward's workers. While the buildings weren't originally connected to each other, the kobolds here worked tirelessly to connect them through a set of bridges at every level, and a large network of tunnels. From the Stackhouses one can travel anywhere through Undersigil, and the kobolds have made quite a few track cars, trolleys and lifts allowing for easier travel.

It's with such ingenuity that many of the kobolds here work for companies and interests involved in transportation systems. Whether it be steam engine driven railcars or more exotic lightning rails, the kobolds provide much of the construction labour and maintenance duties for such projects across Sigil, and apparently across the planes in some cases.

But it is said that within the tunnels deep below the Stackhouses the kobolds are working on something in secret from the rest of Sigil. As it's known that many sheets of metal and mechanical parts have been transported to places down below. One theory

is that the kobolds of the Stackhouses are building a massive Colossus Construct down below, which happens to be their master, it's voice demanding it be built so it can one day rise to the streets of Sigil. Most kobolds will of course nervously laugh when such things are mentioned to them.

The Dragon's Nest: This region in the Market Ward and Undersigil below, is home to a number of draconic races including dragonborne, draconians, dragonspawn, dragons, dracotaurs, spellscales and more. But mostly it belongs to the kobolds, though a fair number of dragons are said to live here. But for the most part it's rumour, as many of Sigil's Dragons tend to live in secrecy usually in humanoid form.

Here one can find examples of kobold culture, songs and artwork, while much of it has it's origins in the elder draconic culture, it's taken a life of its own with the kobolds. Kobold culture often tells of struggles against adversity, outwitting others through craftiness, and about the virtues of perseverance. In this part of Sigil, it's a proud culture and here the kobolds hold on to this culture stronger than the other neighbourhoods. At every street in the Dragon's Nest, merchants all vie for attention of those passing through. Many claiming to sell genuine draconic artifacts, but mostly selling cheaply crafted trinkets.

This is also where one goes to find draconic lore of the ancients eons. It's said that the Dragon's Nest was one of Sigil's most ancient neighbourhoods from it's primeval past when most of it's buildings were stone huts, and caves carved out, before something resembling civilization spread across the planes. Down below one can find many ancient draconic runes carved on the walls of catacombs, and it's here

that many kobolds live and perform ancient rituals to the dragons said to be their ancestors.

Of the many rituals one of the most well-known is the ritual of the Dragon's Blessing, a transformation ritual that reshapes kobolds into the Dragon Blessed, or urds as they are more commonly known. The Dragon's Nest just happens to be one neighbourhood where the most urds can be found, as many are seen flying to and from here. While urds are held in regard amongst the kobolds perhaps the greatest secret is said to be the bit of lore the Twice Named Ascendant One found in the Dragon's Nest. As the legend goes, he was once a mortal kobold with the power of the mind over the body, an egotist who learned to shape his body to his will. It was with his ability to shapeshift, that he discovered a loophole in the laws of reality that allowed him to become ever more powerful from the ancient writings in the Dragon's Nests walls. Soon enough the Twice Named one ascended to Godhood, to become the companion of the great dragon overpower Io.

Other hidden bits of lore in the Dragon's Nest, are said to allow kobolds to invoke all of the fearsome powers of their bigger ancestors. Or to give them great insight and aptitude. Some are said to even give some of the blessings of kobold bloodlines on to other races. However despite all of this most kobolds lack the understanding to use such rituals and secrets. And because of the nature of the Dragon's Nest with its many races (albeit mostly draconic ones), they are more welcoming outsiders, as they supply a steady flow of income to this region. However the kobolds here don't feel the need to serve other races, except for the sake of being hospitable and respectful for fair compensation.

Kobold Personalities

Kheemo: (CN male Kobold Barbarian – Fated) A brawler from Kobold-Land, Kheemo rose to prominence in the underground gladiatorial arena circuits across the Cage as one of its champions. Based on his size and stature as a kobold, it's quite easy for his opponents to underestimate him, but when he invokes his wrath he is unstoppable. It's said that his powers come from five different totem spirits of dragons who once ruled Sigil in it's ancient primeval past, who one day choose him as a champion after he single-handedly killed a gang of thugs terrorizing the Hive. Kheemo has quite a reputation as one of the figures of Sigil's underground fight scene; it's thought that he's very much involved with people such as Harys Hatchis and Zadora in order to make the underground gladiator scene more mainstream.

