

PLANESCAPE CAMPAIGN SETTING

CHAPTER 8: AND BEYOND

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*AND BEYOND...*

Outside of Sigil the next biggest thing you need to learn 'bout is the Planes. They're infinite, so's it's not like you can learn everything in one shot. But we'll try our best, hm? Sigil is said to be the center of the multiverse, the center of all. From Sigil one can affect the Planes entire. Or some such drek. Now, since Sigil is the center of things, the going theory is that as a 'fulcrum point' (see? You too can learn a thing or two from a Guvner), if one were to nudge Sigil one way or the other in belief, then the rest of the Planes would follow, like a snowball at the top of a mountain making for an avalanche. No one's gotten a strong enough grip on the city though to test that theory out yet, and I'm rather glad for that myself. Now let's take a look at why so many cutters believe such bunk.

The planes, such as they are, exist as a representation of a meaning or element or aspect of reality. Confusin' enough for ya? I'm not yet done. The planes themselves are generally infinite. They exist 'beside', 'between' or 'concurrent' to each other only by our own convention—it is not so simple just to walk around in one plane and mark a point on your map where the other begins - though I'm sure some lucky berk out there will prove me wrong tomorrow. Moving from one plane to another generally only occurs with deliberate intention. Some planes will recognize that you are wishing to traverse to a plane near to it and through either the planes own willingness, or your belief that you're going the right way after a few days or weeks of travel, you'll find yourself where you're trying to get to. I don't suggest bothering making a map of the journey though, such planes are notorious about making the way unrepeatable.

For other planes, or if you want to get to one without having to traverse the others between, one must hop a portal to elsewhere, have a grand wizard cast a *gate* or other spell, alternatively one can take one of the many natural pathways from one plane to another such as the river Styx, climbing Yggsdrial, walking the Great Road, or if desperate enough jumping into a astral rift, colorpool, or other open vortex. Portals and spells are usually the safest and most controlled way to travel though, so if you have a choice I'd suggest taking those.

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 TRAVELING +HE PLANES: ADVICE

As we get started on our little tour here, let's have some advice out front. I'd rather you got home safe and sound to recommend me to your buddies as your personal font of knowledge. From the top:

*Plan Ahead:* Right cutter, so you're looking to become a planewalker and all you need is a portal to hop through? Well, you could take that approach but it's your neck you'll be risking. Smart cutters plan ahead and research the destination that they're going to as well the places that they plan to travel through. If you have the time and jink, you may even like to consider planning several routes to get to your destination. You never know when your carefully planned

route falls apart and you're left stranded somewhere out there on the Great Ring without a gate-key or a clue.

*Portal Diaries:* Having mentioned others who keep diaries of portals and where they lead to, it's a good habit to get in to keeping this information recorded somewhere yourself. You never know when knowing about a particular portal will come in handy. Even if you can't make use of the portal in a particular situation, that knowledge may be useful to another (since knowledge is power) and it can make a useful bargaining chip.

If you know of a number of portals, it pays to keep some portal keys lying around. It's recommended that you don't carry them around all the time, as this means that if you do happen to pass through them (without intending to use them) then you'll trigger the portal in any case. If you need to use a portal in a hurry and the key takes awhile to get a hold off, keep a spare for emergencies as you'll never know when you need to make a sharp exit.

*Travel with Others:* The planes can be a dangerous place to travel, that's pretty much common sense and anyone not going out with at least some preparation is simply asking for trouble. There's a fair number of cutters that travel the planes regularly, whether it is transporting goods for trade, passing messages or traveling for other reasons (best not to ask in some instances). Whilst hiring on as a caravan guard on a Prime world may not seem very glamorous, out on the planes it can mean the difference between reaching your destination and not getting there at all.

The plane that you travel on is a pretty big clue on the kind of guide that you're likely to encounter. Having to spend a great deal of time on a particular plane is going to influence a guide no matter what their original character and outlook may have been. For example, it takes a particularly strong individual not to be affected by the apathy of the Gray Waste. If you happen to find a rather cheerful guide on the Gray Waste it's recommended that you be peery in the extreme of their motivation and intentions. Like so much of the advice contained herein - use your common sense, it's one of a planewalker's greatest assets.

Whilst on the subject of Paths, not all roads are ones that you can simply walk down from point to another in order to reach your destination. Some roads, paths, whatever you want to call them have a specific nature that is affected by the choices and actions of those who travel along them. For example, in Elysium if you help a cutter out or perform good actions you'll find your journey goes a lot faster. Fail to help another out or perform a malevolent action and you'll soon find yourself going nowhere. Unfortunately some of the paths in the Lower planes work the same way, except that the choices and actions are reversed.

The planes are a place in flux, molded by belief and infinite in size - the more options that you have for getting from one point to the next the better off you are (in general that is). There's a big debate within the Planewalkers community as to how many routes a cutter should plan

when getting around. The favored number is three, although this could just be a nod to the Rule of Three than for any more specific reason.

The main thing to bear in mind is: be adaptable. All the best laid plans can fall apart at the drop of a hat. In fact, should you ever have the misfortune of visiting the demi-plane of hats; you'll soon see how any plan can be dashed asunder. Improvisation, some knowledge and a willingness to go about things in an unorthodox manner are all useful for surviving out on the planes. At this point there should be an inclusion of interesting and pithy quotes from various planewalkers, but budget cuts have prevented any from being included.

*What You Know and Who You Know:* So you've planned several routes, got the portal keys, arranged for reliable guides and feel ready to head off. Having followed all the advice above it would seem likely that you and your companions reach the destination in one piece. But the one thing that we've not considered so far is the various personalities that you're likely to encounter along the way.

The planes and places that you'll be traveling through give some hint as to the character of the individuals that you might meet along the way. However, only a leatherhead would presume that all berks in Carceri are treacherous and that all berks on Mount Celestia are paragons of good. Bear in mind that most berks you'll meet along the way are individuals, which means that they each have their own histories, their own motivations and long-term goals.

Of course I'm not including such creatures as Hordlings and other critters that can't or do not wish to use their sentience for specific purposes and goals. But you can bet your Bigby's Thumb of Hitchhiking that even the tiny Shad on the Plane of Earth can help or hinder a cutter along on their travels. One part open-mindedness, one part peeriness and one part expecting the unexpected is a recipe that the (late) noted scholar and planewalker Rolla Cello put forward in his last treaty entitled 'Rough Guide to Pandemonium'.

So why all this advice on not making assumptions about cutters living on the planes etc. you may ask? Well, sometimes it's not so much what you know as who you know. A word in the right ear can change the fate of kingdoms and more. With so much relying on word of mouth and reputation, a cutter's fortunes can rise or fall with a single word. It pays to keep in the good books of those you cross regularly or are likely to have a run-in with. If you plan to visit Elysium and a Guardinal scholar asks you for an interview before-hand to learn more about a Prime world that you've visited - well, an hour of your time answering questions can go a long way towards getting a friendlier reactions from other Guardinals that you're likely to encounter.

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*TRAVERSING INFINI+Y*

*Jordel made his way out of the Great Bazaar, seeking a quieter place where he could hear the mimir's tale in peace. The strange magical device floated a foot before with him, and at times he felt like it was the one doing the leading. Yet he had no complaints when he found himself on a small bench nestled between two impressively tall buildings lined with menacing thorns along their rooftops. The mimir paused its recitation for a moment, seemingly considering what it had next to say...*

*"A tad long winded that one, but you can find worse bashers to learn from. Of course, what's most important to planewalkers is how to get from place to place. The profession doesn't entail lounging in one area, after all. There's too much to be seen, far more than can be squeezed into a single lifetime. Fortunately most of the multiverse, save perhaps the Prime Material Plane, is riddled with portals and other pathways to travel between the planes. For those powerful enough, magic simplifies planar traveling as well, and of course some creatures have the inherent ability to cross planes. Every method has its advantages and disadvantages; each can provide its own adventure. And the real excitement typically starts once you get to your destination, which is why it's important to know what you're getting into and to be properly prepared in advance. You don't want to head into Pandemonium without being ready for the winds, and you don't want to step onto Elysium without knowing a way out."*

[Editor's note: Hajzeek is a sad sight these days. You'll be hard pressed to find a cutter who's seen more nooks and crannies of the planes than that old bariaur. But everything passes with time, so they say. He certainly makes Sigil richer with the time he has left.]

### *Hajzeek Gnarl-Hoof*

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 P⊕R+ALS

Ah, was a time these hooves took me all across the planes. I saw the darkest, smelliest hole in the multiverse and the brightest, sweetest heights of 'em, too. And I loved 'em all. Pass me another mug o' that bub there, and ol' Gnarl-Hoof will tell ye all about it. I'll lann ye the ins and outs o' planehoppin', I will. The first thing a planewalker needs knowin' is how to get around. There's lots o' ways ye can get to where ye're going.

The way most folks get around the planes is portals. There's really three reasons for this. They usually take ye to the same spot every time, just about any sod can use 'em, and the things be as common as Dustmen at a mass burial. Portals connect two places through a permanent teleportation effect. This makes 'em quick and handy shortcuts, sometimes to a place on the same plane, but oftentimes to another plane altogether. Now, the portal itself can be up to about 15 feet in radius, and exists in two-dimensions. I got that from a Guvner. Most portals're

in doorways or gates that have the same sort o' shape, but they can also be found in other sorts o' bounded spaces like windows, holes, or natural opening.

Portals keep things movin', allowin' people to get to places they could never reach otherwise. Some of us use 'em just for the noble art of explorin' the corners o' the multiverse, but lots o' folks use 'em to spread their jink around. Opportunistic traders can get rare goods from out-o'-the way spots and bring 'em to other out-o'-the way spots. Portals make Sigil the City o' Doors; that city has more portals in and out of it than pointy bits on a bladeling, and so the city has a big sway on planar doin's. Lucky for all of us that the Lady can't be bought. She ignores all the posturin's of the sycophants and cross-traders o' the factions and guilds, and She's the only one that can make portals that lead in or out o' the city. Outside the Cage, it seems that portals are a natural part o' the planes, sometimes crafted by deities but usually just appearin' and disappearin' of their own accord. But mortals who try to make 'em *always* fail. Now, I hear tell that some primes can make portals on the Prime Material Plane, but those spells only work on their out-o'-touch worlds.

Since planars can't make their own portals, many groups and businesses make chartin' the portals that do exist a big priority. Then they turn around an' sell that knowledge to planewalkers. Good thing, since portals ain't so easy to find. And they usually need a special key to open 'em. Mark ye well the Rule of Threes when usin' portals: find the portal, then figure out its key, and then get ready for what's on the other side.

### ***Finding Portals***

Portals are invisible, but they give off a faint aura o' transmutation magic, so bloods using *detect magic* an' *true sight* can see 'em, and they give off a much stronger aura when they're open. Planars can kind o' sense portals, spottin' traces of the aura around the portals. Usin' witchery, or just sniffing it out yerself don't give ye a clue on how the portal is opened, though. How hard a portal is to find or get to can give an idea of how out-o'-the-way its destination is. Thank the powers that most portals are medium-sized and stay in one place, but there be plenty of 'em that can be moved, like barrels, wardrobes, or mirrors, and others that change on their own

Just finding one portal usually doesn't finish the job. They ain't many portals that're static, and lots o' times they have conditions that make travelin' back and forth more difficult. For starters, portals can be either one-way or two-way, which means ye may have to find another portal in order to find yer way back. Even portals that're two-way oftentimes have different keys to open each side o' the portal. And if that ain't enough, portals are either temporary, permanent, or shiftin'. Most portals be temporary, appearin' and disappearin' at what seems like random times, or changin' their keys every once in a while. Permanent portals are hard to find, and're jealously guarded by those who want to keep 'em under their thumb. Lastly, some portals don't disappear but just move about between locations. These shiftin' portals move one or both o' their ends to other locations based on some pattern, though a lot o' them seem to shift in ways that make no sense. Shiftin' portals can be pretty dicey if ye don't know where ye're goin' to be comin' out.

## ***Discovering the Key***

Almost all portals need some sort o' key to open 'em up. This key can be just about anythin' a cutter can think of: a word or sayin', a gesture (like waving your hands), a thought or emotion, a musical note, the castin' of a particular spell (which is then sucked up by the portal without any harm), or the channelin' of divine energy. Many portal keys are part of a general group such as a flower, a bottle, or a broken sword. Others may be more specific such as a particular amulet, or an object the wielder considers to be junk. A few rare portals may be set to open only at certain times during the day or year, or only to someone wit' a particular name or alignment. The kind o' portal key is oftentimes related to the portal's destination, but that ain't always the way o' things.

The most obvious way to figure out a portal key is the ol' "trial and error" method, but it's not the best way to go about things. This only has a chance to work if ye got some idea about where the portal goes and think the key's connected to that. Spellslingers, on the other hand, are oftentimes given the job of learnin' portal keys by castin' divination spells like *analyze portal* or *legend lore*. These bloods can make a good livin' sellin' their skills and knowledge to planewalkers or catalogers. Most planars, 'specially in Sigil, learn portal keys through word o' mouth or exchanges of information. The cost of a portal key can vary wildly. How much does the physical key itself cost? How few're portals to the place in question? How much does the operator of the portal want to keep traffic down? How much is it worth to ye, berk? For portals that see common use, a portal key (whether 'tis an object, action, or mental concept) will generally cost from 5 to 100 gold pieces.

Once you have the right key, turning the portal on is normally pretty simple. Usually the person wit' the key just walks through the portal, and it activates when the key passes through. Sometimes the key's gotta be used a certain way, though, like holding it in the air or tapping it against the portal itself. It don't matter whether the portal is bein' activated on purpose or not; if someone happens to carry a portal key on 'em, or otherwise triggers the portal, it opens, oftentimes catching the person 'fore they realize it.

## ***The Other Side***

When it opens, a portal crackles wit' energy and sometimes lets out a burst of air or other effects. Sometimes the portal's destination can be seen as a dim outline once the portal is on. Unless something special opened it up, the portal stays open for a full six seconds 'fore it shuts down. Usually, all ye have to do is put any part o' yer body into the portal, and ye'll get sucked through. But if the portal's two-way and ye have the key for both sides then ye can move freely in and out o' the portal. So ye can poke yer head through and peer around, for instance. If there's something solid blockin' the other side o' the portal, it won't open.

Any planewalker'll tell ye that knowin' what's on the other side o' the portal is the most important knowledge ye can hold. No point in going through it if ye don't know where it goes, unless ye're just burnin' up wit' curiosity. Usually ye know somethin' o' where the portal leads 'fore ye pass through it, either by using *analyze portal* or by lannin' it from whoever gave ye the portal key. Some planewalkers have developed the ability to sense where a portal goes

to and even if there's a natural danger on the other side. The best way to handle planar hazards is wit' spells, but some devices have been made to use on specific planes.

### *The Exceptions*

Well, this is the multiverse we're speakin' of, and there's always somethin' that breaks the rules. There be portals that don't need keys, that're always open, or don't even need to be in bounded spaces. The easiest examples to point to be the portals along the Great Road, the World Ash, or Mount Olympus. And o' course the ways portals work may be completely different on certain prime worlds or other obscure regions o' the multiverse.