Khur'bhu'bhu: (LN male Kobold Ardent – Guvner) While the Fraternity of Order is not what it used to be, in it's retreat to Mechanus, Khu'bhu'bhu stayed behind in Sigil to learn more about ancient loopholes in the laws of reality, such as the ones in which a mortal kobold became the Twice-Named Ascendant One. While his pursuit was originally the effects of emotions over the effects of living beings and reality, Khu'bhu'bhu has learned of an important axiom in how reality is written by the consensus in the minds of many sentient beings. And thought is in turn guided by emotions. As emotions can help write how reality behaves, he has classified the many types of emotions in sentient beings. To many of the Guvners still left in Sigil, his work is considered to be quite unorthodox as they view emotions to be an aberration on living beings. But he views emo-

tions as very much something that follows laws of reality. Much of his work has also helped the Bleak Cabal whom he enjoys a beneficial working relation with.

Luukho: (NG male Kobold Avenger of Bahamut – Revolutionary League) This wandering crusader across the wards of Sigil seeks to free many from the chains of needless greed, and instead lead them to the path of honour and respect for others. Despite his investiture of holy powers from Bahamut himself and his great Adamantine Companion, this black-scaled crusader has never been an officially endorsed member of Bahamut's church. Luukho has been a scourge of both organized criminals and covetous merchants who control the system. It's thought by some that Luukho is a legend dreamt up by the oppressed, until they meet a humble Kobold with very little wealth who gives them advice on how best to turn their lives around. Luukho's wrath leads only to a few ending up dead beneath his blade. Instead he prefers to preserve lives, letting those he brought down to ruin learn that there is another path beyond the unchecked pursuit of greed.

Ma'khat'kat: (NE female Kobold Cleric of Tiamat) This matron from the Servant District of the Lady's Ward has risen above her station as a servant to the Golden Lords, to reigning alongside them as a significant voice for the clergy of Tiamat. In Sigil the focus of Tiamat's church has never been on the dragons, but more on Tiamat's portfolio as a Goddess of Greed. Which among the obscenely rich of the Lady's Ward makes Tiamat a very popular power. Ma'khat'kat resides in the High Priestess quarters of Tiamat's massive temple, where she receives and listens to the concerns of the rich, using her

knowledge of their secrets when it suits her for all the right gains. She has often used her knowledge to bring down one Golden Lord, at a request of another for use of a significant favour sometime in the future.