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#### USING THE CITY OF DOORS

Sigil hangs above the Spire like an apple just out o' reach from those who want to grab it. Many have lusted to control the city and its portals, but it knows only one mistress. Luckily, She makes sure no one gains too much control o'er her doors. I've spent a lot o' time in this city. In the old days, I stayed just long enough to get to where I was going next. Now, it makes a better place than most to rest these creaking bones and talk wit' travelers by a warm fire.

Adventurers and traders could hardly find a better place to set up shop than the Cage. Nowhere else in all the known planes gives as much access to the rest of existence. Though Sigil's portals may not always drop a cutter off in the exact spot that body wants, they can get close enough. Even parties that don't call kip in the city oftentimes pass through, finding that the shortest path between two points goes through the Cage. In fact, there ain't many planar explorers that don't make use o' the City of Doors in some way.

Though Sigil is full o' portals to the other planes, getting to use 'em is another matter. Whilst even the Guvners can't keep track o' just how many portals exist at any one time, 'tis the opinion o' most bloods that nearly all portals in the Cage are under someone's control, be it a guild, faction, or random basher. Usually, such portals be on property owned by the controller. But sometimes, the portal ain't under direct ownership, but the location and portal key needed be such a closely kept secret no one else is goin' to be able to use it, at least 'til someone finds a way to make it worth tellin'. If a cutter's a member of the controllin' group, they might have easy access to the portal, or at least for some small cost. If not, the cutter will probably need to provide a garnish of some sort (jink, favors, what-have-ye). That being said, if there's one thing that'll get ye flayed, 'tis tryin' to tax the use o' the Lady's portals. That business has been punished so harshly by Her Serenity that only the barmiest ever try it anymore.

Not all Sigil's portals're controlled, though. New portals appear oftentimes enough; maybe they're products o' the Lady's whim or some cosmic fluke. Some o' these vanish just as quickly, though others stick around. Shiftn' portals are also really hard t'keep track of, though the Guvners still log what details they can in their tomes.



Of course, before getting' access to a portal, ye have to find one that suits yer needs. Luckily, that's normally the easiest part, as there be more than enough bashers makin' a livin' off findin' portals and tradin' chant on 'em. Askin' around in any o' Sigil's pubs will get ye a few recommendations to those in the know, who will likely be just as willing to point ye in the right direction; for a minor fee, o' course. This can be 'specially handy if ye're looking for a little-known portal, or mayhap one less public. On the other hand, it ain't guaranteed that what ye pay for is legit. There be plenty out there looking to bob would-be planewalkers. If'n ye're looking for something' more reliable, there be a number o' businesses that sell portal information that live by their reputation, with the Guild of Doorsnoops bein' one o' the biggest.

In the wake o' the Faction War, the Lady of Pain shut the portals down completely, then scrambled 'em, a time we speak of nowadays as the Tempest o' Doors. Not all portals reopened, and those that did oftentimes had new destinations or new keys. Over the last five years, things have gotten more regular, but many bashers are now leery of usin' Sigil's portals. 'Tis a sad thing when the planewalkers can't rely on the City o' Doors. An era has passed us by, but all sweet grass turns brown in the end, I suppose. Now most cutters put more stock in the planar pathways and other forms o' travel, which means Sigil is a bit less crowded and no longer guaranteed to have access to every bit o' planar merchandise. But even yet, travel through the Cage is still very high, and the lessened demand for portals has forced businesses to provide cheaper rates for their services.

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#### THE GATE-TOWNS

Sigil's not the only anthill that has important portals. Around the "edges" o' the Outlands lay the gate-towns, one for each o' the Outer Planes. These burgs are shadows o' the planes they are connected to, culturally an' philosophically. The land within and around each gate-town takes on the features o' the plane 'tis linked to, making them a good way for a basher to get a handle on what to expect on the plane itself. Even more important, each gate-town has a gate to the Outer Plane 'tis coupled wit', usually large enough for caravans to cross, making 'em the main road for merchants. The destinations of most of these gates be well known (though they have been known to move), and guides can be hired in most o' the gate-towns, which is especially handy for some o' the less welcomin' planes, ye'd best believe me. Don't trust 'em, but so long as they be willin' to go through a portal first, ye're probably safe on the other end.

Gaining access to the gates ain't as easy as ye might expect. Whilst they're always open and don't need portal keys, in some o' the gate-towns, the folks that live there keep a tight grip on passage. The bureaucrats of Automata make all potential gate users fill out forms, whilst Tradegate's gate is actually owned by a fine and worthy bariaur named the Master Trader, who must be found and negotiated with for passage. Some o' the other burgs, like Glorium, Sylvania, or Torch have gates that are a little more difficult to find or physically get to, though no one stops a body from trying. But most of the gate-towns don't have any rules or physical barriers keeping others from using their gate. So long as sods don't make trouble, they can use the gates all they want.

O' course, when traveling through the gate-towns, any canny blood is goin' to be mindful o' that burg's own personal quest. Y'see, the petitioners o' the gate-towns are made up o' sods who held a particular philosophy but didn't quite measure up, and didn't end up on their proper plane. From then on the petitioners o' that town are devoted to overcomin' their own stumbling blocks and getting' their burg to become more and more like the nearby plane until the entire gate-town up and moves there. This is good for the petitioners so they can set about trying to merge with their plane proper, and 'tis good for the plane's original inhabitants 'cause it means more territory and followers. O' course, this means that it'll be a while 'fore folks find where the gate has moved and a new town is built, but 'tis not a recurrin' problem 'cause these shifts take a *long* while, what with opposin' forces interferin' all the time and most o' the burg's mortal residents preferrin' their homes where they are. Since there tain't too many petitioners to begin wit', their desires are normally ignored by more influential bloods. The most recent crossin' was when the gate-town of the Abyss, Plague-Mort, crossed and was replaced by a burg known as Blight just two years ago.

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#### ELEMENTAL VORTICES

Portals ain't the only way to get around, though. One of the other ways is usin' an elemental vortex, though planars rarely make use of 'em. See, a vortex usually appears on the Prime connectin' to an Inner Plane, though sometimes vortices connect one Inner plane wit' another. Near as anyone can tell, vortices are natural holes in the fabric between the planes. These vortices usually last forever and stay nice an' stable. They don't need a key neither, but most smart cutters try to find another way to get where they need to go. Why go to all the trouble of finding another way, when these vortices seem so handy? Well, the Prime ends of most vortices tend to form in places where there's lots an' lots of the elemental stuff that the vortex leads to. So, a vortex to the Elemental Plane of Fire could be locked deep in the heart of a volcano, while one that leads to the Elemental Plane of Water may be in the deepest reaches of an ocean. But in spite of all these dangers, elemental vortices are many times the safest ways (if ye've got the right elemental protections) to get from the Prime to the Inner Planes and back.

Findin' the vortex ain't hard, they show up through *detect magic* and the like, and skilled folk can sense 'em. So, first things first: find a way to survive the element itself. Use a spell, magic item, or some other sort of adaptin', and then away ye go. Easy as gallopin'. Ye just get yerself down into the elemental matter, deeper an' deeper until ye're all the way under it. The only thing around ye now is that one element. At that moment, ye leave the Prime behind and find yerself in the Inner Plane. There the vortex can't really be made out from the surroundings, though its elemental properties are actually a bit less strong than the rest of the plane.