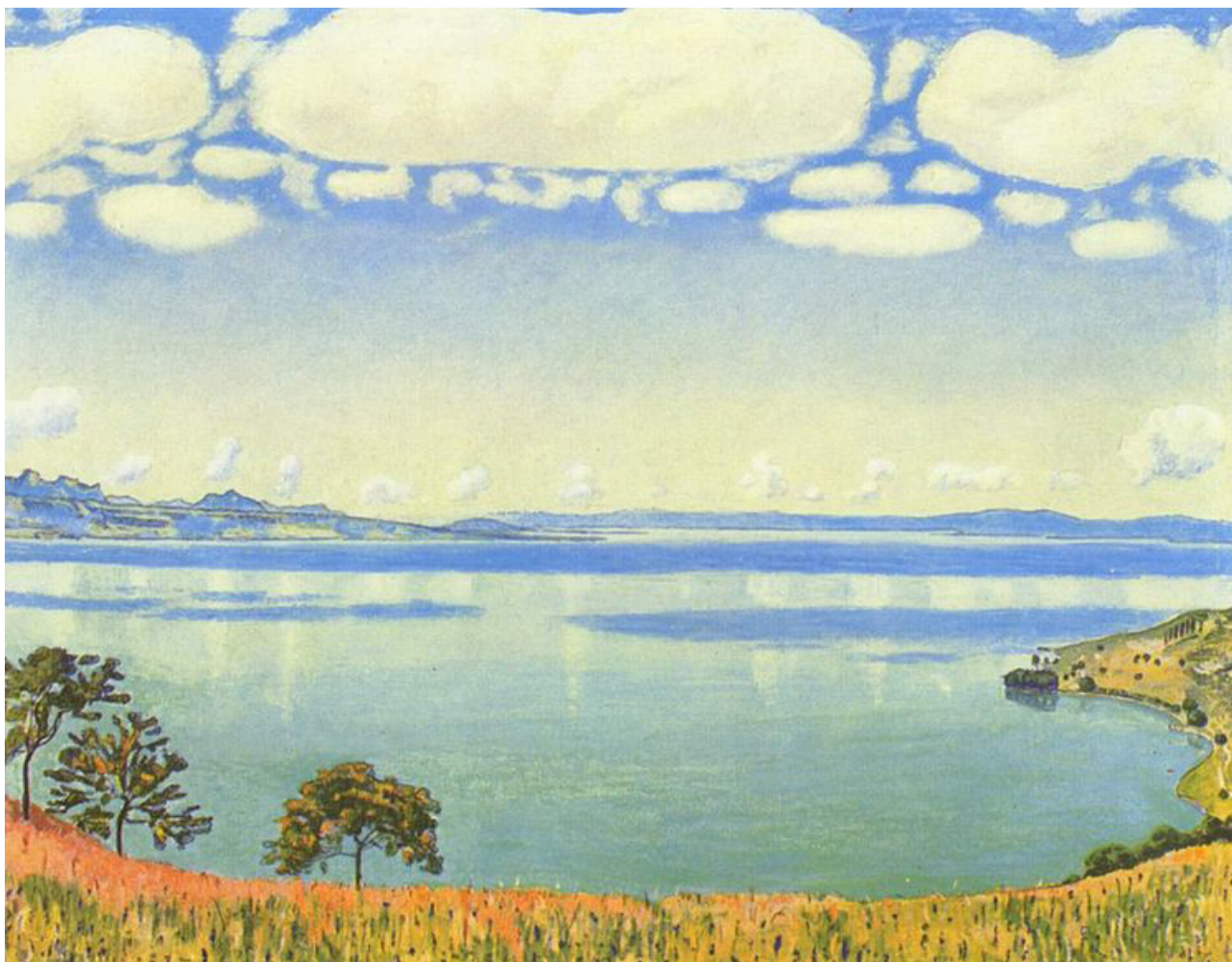
Ta'loror: (N female Kobold Assassin – Athar) This white-scaled kobold gave a part of her soul away to the Plane of Shadow many years ago. She did so because of her disgust over how religions shaped the lives of various races across the planes, making some less and some more in the eyes of others. Ta'loror holds no love for the ancient dragons that all kobolds are said to come from; to her they are nothing more than useless myths created to divide the kobold people into sides such as between Bahamut and Tiamat. As an assassin who dances through the shadows, she's re-

lentless in her crusade against the powers that have been pulling the kobold races one way or the other. While most of the Athar have left Sigil for the Spire, she's still in regular contact with many of their factors, seeking to eliminate or ruin many of the clergy that have grown in influence since the Faction War.

Yirlili: (N female Urd Sorcerer – Sensate) As one of the Dragon Blessed, Yirlili has a privileged position among Sigil's Kobolds. She underwent the transformation at a young age when it was discovered she had a natural talent for arcane magic. As an urd blessed by the ancient secrets hidden away in the Dragon's Nest, Yirlili seeks to discover all she can about the lost Eon of Wyrms that once happened through out all of Sigil and the multiverse. Yirlili is an explorer

who's brought together a cadre of other kobolds, dragonborn, spellscales, and more. Her pursuit of the lost eon has lead her to experience the life of an ancient dragon who lived in that ancient past through a series of runes which unlocked the memories of that life. She now seeks to uncover evidence and the legacies of that ancient dragon, which is thought to uncover more than anyone has ever known about the Eon of Wyrms.¶





PLANAR LOCATIONS:

SURCEASE & DOLOR

by Jem & illustrated by Arkhip Kuindzhi and Ferdinand Holder

(This article used the following public domain works: *Surf and Clouds* by Arkhip Kuindzhi for Dolor, and *Lake Geneva as seen from Chexbres* by Ferdinand Holder for Surcease.)

Surcease

Surcease is one of those places that fiends like to talk about when they talk about the Upper Planes. It dulls the wits, they say, and the vital force. It takes away pain, but it doesn't solve anything, just replacing real sadness with pabulum and scripture. And of course, the reason they're so quick to make these charges is that to some extent, they're true.

Upon the first layer of Elysium, Amoria, there is a glade distant from all the usual settlements. It is still, save for the sound of

a spring burbling out of a cleft rock into a wide, calm pool, from which a rivulet flows into Oceanus. Within this pool is a shifting portal to the Prime.

If someone is suffering from inconsolable sadness, a grief which has become more of a burden than they can bear, or a gnawing hate or anger, the portal may bring them from waters where they swim on the Prime, or the traveler's way may bring them across Elysium. Upon the rock of the spring is carved the pool's power:

SURCEASE

*Offer your salt tears into this
spring,
drink of the fresh waters here.
Offer the frothy spittle of your
hatred,
bathe in the waters clear.*

*See here the stories of those
who came before. Unburden
yourself, and build this stock of
lore.*

A character who sits by the pool, or swims in it, and is will-

ing to tell his story, finds the memories of his woe rushing past him, the emotions intensifying. If he weeps, or spews his hatred, or otherwise adds to the waters of the pool, his story becomes part of the memories the pool keeps. If he is willing to surrender to the pool's power, his memories of the pain fade, leaving only the sketchy outlines of the events that occurred in his life, a cool factual narrative rather than the immediacy of experience. The price for this is a permanent -2 penalty to Wisdom, from abandoning such crucial life experiences. A few Elysian natives live nearby and can sense when Surcease is used; if the character stays with them for a while, adjusting and being counseled, this fades to a -1. The pool can also cure lycanthropy and magical alignment change.

In a somewhat different vein, a barbarian who wishes to attain discipline can give up the power of his rage to the pool. With a great cry, the beast in his soul is

domesticated, the wildness of his spirit retreating. He loses all rage abilities, and any abilities that require the rage ability from feats or prestige classes. He becomes lawful, and, depending on the number of levels he has as a barbarian, gains monk feats of the appropriate level from still mind (level 3), purity of body (level 5), wholeness of body (7), diamond body (11), diamond soul (13), timeless body (17), tongue of the sun and moon (17), empty body (19), and perfect self (20). He is no longer a barbarian, and not quite a monk, though he can advance as one counting his previous barbarian levels as monk levels.

The emotions and stories given up at the pool remain there indefinitely, and those who swim in the waters, or drink of them, are surrounded by them. Non-bard characters can make a bardic knowledge check while in the pool; bard characters can do so with a +10 to their roll. The pool

Vial of Surcease Water	
Thrown Splash Weapon	Casts Crushing Despair or Confusion (50% Chance either) with save DC 20

also allows vision spells to be cast without an XP cost.

Dolor

The true purpose of Surcease is hidden from most users. Very few people know that with care, the waters left behind can be harvested, removing particular memories from the pool. The harvest takes days, and is performed by someone swimming in the pool with a tiny spoon and vial, catching fleeting memories. It is not a fact likely to be stumbled across by accident.

The guardians of Surcease use the water gathered there, only a few memories at a time so that the pool loses none of its native utility. While one vial acts as a



Summary of Pool Effects			
Plane	Attribute Effects	Disease Cured	Miscellaneous
Surcease	-2 Wisdom, (reduce to -1 with recovery time)	Cure lycanthropy and magical align- ment change.	Non-bard characters can mage a bardic knowl- edge check (bards receive a +10 to their bardic knowledge checks instead). Vision spells can be cast without incurring an XP cost.
Dolor	-1 Charisma	Final stage of Gray Waste Despair	Restores one emotion (sadness or anger, 50% chance either) to subject.

splash weapon that casts crushing despair or confusion with a save DC of 20, this is by no means their intended purpose. The tears are taken on a very long journey indeed, across the Outlands to the Gray Waste.

Here, too, there is a still pool, tucked in an uninhabited corner of Oinos. There is no forest here, only bare rock surrounding a brick well lined with stairs, dark water barely visible below. Instead of the traveler's way guiding planewalkers here, only those people come here who have completely lost their emotions to the Waste.

Carved into the side of the well away from the stair entrance is its name, Dolor. Graven upon the top stair is the well's purpose:

Weep Once More.

One who descends the stairs into Dolor and bathes in the

freezing water at the bottom finds the experience of the tears or rage taken away by Surcease, at last harvested and brought to Dolor. Slowly at first, the images and emotions come to a crashing intensity. The sufferer finds that some of his own lost emotion has been restored, though only in a most limited fashion: a deep and terrible sadness, or a fervent and boiling rage, at the inequities or offenses they have seen.