The most common an' stable elemental vortices connect to the four main Elemental Planes. Vortices that get a body to the Para- an' Quasielemental Planes are much harder to come by and ain't as reliable. Temporary vortices to Lightning may open up durin' really violent thunderstorms, and vortices to Ice may appear at the snowbound poles o' prime worlds on occasion. I've even seen Para- an' Quasielemental vortices muscle their way in and take over other permanent elemental vortices. This one time, I was headin' for Fire and next thing I know I'm treadin' through the stiflin' Plane of Dust. I was prepared for bein' singed, not

chokin' on all that dust. Use a vortex if ye need to, cutter, but be warned.

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## AS+RAL CØNDUI+S

The Astral Plane offers up many ways to go to and fro. The Astral is a sort o' bridge between the Material Plane and the Outer Planes. Sure, there are strange beasts, horrible astral thought storms and the inhospitable githyanki to make any trip through the Silver Void hazardous, but it still sees lots o' traffic. Spells like *astral projection* or powers such as *astral caravan* allow a body to get onto the plane while spells like *dimension door* and *teleport* use the astral to travel without actually physically moving between two spots. Those are just some of the most common methods of using the Astral.

A lesser known route is by usin' astral conduits, which'll take you from the Astral to 'bout anywhere on the Planes. They're strange things; they twist an' turn throughout the Silvery Void like wormholes in a piece o' fruit. Now, their ends are invisible, but they don't need keys, so all a body has to do is go inside and then away ye go, faster than a Taker grabbin' for the last piece of pie. Travelin' down one o' these things feels like goin' through a portal, but really, that's not how it is. Ye're actually movin' down the tube, but so quick it seems the trip takes no time at all.

So, easy to use, but a cutter needs to know it's there first, and for that they'll need to be able to see it, with a spell like *true seeing*, p'rhaps. Now, where does it lead? Well, unless ye want to take yer chances, divination magic will give ye an idea. So, ye're smart, you can guess what's comin' next, right? Hard to find but useful? Can ye hear the jink changin' hands? Most spivs in Sigil have it "in with a basher, who's in with a cutter" who can give the chant about astral conduits. Also, those bookish Guvners have all sorts o' notes written down that'll help find conduits. There's more conduits than there's pages, though, and more turn up all the time. They tend to roam about too, so make sure yer source is up to date.

Why do they exist? Why do planars need one more way to get around? Well, seems the conduits may really be there for another reason altogether. They've got plenty of other uses. Firstly, astral conduits are how the planes of belief and the Prime Material Plane talk to each other. Prayers and devotions from mortal bashers go from the Prime to the Outer Planes through the conduit network and all the spell energy that deities hand out to their faithful comes back that way. When a sod dies, the spirit goes through the astral conduit network to whatever afterlife they've earned. 'Cause of all this, many cutters speculate that the conduits were put there on purpose, and that new conduits come about the same way. Only makes sense. And seeing as conduits mature with time, some berks go so far as to say that the conduits themselves are alive. The life stages are broken down to young, when it drifts about and only works one way; then mature, where it tends to stay in one place, moving about every few centuries, and works both ways; and old an' dodderin'. Then 'tis really dangerous, as it moves around from plane to plane without any way of tellin' where 'twill end up. And finally, they just die.

Even the stable ones can be treacherous, though. Sometimes, a group traveling t'gether down a conduit gets split up, ending up in different places. And some say this can happen to the spirits of the dead, too, and the poor sods end up in the wrong afterlife. Then there's some critters that prey on the conduits. See, while the ends of a conduit are invisible, that's not the way 'tis in the Astral. The conduit tubes can be seen twistin' through the Silvery Void, and a cutter can tell when a body's travelin' down 'em. The githyanki know some spells that can tear open conduits, spilling the contents out into the Astral Plane, and these spells have made their way into other hands. Then there's the astral vampire (h'rak'va in the githyanki tongue) which can pierce a conduit with its long proboscis and suck out the life force of hapless travelers. Some berks figure these dangers ain't enough, and tell tales of another beastie called a conduit cleaver, which has hundreds of arms ending in cleavers, and chops through conduits with its bladed limbs just for fun. Me, I'm too old for bogey stories.

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### C ⊕ L ⊕ R P ⊕ ⊕ L S

Handier than conduits are color pools, as long as a cutter can get to the Astral in the first place. Color pools are holes in the fabric of the Astral. Yep, that's right, more holes in reality. Startin' to sound like there are more holes in existence than there be in a halfling's socks, don't it? Anyways, color pools are like doorways that go from the Astral to any of the planes it connects to. They look like colored disks that can only be seen from one side. Even though they can't be seen from one side, both sides work, so astral travelers who ain't paying attention can tumble right through a color pool 'fore they even know it. Color pools work a lot like the colored disks that are all over Mount Olympus and Yggdrasil. Graybeards wag their bone-boxes about what color pools are, but most planewalkers are just happy to get off a plane infested with githyanki. They don't care that the exit is a blandin' of "liquid reality" and "astral ectoplasm".

Color pools are everywhere in the Silvery Void and even the greenest rube can find one. Just think about going to a color pool that'll take ye to the plane ye want, and ye'll start driftin' in that direction. Now, ye can't choose where the pool is goin' to take ye on the plane in question, so ye have to take yer chances. And keep this in mind: despite what some knight o' the post in the Hive Ward may tell ye, there is no set code to the colors of the pools. One portal to Celestia may be bright blue whilst another is blood red. 'Tis much better to follow yer mind than yer eyes whilst searching for color pools.

Most color pools are one-way portals, so's ye can get off the Astral, but ye can't get back that way. A cutter that steps into one is swallowed by the pool and appears, as if from nowhere, on the other side. The color pool's exit on the plane is invisible. Now, just so there'll be an exception I wager, every great once in a while, two-way pools come into being. These color pools allow a body to go onto and off o' the Astral. The entrance back to the Astral is still invisible, though, so mark ye well where ye came out.

Now, the planar pathways, they see much more travel than about anything else. Why? 'Cause they're pretty easy to walk or ride down. They got well-mapped routes and trails and lots o' connections to different planes. They ain't the quickest, but they're great if a body likes the scenic route. See, unlike the instant travel offered by portals and the like, the great planar paths are roads, staircases, waterways or such that a basher needs to actually travel to get from plane to plane. On some of 'em, the change from plane to plane is so gradual ye might not even notice, while on others, there be portals an' doorways that connect the path to other planes. 'Cause the pathways are actual physical locations, they each have their own hazards, inhabitants, and special laws required for traversal. There's six generally recognized planar paths, and these be the Great Road, the River Styx, the River Oceanus, Mount Olympus, Yggdrasil, and the Infinite Staircase.

### ***The Great Road***

The Great Road is so great, it's moved beyond bein' a real road into what a graybeard would call the 'archetype', and what most of us unlearned sods would call the 'idea', of a road. As most anyone knows, the Outer Planes form a ring. You've got yer Upper Planes, and yer Lower, and then you got those ones in between. Now, if a body is of a mind to, he or she can go from plane to plane, following the ring. This is known as walkin' the Great Road, and every planewalker should do it at least once. At least part o' the way, 'cause walking through every plane would take ye a few centuries. Even the modrons take shortcuts when they're on their march. On each plane, there's an archway at either end. Yeah, I know planes don't have ends, and that they go on forever. I still have a workin' brainbox! Just keep up with me here, aye? Imagine there's an end to the planes, otherwise ye'll never get anywheres. These archways are a lot like the doorways in Sigil, and they hook the plane up with the two planes on either side of it. If a basher looks through the arch, the other plane can be seen on the other side. Just step through that arch to get to the other plane. There's usually some kind of town or fort around the portal. If ye're in the Upper Planes, ye can buy some wares or have a mug and a rest. In the Lower Planes, you might find yerself the newest spear holder in a Blood War regiment. The fiends make sure an' secure their portals, both to guard against their foes and to spring their own attacks.

### ***The River Styx***

Feh, I'd rather go floppin' about the Ditchwater than row a boat down the Styx again. Dangerous, smelly, and I can't remember my first love's name no more. But sometimes, a planewalker might see the need to travel down its chaotic, meanderin' course through the Lower Planes, so I'll tell ye what I know of it. The River Styx connects to the top layer of every Lower Plane and its tributaries connect to lower layers. Its putrid, blood-colored waters steal away a body's memories if ye so much as stick the tip of yer littlest finger in the sludge. If ye're so unlucky as to fall in completely, ye'll find yer very sense of self slippin' away like smoke in the Foundry. Walkin' along its banks ain't much better, 'cause there's corpses and pointy rocks every which way, and the banks don't take much to collapse and spill a sod into the waters. And I told ye to stay out o' the water, aye? Right, 'cause not only will ye lose all yer memories, but there's horrors in the deeps that keep their wits just fine, and will happily munch on ye.

The river's path can change at a moment's notice, sending travelers over dangerous rapids, impossibly high waterfalls, or directly into the hands o' their enemies. Now, most o' the time, we picture the Outer Planes as a ring, with a Great Road goin' between 'em. Well, the Styx don't make sense that way. Accordin' to it, the planes ain't sittin' cozy side by side. A traveler can go from Acheron to Pandemonium with no in-between stops, or they can travel through every lawful evil plane in their travel from Carceri to the Abyss. Movin' from plane to plane is so gradual that a body'll look about and realize of a sudden that the planes have changed.

Best way to go down the river is to get a ferrymen. Some of 'em are fiends, others are the spirits of the dead, and a rare few are livin' beings putting their sailin' skills to use. Without a ferryman who knows the way around, yer'e liable to get very lost indeed. But just remember this: on the Lower Planes, ye can trust nobody, even if ye've paid cold, hard jink. They'll peel ye and give ye over to an archfiend given the chance. But in spite of that, the Styx sees constant travel. Since it connects all o' the Lower Planes, the Styx is used as the main method of movin' troops about for the Blood War. Other travelers make use o' it, too, 'specially merchants, since portals on the Lower Planes are even more treacherous than the Styx at times. And it never takes a body more than a day to get somewheres.

Several different bein's make kip on or in the Styx. The best known are the silent marraenoloths. These fiends call the yugoloth lord Charon (or Cerlic, depending on which graybeard ye ask) their high-up, and they look like skeletal boatmen shrouded in black cloaks. They sell their services, but they charge a steep price, and they may turn stag if some other cutter has given them a bigger garnish. Besides the marraenoloths, the waters of the Styx are home to all sorts o' fiendish creatures that are unaffected by the Styx water. They either play some part in the Blood War or feed on the tainted memories lost to the churnin' waters.

### ***The River Oceanus***

The bright, cheery mirror o' the foul, depressin' Styx, the River Oceanus winds through the Upper Planes of Elysium, the Beastlands, and Arborea. Its waters are fragrant an' sweet, always carryin' the tranquil nature of its headwaters in Elysium. Oceanus is a well-used trade route between the layers of those planes; ports have been set up all along its banks and trader's boats are always going up an' down it, and travelers can usually find safe passage if they wave around a little jink.

Even though the river goes through the Upper Planes, it can still be dangerous. In a lot o' ways, travelin' down Oceanus is like travelin' down the Styx, just with better scenery and water ye can drink. If berks ain't careful, they might find their selves plunging o'er a big waterfall, crashing o'er white-water rapids, or being made the food of some mammoth sea creature. The river meanders and can't be charted; its course vanishes from time to time only to reappear on a different plane. One moment a body can be lookin' out on the fields of Elysium and then the next see the shores of Arborea and have no idea when the change happened.

The Oceanus is deeper than any cutter can figure, and within it, strange and fantastic creatures live. There's all manner of beasts like ye'd see on the Prime, like dolphins, fish, and

turtles, but it's also home to all kinds of intelligent beasts. And hidden deep in that dark deep there are creatures never seen on any Prime Material world, huge monstrosities that rarely rise to the surface, which suits the bashers livin' and sailin' on the river just fine.

Chant says that the Oceanus has been expanding into the first layer of Ysgard, forming a connection to the homes of the Asgardian pantheon and their followers. Mayhap. There are less likely things, like the Styx flowing into Nessus, the lowest layer o' Baator, but if 'tis happenin', it ain't a stable path yet.

### ***Mount Olympus***

On prime worlds where the powers of the Olympian pantheon are worshipped, the mortals tell tales of a massive mountain their gods call kip. Well, like a few clueless tales, this story's pretty much true. On the Outer Planes there really does exist a towering mountain that links the cases of the Olympian deities, a mountain that makes a safe route for planar travel if'n a blood knows the way of its paths. Mount Olympus connects to Arborea, the Gray Waste, Carceri, Gehenna, and every prime world where the Olympians are worshipped. But most of the gateways can only be used by worshippers of the Olympian pantheon, and unbelievers find their selves stranded on the Gray Waste. But the Olympian powers are some of the most popular out there, so the mountain still sees lots o' hikers.

Travelin' Olympus is like travelin' any other mountain, really; get where ye want by climbin'. Some places, the slope o' the mount is gentle and the climb easy, at others the slopes become rocky cliff faces that can spill berks o'er infinite drops, drop showers of boulders on 'em, or slap 'em about with bitin' winds. The gateways to the other planes look like colorful, freestanding disks, hidden behind rocks an' woods or in deep caverns. A body can't see through 'em, so a basher has to step through to find out where they go. They're usually two-way, so a basher can get back out if 'tis not a plane they're lookin' for. Well, unless they end up in Carceri; that plane's never been one to let berks leave easy. Areas that see lots o' travel have paths carved into them by merchants and caravans to make the trek easier. Great monuments and temples built by mortal and immortal beings alike also dot the landscape, providing a welcome restin' spot for weary travelers, though just like the disks, only the faithful get any hospitality there. These great marble palaces are covered with statues of deities and mortal heroes, and have endless courtyards filled with pretty marble statues, and lovely gardens and orchards. It's all a bit on the showy side, but 'tis nice enough. 'Sides the flocks o' sheep, temples, vineyards and orchards, Olympus has many glades and forests, where fey bashers like satyrs and nymphs are said to cavort around. The path is also guarded by hounds, mountain spirits, and other mystical beasts. Again, it's a nice way to travel around if ye follow the Olympian gods.

### ***Yggdrasil, the Great Tree***

Yggdrasil's a lot like Mount Olympus; 'tis really, really big and connects up wit' all the places important to a particular pantheon, the Asgardians this time. And the World Tree is spoken of on many prime worlds, where followers of the Asgardian pantheon say that the different realms and worlds of existence are cradled in the great ash tree. Mayhap their belief in such a thing made the tree grow, or mayhap they heard stories about it. Either way, Yggdrasil is one of the

main planar pathways. It looks like a massive tree with branches that can be miles around, its bark be silver and flaky, like gray clay, and its leaves're shimmering blue-black ovals.

Ysgard has many connections to the World Tree, as does Hel's realm in the Gray Waste. Loki's realm in Pandemonium has a connection to the World Ash, an' so do scattered points in the Outlands. The site called Pinwheel in Limbo also has a connection to one of the World Tree's routes, though why this be so is dark, 'cause it don't seem to have anythin' to do wit' the Asgardian pantheon.