It is not an entirely healthy state of mind, and the bather loses 1 point of Charisma in the experience due to their newly dour or angry personality, but it is sufficient to restore them to motivation and activity. The Elysian guardians of the place (who rotate often, to avoid the effects of the Waste themselves) then swiftly escort the bather to a nearby portal to the Outlands or the Astral, or simply plane shift them away, depending on their current resources. The

bather is offered employment in some organization or other which is at least nominally dedicated to a cause that the bather might now feel inspired to join, so that they might learn some control and channel their new emotions to productive ends.

The Elysian troops who maintain Dolor must act with great caution, often unable to seek out targets, only passively wait for opportunities. It is frustrating, but if the major forces on the Waste knew of even one site like this outside of the realms of the local powers, they would surely move swiftly to crush it. Nevertheless, for the chance to save even a few souls, the guardians of Surcease and Dolor continue their risky venture.¶

Summary of Surcease's Effect on Barbarians	
Miscellaneous Effects	Ability Gained (Level)
Becomes Lawful	Still Mind (3)
Loses all rage abilities and any abilities that require the rage ability from feats or prestige classes.	Purity of Body (5)
	Wholeness of Body (7)
Can continue leveling as a monk, counting his barbarian levels as monk levels.	Diamond Body (11)
	Diamond Soul (13)
Gains monk abilities per his level.	Timesless Body (17)
	Tongue of the Sun and Moon (17)
	Empty Body (19)
	Perfect Self (20)

Book of the Damned, Vol. 3

PATHFINDER

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HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

INTERVIEW WITH SHEMMY

by Sciborg2

A major contributor to D&D lore and author of Paizo's *The Great Beyond* and *Book of the Damned Volume III*, Todd Stewart, aka Shemeska the Marauder, was kind enough to answer a few questions about his work on things planar.

Can you give us a brief story on how the daemons ended up as part of Paizo's cosmology? Was it your work on the Demented and your storyhour that led to Paizo commissioning you to do the BoD III? Did you invent the daemons?

I got started with Paizo back when they were doing *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazines, when those two were still in printed form. I think it took me around five rejected pitches to finally get some notice (for the Ecology of the Keeper). Prior to that accepted pitch, Wes Schneider ended up writing some fluff in a *Dragon* article on dead Planescape factions, and took some inspiration from a scene in my Storyhour and something that Rip van Wormer had done as two rumored fates for former Mercykiller Factol Alisoehn Nilesia. I pinged him about it over email and he'd apparently read some of my stuff and knew who I was, and we talked a bit, and I pitched a few more things thereafter. To make a long story short, writing several thousand pages of stuff and posting it on the internet for free can get you noticed after a few years of doing it.

I ended up doing a number of pieces for Paizo in *Dragon* and then finally one wandering monster (the Dergholoth) in *Dungeon* before WotC folded the magazines. Fast forward a year or so and Paizo brings out Pathfinder, I

pester them at GenCon, and when they were soliciting freelancers for the *Pathfinder Campaign Setting* book they asked if I was interested and tossed out an email with a listing of available topics. It took around ten seconds for me to pop back an email begging to do the cosmology section. I think I offered them my firstborn and my players' organs if I could do that section.

For the cosmology that I wrote up for the book, a portion of it was already mapped out by James Jacobs (the nested shells motif was him), but a large number of the planes weren't yet fully defined, some didn't have names yet, around half didn't have natives designed for them yet. There was a list of alignments tagged with names and/or natives that got bandied about a bit. I really don't recall how a lot of them got hashed out, but I do recall I'm responsible for the jyoti, sceadui-nar, proteans, axiomites, fetchlings, dziriaks, lurkers-in-light, and vulpinals among others. But the daemons' general motif as representing death/oblivion was already there, that was James, and two of the deacon servitors were already designed as well. I did the meladaemon and purrodaemon (the names were already there, but not the appearance). The basic setup was there, but I pretty much had free reign to supply the details like what each plane looked like, most of the themes, around half of the natives, etc. James gave me a ton of creative freedom there.

Still, initially a lot of that was very slim on description, sometimes just a name tossed out there, and some of it evolved from the initial descriptions in the PFCS till

they were expanded upon heavily in *The Great Beyond*.