To get where ye're goin', just walk along the tree and find the right colorful, disk-shaped portals. Lots o' merchants an' planewalkers climb the branches, and 'tis also home to the squirrel-like ratatosk, friendly cutters who can be hired as guides. 'Tis also guarded by eagles, aasimon, yugoloths, and even the legendary dragon Nidhogg who lies at the tree's roots (though he doesn't so much guard as vent his frustration on any poor sod who comes by). Gravity on Yggdrasil goes towards the center of the branch that a basher is standin' on and moving from branch to branch can be unsettlin' when gravity moves over to the new branch almost instantly. Any poor sod who falls off a limb ends up in the Astral Plane, and'll have to find another way. The portals on the tree move around a bit as the tree sways in the Astral winds, but trips across Yggdrasil almost never take more than a week.

### ***The Infinite Staircase***

There's one last important planar pathway – the Infinite Staircase. The Infinite Staircase is what it sounds like: a set of stairs that stretches beyond all horizons, takin' a cutter to the depths o' the Hells or to the heights o' the Heavens. 'Tis a spiralin' silver staircase with ivy hangin' from it here an' there. No support can be seen for the Staircase and along it are platforms o' wood or marble, some straight, some curvin', and each one leadin' to doors or even more stairways. The platforms are of many makes, from small doorsteps with a wooden door to large platforms that stretch out o' sight wit' yawnin' archways.

Openin' one o' these doors, it opens into a quiet, out-o'-the-way area somewhere on the planes, coming out a door that the locals pay no mind. It could be in an abandoned building, or in the corner of a dusty basement, though usually the door takes a planewalker to an inhabited burg o' some sort. So, what kinds of planes are these? Any kind. The Staircase connects to any place in the multiverse where creativity and imagination springs up. 'Tain't as pleasant as it first sounds, rube. This could mean a trip to a pain garden in Baator or a potter's shed on the Prime. Bloods can usually get a feel for the type of place a door goes to by the surroundin's and the materials 'tis made of. I once stumbled across a door of stretched, humanoid skin painted with bloody symbols, on a shadowy landing wit' the soft sound o' moans comin' from somewhere just beyond knowin'. I was sure *that* weren't what I was lookin' for. Hoofed it up another staircase right quick. Most doors ain't so obvious, but there's always some clue.

Climbers of the Infinite Staircase may have a trip ahead o' them. No graybeard knows how many doors there be, though many have tried to find out. If they have a specific door they're heading for, it may be days away. That's a lot of walking up or down, and the Staircase ain't



kind to berks who cheat with magic. Fliers who stay close to the stairs do all right, but if they try to take a shortcut to another set o' stairs or landing, they're likely to get sucked into a fold in space and spit out onto the planes somewhere. Teleporters risk the same danger, as does anyone who jumps, dives, or is pushed off the stairs.

Those walking the Staircase may meet the occasional fellow traveler or see no one for days. The Planewalker's Guild has taken over a massive landing as their kip high up on the Staircase, and I can tell ye that a body can do worse than joinin' up with those bloods. A fine bunch, interested in nothin' so much as learnin' the paths o' the planes. Travelers might also run into the lillends, servants o' Selûne, the moon goddess. The Staircase starts in the goddess's palace, and she takes an interest in who's usin' it. If'n the planewalkers have a close relationship to creativity, chaos, and good, they may get help from the lillends, mostly by getting directions or warnings o' dangers. If the lillends feel the planewalkers themselves are one o' those dangers, they won't be shy about nickin' the "intruders".

The Staircase is one o' the most useful of all planar pathways, but planar travelers often choose other routes. I've always found it a great way to get about, like the City o' Doors with all the different kinds o' portals, but for many berks, 'tis real lonely. It can be mighty tiring to travel the Staircase, and caravans are right out. The other planar pathways don't provide as many destinations, but the ones they do are mapped out much better. But the truly adventurous, or the just plain lost, can be found walkin' up and down the silver steps, openin' doors that lead to worlds beyond the ones they know.

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#### USING MAGIC

Canny bloods don't trek around the Great Ring without some form of protection to help them out against all the dangers the planes are host to. Planewalkers usually get chummy with a spellcaster or two, if their own talents don't go that way, if only because such cutters tend to have ways to survive new environments. Of course, most bashers also use potions and other enchanted items made to give their bearers protection. After all, creatures have made their homes in just about every dank corner of the planes, buildin' communities in every bizarre and hazardous situation ye can think of. While some creatures're naturally able to exist in those spots, many planars do so only with the help of magic. And though many o' us have other talents, the canny blood learns to respect what magic can offer. If not, ye'd best stay home.

On the other hand, a lot of the Clueless come to think that magic is the end-all-be-all o' planewalking, and that 'tis all a basher needs to get around. But if everythin' were that simple, we'd all put away our weapons and pull out some dusty tome, wouldn't we? Truth is, magic ain't nearly as reliable as it is on most prime worlds. Spellslingers have to keep in mind planar cosmology so they don't try castin' spells that rely on the Astral Plane in the Inner Planes. That arrogant look won't stay on their faces long when that important spell fizzles. What's worse, some parts o' the multiverse make certain type of spells more difficult or impossible to cast, meaning survival depends on old-fashioned, sweaty methods.

### Variant: Planar Environments Affecting Spells

Some DMs may feel that magic trivializes certain aspects of planewalking. Climbing the frigid peaks of Ysgard isn't as much of an adventure when using *endure elements*, nor is reaching a distant realm difficult when using a *teleport* spell. There are a variety of ways the DM can choose to have the planes respond to these spells, though the spells themselves become a bit more unreliable in doing so. *Teleport* and similar spells may not be as accurate on more morphic (i.e. chaotic planes), and may fail altogether when attempting to enter some realms or sacred areas as the powers there might wish to prevent outsiders from finding them. When in regions of the multiverse that have particularly nasty environments as part of the plane's overall philosophy, spellcasters may find spells such as *endure elements* and *attune form* gradually being eroded, their duration shortened or even requiring concentration to maintain after a certain point. Players should eventually be able to overcome these restrictions or be able to find specialized spells that work properly on the particular plane. In addition, spellcasters should always detect the latter complications when casting a spell and magical items shouldn't be affected, as there's no cause for invalidating hard-earned gold. The three most important things to keep in mind are not to drown players in tediousness, don't make them feel like their powers are useless, and be consistent. With that in mind, eventually players will reach a point where hopping from plane to plane is a simple task, and it *should* be, if only to allow them to deal with more interesting matters.

With that in mind, some places should never be accessible by normal spellcraft, including mysterious places such as the seventh layer of Mount Celestia or the ninth layer of Baator. Whatever forces hold sway there make sure no one can barge in uninvited (or leave without permission). Nor can one *plane shift* to the Ordial Plane, if it truly exists. Some destinations simply require journeys more taxing than magic.

But properly prepared magic often makes the difference between a dead party and a live one. Spellcasters worth their scrolls will allow for the basics. Have some spells to make light with, since not all planes have much in the way of their own sources of illuminatin'. *Tongues* is real handy when talking to the weird bashers most planewalkers run into. Lastly, *avoid planar effects* (or better yet, *attune form*) is a handy all-around spell to keep casters and their friends alive.

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## THE ⊕U+ER PLANES

### Hajzeek Gnarl-Hoof

The Outer Planes are created by the thoughts, hopes, dreams, an' beliefs o' the Prime. While some might want to argue this point, the vast majority don't for good reason. Each plane represents an aspect o' mortal existence an' belief. This ranges from the depths o' depravity in the Abyss, to the heights o' moral an' ethical purity in Mount Celestia. Ye may notice that some o' 'em planes are even what yon prime would call heaven, hell, or the afterlife. An' since these planes are built up out o' those very beliefs, for all intents an' purposes, they're right.

That's what a petitioner on any o' the Outer Planes is after all, a dead mortal soul gone to their last repose.

The Outer Planes are arranged in what we think o' as a giant wheel. The Great Wheel, in fact. The planes are positioned side by side around it, placin' similar plane beside similar plane until one comes right back around where one came from. A unity o' rings. Two things, the Outlands an' the Great Road, reinforce this wheel arrangement. The Outlands are the center o' the Wheel, a plane o' true neutrality where its 'edges', an' I use the word lightly, reach the borders o' the other Outer Planes, at which point the Outlands begin to surrender somethin' o' its flavor to its neighbors. These points are built up wit' burgs, the gate-towns, which have established 'emselves on the inter-planar trade. Secondly, the Great Road is a planar highway that journeys throughout the Wheel an' is one o' the few ways a basher can simply walk from one plane to the next. The trip is long an' quite a pain from what I understand, so be damned if ye'll see me walkin' it. Both the Outlands an' the Great Road, though, agree on the order in which the planes exist around the Wheel.

It's worthwhile to note for some o' ye who're from the Prime Material, that the Outer Planes don't 'lay beside' the Ethereal Plane. They just don't touch at any point what-so-ever. How do we know this? Simple: any spell that relies on the Ethereal bein' around fails miserably on the Outer Planes. That means no *ethereal jaunt*, *blink*, or other such thing. Once ye get a better grasp o' what each plane is ye'll see why this makes sense, but for now just keep that in mind in yer travels.

## Organization of the Great Wheel

There're a lot o' planes out there, an' to a clueless it can be a little hard to sort 'em all out. Folks look for a pattern in a lot o' things, even things that don't necessarily have one, 'cause it's easier to remember that way. Luckily the Outer Planes do have patterns to 'em, so they're easier for the clueless to know basically what they're about.

The **Planes of Law** are those lands tied to some notion o' order, whether for the benefit o' society or 'cause o' some inherent rules governing existence. The Planes of Law include Mount Celestia, Arcadia, Mechanus, Acheron, an' Baator.

The **Planes of Chaos** espouse the ideals o' freedom, individuality, change, an' independence from the control o' others. The planes 'emselves manifest this ethos an' tend to be considerably more dynamic an' unrestrained compared to other lands. The Planes of Chaos are Arborea, Ysgard, Limbo, Pandemonium, an' the Abyss.



The **Planes of Conflict** are caught between the conflictin' values o' order an' freedom, society an' individuality. Each tries to find its own balance, though none exists in perfect harmony. These planes include the Outlands, Bytopia, Elysium, the Beastlands, Gehenna, the Grey Waste, an' Carceri.

Though most planars rely upon the previous categories, primes tend to slice things along the axis o' good an' evil.

The **Upper Planes** are associated wit' the concept o' good an' are generally what a clueless means when they're talkin' about heaven (unless their idea o' heaven is seriously skewed). The Upper Planes include Mount Celestia, Bytopia, Elysium, the Beastlands, an' Arborea.

Opposite the Upper Planes, the **Lower Planes** are the various hells, a point even most planars wouldn't argue. They're tinged in at least some fashion wit' evil. The Lower Planes are Baator, Gehenna, the Grey Wastes, Carceri, an' the Abyss.

Between heaven an' hell, the **Neutral Planes** are the lands either less concerned wit' or devoted to some balance o' good an' evil. The Neutral Planes are Arcadia, Mechanus, Acheron, Ysgard, Limbo, Pandemonium, an' the Outlands itself.

## Planar Alignment

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The outer planes are associated strongly with the beliefs and alignments of the Prime. As a result these planes may have a significant effect on those whose alignments do not match that of the plane. These affects stack should a character fall under more than one affect.

Mildly aligned:            Those of *opposing* alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks.

Strongly aligned:        Those *not of* this alignment are at a -2 to Cha, Int, Wis checks.

### Variant: Alternate Alignment Penalties

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DMs may wish to ignore this rule, to encourage characters to explore planes they may otherwise avoid for the detrimental effects. The DM is encouraged to develop her own penalties for the planes as well, to reflect the local atmosphere of the planar environment.



Speakin' o' the Outlands, let's begin our little tour there, shall we? The Outlands are in the smack center o' the Great Wheel. They represent complete neutrality, what some o' the clerical bent would call 'true neutral'. They're also the holdin' spot for all those things that don't yet fit anywhere else in the Outer Planes; that which is not yet well-defined or which defies bein' placed neatly within any one plane's basis o' belief. Since it touches on all o' the Outer Planes, the Outlands are one o' the major planes o' transit, an' it is through this plane that ye'll see armies march, merchant caravans pass, an' many a planewalker make their winterin' quarters.

Not that they need to 'winter' at all really, the Outlands don't have much to speak o' when it comes to regular weather or even sunlight. Like Sigil, the light in the Outlands dims an' brightens on a regular schedule, but there is no apparent sun as the source o' it. The environment o' any particular place in the Outlands tends to reflect the environment o' the nearest planar contact. As an example, near Elysium the land is nice an' green an' fertile. Near, say, the Abyss, ye'll have never seen a harsher more desolate an' unfriendly expanse o' land. The Outlands can give ye an example o' most any type o' land ye'd see on the Prime as ye make yer way around it, so it's best to have a rough idea o' what manner o' plane is closest to where ye're goin' so ye can be prepared for nice or nasty environments.

The Outlands are constantly growin' an' fadin'. Remember what I said about belief formin' reality within the Outer Planes? Well, the Outlands are the clearest example o' it. Where they border the other planes—at the gate-towns—if the area there gets too much like the other plane, it'll just slide on over. One day there will be a town in the Outlands, the next day there won't. What determines a slide? Usually it's the strength o' the local belief, though in the case o' gate-towns to the Abyss, usually it's 'cause a tanar'ri army came rumblin' through an' killed every other poor sod livin' there. Truth is, most petitioners in the gate-towns are *tryin'* to get their little burg to shift, they just haven't figured out what they're doin' wrong. Eventually they tumble to the dark o' it, though, an' so the Outlands seems to be constantly losin' little bits an' pieces o' itself to the rest o' the Outer Planes as the belief strengthens.

### ***The Hinterlands***

In a similar manner though, the Outlands is gainin' ground as other Outer Planes lose bits o' 'emselves, an' as the Hinterlands o' the Outlands keep growin'. The Hinterlands are the lands beyond the gate-towns, an' as far as the rest o' the planes are concerned, they're one big giant question mark. It is in this area that one finds everything that just doesn't souse into any other category. The mysterious, the unknown, an' the hard to define. Some think it's where our beliefs break down. Space an' time become wild, an' places o' the past mingle wit' those o' the future. It may be where the planes as we know 'em cease to exist, givin' way to nothingness.

Another common theory is that it's where the *true* ideas o' the Outlands reside, those concepts that are distinct an' powerful yet can be turned to any purpose, good or evil, lawful or chaotic. Picture a field o' mirrors, a tower o' eternally ringin' bells, towns devoted to the meanings o' a single word, streams o' colors, an' so forth. Perhaps the powers o' the Hinterlands are embodiments o' mortal archetypes, those models that we empower wit' our associated beliefs

in ‘em: the Mother, the King, the Philosopher, or the Planewalker. Recognized by the collective minds o’ the multiverse, it seems fittin’ that such ideas would live in a place that is distinct yet ill-defined an’ obscure.