The Great Beyond wasn't my next project, which was actually the Osirion sourcebook that I co-wrote with Jason Nelson. Fun project, and intentionally outside of what had been my comfort area of planar stuff. In the Great Beyond there was so much stuff to talk about, and so very much not enough space to get into it all, but I tried. And I tried. And I so totally overwrote that book that I'm lucky to have gotten more work from Paizo afterwards. I've since been very very good about hitting deadlines and word limits. And they're never going to let me live that one down.

But I got to delve into the daemons a bit more in depth, detailing the mythology behind them more, giving a map of Abaddon and some points of interest (some of which get write-ups in BotDIII), and getting into the question of a 5th Horseman aka the Oinodaemon aka the Bound Prince. He/she/it was fun, and it's a distinctly different play on the earlier concepts of a supreme NE fiend or fiends like the Oinoloth, the General of Gehenna, and the baernaloths. The trick was to have something to fit that conceptual niche, but not take away from the concept of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. I hope it works for everyone.

Also, there were things in BotDIII that play off of things introduced in earlier stuff. Everything from material cut for space from TGB to a little bit of fiction in a web article at Kobold Quarterly, Misbegotten Children of the Abyss that featured a pre-Horseman Trelmarixian and his former mistress/mentor/lover Lyuthe-

ria the Parasite Queen. That got brought forward into BotDIII and expanded upon as far as the history between those two.

What makes the daemons special not just in the Great Beyond but in D&D's fiendish history?

For me it was a certain iconic presence from very early on with Anthraxus the Decayed from 1e, but otherwise the NE fiends were pretty understated and dare I say underdeveloped and ignored for most of that edition. And then there was 2e, and amidst a perception that TSR was taming down the game and removing words like demon and devil from the game, there came Planescape's take on the newly renamed yugoloths. Say what you want about TSR trying to make a kinder, gentler D&D and bowing down to angry, churchgoing PTA member mothers... that stuff was f'ing dark. They went from the 3rd wheel of the underworld to the hidden masters of all that lurks in the dark, creating the other fiends, sparking the Blood War as a diversion and experiment into the very nature of Evil itself, and in the end they're the puppets of even older, more primal masters.

Now the irony here which isn't lost on me, is that I never played D&D before 3e in the fall of 2000 or thereabouts. I only discovered the earlier stuff maybe a year later after there was a Dragon article on prestige classes for some of the 2e Planescape factions, and about the same time I'd snagged a copy of Planescape: Torment. Finding the 2e material and later some of the 1e material to be completest about it didn't take all that long.

Many Planescape fans have enjoyed your ongoing story hour, which features the yugoloths

and their baernoloth creators in great detail. How did your work on that campaign, as well as your stories about the baernoloth Demented, help shape your vision for the daemons?

There are a few sorta easter eggs in BotDIII where I've used things from my home game/fiction, but they might have gone in totally different directions than the original. For instance, Trelmarixian was a bit character in a home campaign of mine, a unique arcanaloth who was more or less evil jackal-shaped jello; his Pathfinder namesake while similar in appearance has a wholly different personality, history, etc. Some themes and concepts might be similar. One such case is the relationship between Trelmarixian and the Parasite Queen, which more or less mirrors that of Helekanalaith and Larsdana Ap Neut in some of my Planescape fic.

But when little things like that happen, especially if a name of something I created earlier gets used in no case are they assumed to be the same creatures, but if you've read some of my stuff online, occasionally a name or title might be familiar, but it shouldn't ever be intrusive or awkward. Paizo's daemons are their own creatures, and they really went out of their way to make sure that from the outset they had a unique role and conceptual place within their cosmology rather than stuck in that 1e'sque pigeonhole of seemingly like fiendish also-rans who were just there to fill a place in the symmetry.

The baernaloths are creatures unique to Planescape and only occasionally referenced in 3.x, and they occupy a niche and cosmological model that doesn't have a real parallel in Pathfinder. Pathfinder's Asmodeus and his devils didn't have to wrest Hell away from any versions of

ancient baatorians, and the daemons didn't arise as the chosen children of primordial baernaloths (they arose as either a cosmic mistake or a natural consequence of mortal life and death, but in either case they began rejected, hiding, and feasting upon one another, not as chosen disciples of Evil). So no baern, and not just for reasons of the baern being off limits to use. That's not to say I won't try to leave the door open to ancient, brooding, lurking evil that the multiverse doesn't know about or has forgotten. There's the Oinodaemon for that who combines some of the mystique of the Oinoloth and the psychotic wasted baern of the Demented at the same time.

But Paizo did keep intact the idea of the daemons creating the first demons via soul experimentation, similar to the yugoloths creating the first demons (or obyriths). But unlike the 'loths, the daemons succeeded far beyond their own capacity to control the situation, and it almost destroyed them (while also doing a damn good job of decimating the original inhabitants of the Abyss, the qlippoth).

Otherwise, apart from the Oinodaemon who has his own role and inspirations, the closest that you'll get to an out and out 'loth/baern is Tegresin the Laughing Fiend. Officially he's an imprisoned fiend of unknown type and unknown alignment. But just in terms of attitude, actions, and intentional mystery that's the atmosphere and style I was going for. He's appeared briefly in two places so far, and in two other places as the oh so malicious speaker for a quote introducing a section of a book (Devourers in Undead Revisited, and the Well of Worlds in Classic Treasures Revisited). He's a favorite of mine, and dare I say a

bit of a chosen mouthpiece.

How would you incorporate your new daemons into the Great Wheel cosmology?

Given how different their worldview is compared to yugoloths, there are a couple of different ways that I'd go. I'd either incorporate them as a heresy within the ranks of the 'loths themselves; as a fellow race of Gehenna/Waste/Carceri natives; as independent creations of another baern, something akin to the gehreleths thrown from the 'loth family tree early on but still out there brooding; or even if you wanted to get really obscure the daemons could be those 'loths who rejected the purification of law and chaos by the General of Gehenna using the Heart of Darkness.

What's next for you and the Great Beyond? A novel about the machinations of the daemons perhaps?

I'd love to revisit the daemons again, but it's Paizo's playground they've let me play in, so it's their call in the future obviously. Of course I've got a lot of stuff that was cut from this book and earlier ones that might be incorporated into something else later down the line as it fits (an in-game book in this book was retooled from something similar cut from *Undead Revisited* for instance).

I've never done a novel, though that's always something there in the back of my head that I'd like to do eventually. But man, I still need to finish my *Storyhour(s)* too, and there's a plot there and characters rattling around in my head that I have to tell their story too. Though the Paizo daemons (and proteans) have been yammering for more and more attention, and I've got a few story ideas I'll type up at some point in

the next year or so probably just for fun.

Suffice to say, in some form or fashion you'll see more stuff from me.

The book presented the idea that the loathing of life leads to an obsession with it, specifically in the form of daemoniac experimentation. My understanding is that you yourself are a scientist - how did this inform the direction of the daemons?

You hate something so deeply you become obsessed with it and by knowing it you can better exterminate it. That's how a lot of daemons approach the topic, especially the meladaemons. The sections of them and their master are rather heavily influenced by some of my own background as a cell biologist. I think I might have tossed around a few five dollar words and terms in there, some of which got nuked by Paizo's editors. For instance, Trelmarixian the Archdaemon of Famine is also known as the Lysogenic Prince. Lysogeny is one of two methods of viral reproduction (my work in grad school was on the viral genes that trigger the switch between lysogenic and lytic cycles of reproduction in the Epstein Barr virus), and in it a virus can incorporate itself into a host cell's genome. This sort of thing can be relatively benign but it can also cause cancer in some cases, and if the host is weakened or immuno-compromised the virus can switch to the more damaging lytic cycle. Trelmarixian's concept of famine goes more towards the broader concept of wasting, inclusive of not just starvation and famine but of cancers, parasites, and viruses that act like parasites within their unknowing hosts, etc. That was informed a lot by my own background. I think I use a number of virus metaphors

in the book, some of which got nuked in the editing process (which is probably a good thing; my editors know what they're doing in terms of what the audience wants, expects and a lot of specialized jargon probably isn't among them. They also orbit nuked a possibly unfortunate human centipede reference among some of the discussion of daemoniac creations).

For the other archdaemons, my professional background doesn't really come into play as much as other influences (*Planescape* among them).

To what extent do you envision competition between Apollyon and Trelmarixian, given the latter's use of diseases to draw souls into states of famine?

A decent amount which they'll likely never speak a word against the other on. They have some overlap certainly. Apollyon rules over disease, but that also could be seen to include disease spreading vermin and parasites (rats and plague fleas for instance), which likewise for the former are heavily linked to famine. That sort of stomping on each others' ground happened long before Trelmarixian was a meladaemon, back when Lytheria the Parasite Queen was the Archdaemon of Famine. But there's an unspoken agreement among them all to respect those boundaries in nebulous fashion, and to never fight amongst themselves openly.

The Four as I envision them present a unified, monolithic rulership over Abaddon, not contradicting one another, not fighting one another, and avoiding stepping on one another's toes if at all possible (though their minions can and do squabble, sometimes fiercely in the case of Harbingers). They're terrified of the notion of squabbling among

themselves and presenting weakness and failing to live up to the expectations of the First whom they displaced.

Thus even if they might overlap in portfolio, they'll ignore it as long as it doesn't go too far. I expect Trelmarixian to push that line further than his predecessor the Parasite Queen. He's hungry.

How do you see the relationship between daemons and the other exemplar and elemental races such as the other fiends, the djinn, the celestials, the psychopomps, and the forces of Order and Chaos?

If it doesn't have a mortal soul, they don't much care until it tries to stop them from feasting on mortals. Pretty much all of reality hates and loathes daemons to the extent that Pharamasma refuses to allow them entry into the Boneyard, and you can find demons and devils, axiomites and proteans, and every other bizarre combination of mutual anathemas fighting together in the Astral plane to protect the river of souls against marauding flocks of astradaemons seeking to poach mortal souls on their way to judgment. The psychopomps perhaps more than others, since they serve Pharamasma directly.

The creatures of the elemental planes and the twin energy planes are a bit different though and for the former they probably don't interact much (unless you count the divs). It's an open question if the daemons are truly aware of the positive energy plane as the birthplace of mortal souls. As far as they're aware of them, the daemons probably find the natives of Negative interesting inasmuch as they despise anything based on positive energy, which the vast majority of mortal life is based upon. But given too much thought on the topic, the fiends

might seek to destroy the sceaduniar as well just because they're linked to the whole cycle of creation and entropy (albeit the opposite end of the spectrum from the furnace of souls). It's likely very complex, and something to explore in the future.

Given the shared championing of entropy, could you see an alliance between the Daemons and the Doomguard despite the faction having good aligned members in its ranks?

Some of the members of the Doomguard might seek such an alliance, with a self-delusional notion that daemons aren't "really" seeking to snuff the spark of life itself from the cosmos, but are somehow part of a grand cycle of life, death, and then rebirth. They might second guess themselves eventually because the daemons will try to kill them every chance they get, though more powerful daemons will string the Doomguard along and allow them to live if it leads to more mortal death in the end than simply killing them on the spot.

As to that question of just what the daemons hope to accomplish if they get their wildest wishes? Well, that's a big question even among their own kind, and some of them highly philosophize the issue. Yes all mortals deserve to die, but what happens then? What becomes of us? What about the fact that we ourselves seem to spawn –entirely– from the very things we devour and exterminate? I have a whole heck of a lot of various schools of daemoniac thought on those topics –and specific Harbinger and Horseman views on them– written down on my desktop actually. (Smiling)

Given the descriptions of the Four Horsemen and the Harbingers, how might GMs utilize

these incredibly powerful beings in games with mortal adventurers who lack the power to battle them directly?

Similar to other fiends and archfiends, though daemons do seem to have more difficulty in gaining access to the material plane or even leaving Abaddon compared to other outsiders, so typically when you encounter them, they're being summoned and bound by some other, mortal agency. Typically that's someone using them for their own (possibly) intersecting purposes, or it's an actual cult that worships daemons (talked about in the book). Identifying and fighting such cults operating on their own, or within the larger uncorrupted ranks of another religion for instance is one way to fit them into a campaign.

Don't stop Szuriel the Archdaemon of War at level 5, but stop a cult from summoning one of her purrodaemon minions. Gain another five or ten levels and don't fight her but discover that she's been manipulating two mortal groups to excavate the Labyrinth of Shiman Sekh wherein one of her Harbingers was bound thousands of years ago. Tie her into the background often enough and link smaller, unconnected events together over the course of a campaign till ultimately if you so choose you have your PCs going after one of her Harbingers or possibly even an avatar of Szuriel herself. Actually laying siege to the Cinder Cone and fighting Szuriel herself is a bit beyond the scope of what I'd generally do in a campaign (and technically there aren't actually stats and rules for such a fight out there in the present), so I'm not going to give advice beyond where I'd take things myself.

For more fun, see Shemmy's excellent [Planescape Story Hour](#)!