Travel in the Hinterlands is probably the best example o’ travel by belief in the Outer Planes. The Hinterlands defy mappin’, an’ one day’s travel may find ye in a place where it takes four days to get back to where ye started. The land shifts, an’ between a glance at yer friend (don’t travel without a buddy system, ok? I’d like to see ye back again, ye know) ye’ll find the nice mountain valley ye were travelin’ along has transmuted into a seaside beach path. The Hinterlands is a fun, if extremely confusin’, journey. But ye can generally get where ye’re goin’ if ye know where it is ye’re aimin’ for. It may take a day, a week or longer, but ye’ll get there. As for gettin’ back; no matter how far out into the Hinterlands ye’ve traveled, if ye set yer sights on returnin’ to the Ringlands it’ll take no less than one day an’ no more than three. Myself, I say there’s a lot of very dangerous and very odd things out there and unless y’crossin’ my palm with a hefty amount of jink, you’d best find someone else to take you on a tour.

### ***The Ringlands***

While the Hinterlands stretch beyond the gate-towns, the area between ‘em is called the Ringlands. This is a gigantic circle o’ land, about 2400 miles in diameter which forms the known Outlands. Therein are divine realms, mortal towns an’ kingdoms, monstrous dens, merchant roads, an’ o’ course, the gate-towns ‘emselves. It doesn’t feature as many unique planar features as the other Outer Planes, an’ instead runs the gamut o’ terrain found on the Prime Material (not that such environments can’t be interestin’ an’ deadly, too).

The residents o’ the Ringlands are a fairly mixed lot, some choosin’ to not devote ‘emselves to any particular philosophy an’ others actively servin’ their notion o’ Balance in any way they can. Petitioners o’ the Outlands have a bad reputation for their tendency to swin’ back an’ forth, followin’ a good deed wit’ an evil one, in order to maintain their neutrality. That’s just a small minority, though, as most o’ ‘em just want to serve their power or, in the case o’ those near the gate-towns, merge wit’ the plane o’ their desire. Dead souls aside, there are lots o’ folk who make kip in the Outlands cause they see a profit to be had in the communities along the valuable tradin’ routes or who fancy the idea o’ buildin’ their own societies where the gods are less likely to interfere.

What gives the Ringlands their name is the ol’ concentric ring formation o’ the land. Leadin’ up to the Spire in the center, at a width o’ about 100 miles give or take - they move - are a series o’ rings. Each ring steadily degrades the use o’ magic within its boundaries, startin’ wit’ the most powerful spells first. This even happens to the spells that some bloods can cast as naturally as breathin’, an’ the powers o’ the mind wielded by psions. It can also be quite annoyin’ when a *teleport* misfires an’ lands ye close enough to the Spire to prevent ye from teleportin’ to where ye wanted to go, meanin’ ye have a quite obnoxious walk ahead o’ ye. More importantly for some folks (like the Athar), the strength o’ the gods ‘emselves begin to fail as they get closer to the Spire. Oh, they’re still powers an’ should be respected, but they start to get to where they can’t throw lightning at ye or blow ye up by thinkin’ it. All things

considered, this does make the Outlands a great place to hold a meetin' if ye don't trust the other side.

Now, the way magic works is odd. Ye would think the weakest spells were the ones to go first, but that's just not so. It's the highest power ones that go first, like magic itself is runnin' out o' juice to power the most powerful o' spells the closer ye get to the Spire. The effect starts just within the gate-towns, an' covers even those magics bandied about by archmages (who really ought to be out puttin' 'emselves to some good use instead o' tryin' t' prove somethin' on the Outlands). Where the rings 'emselves are places is a little fuzzy, as the Outlands shift around often enough that one finds it hard to measure exactly where one ring begins an' the next ends without just walkin' every few feet an' tryin' to cast a spell. It's not like anyone's walked round the Spire nine times wit' a paintbrush to draw a line. So, the best we have is an estimate o' distance.

### The Rings of The Outlands

<i>Impeded spells:</i>		<i>Require a Spellcraft check of DC 35 to successfully cast the spell.</i>			
<i>Limited spells:</i>		<i>Spells cannot be cast (as if the caster is within an antimagic field).</i>			
Ring	Approx. Distance from the Spire	Impeded	Limited	Other Aspects of the Spire's Power	
Hinterlands	1200+ mi	-	-	-	
-	1100 mi	9th level	-	-	
9th	1000 mi	8th level	-	-	
8th	900 mi	7th level	9th level	Creature gain immunity to poison.	
7th	800 mi	6th level	8th level	Psionic and spell-like abilities cease to function. (3.5: Psi-like and spell-like, cease to function.)	
6th	700 mi	5th level	7th level	Positive and negative energy can no longer be channeled.	
5th	600 mi	4th level	6th level	Supernatural abilities cease to function.	
4th	500 mi	3rd level	5th level	The astral is no longer coterminous.	
3rd	400 mi	2nd level	4th level	Divine powers of demi-deities and lower annulled.	
2nd	300 mi	all spells	3rd level	Divine powers of lesser deities and lower annulled.	
1st	200 mi	all spells	2nd level	Divine powers of intermediate deities and lower annulled.	
Spire	100 mi	-	all spells	All divine powers annulled.	
<i>The above milages are to be taken as guidelines at best. The rings will shift fluidly in response to the state of the planes and the whim of the DM. A ring may shift at any moment transitioning a character in one place from one set of rings to the next.</i>					

#### Variant: Epic Magic at the 9th Ring

As an extension of the pattern of magic established by the Ringlands. Past the 9th ring, where

the gate-towns are and where all spells of 9th level or below work on the Outlands - epic magic (10th level and up) fails. Epic magic will work outside of the gate-towns in the Hinterland.

### *The Spire*

Climbin' the Spire is a joke a lot o' planars would play on the clueless primes they meet. Unless ye've got a thing for hopeless causes, don't bother. The Spire is a great mountain, or spike o' rock the size o' a mountain, in the middle o' the Ringlands. It's visible from the entirety o' the Outlands, an' dimly atop it may be seen the little tiny ring that is Sigil. But as far as anyone knows the damn thing is infinitely tall. An' without magical assistance, it's not like one can swiftly go to the top. If ye are goin' to climb, an' there are some spectacular views an' puzzlin' things up the side o' the Spire worth seein', ye'll want to be either a very experienced climber or have wings. Preferably both. But don't bother climbin' it to try an' get into Sigil. Like I said, infinitely tall. Even if ye can see Sigil up there, ye won't ever reach. It's a planar paradox, so don't give yerself too big a headache tryin' to figure it out.

At the foot o' the Spire even the gods cannot reach, which is just as well for at least some o' the residents there. The Athar, those god-hatin' an' currently god-fearin' factioners moved to the foot o' the Spire after they were tossed out o' Sigil by the Lady of Pain, along wit' all the other factions. A lot o' 'em are too scared to go back to Sigil an' too scared to wander out o' the Outlands an' face the wrath o' the gods they've ticked off in the past. Looks like their buildin' a whole community there bereft o' magic or divine aid, barmy as that sounds.

The other residents o' the area are ones ye'd better respect greatly, or just avoid if at all possible. I'm talkin' about the rilmani, the exemplars o' true neutrality in the multiverse, who live at the center o' the Outlands as well. Chant is they view 'emselves as defenders o' Balance an' subtly interfere whenever the forces o' one alignment appear to be on the verge o' dominatin' another, though that hasn't stopped layers from shiftin' an' gods from fallin', so who knows what the dark o' it is. They're a mysterious lot an' quite defensive o' their secrets, so one had best approach 'em cautiously.



## The Gate-Towns

Arranged evenly at the edges o' the known Outlands an' the Hinterlands are the gate-towns, named such 'cause each possesses two large portals, one that leads to Sigil an' one that leads to the Outer Plane the burg's closest to. Along wit' the fact that the Great Road also makes use o' the gate-towns as pathways between the Outer Planes, each town is a prominent locale in its own right. In the land between 'em an' the Spire one will see the most foot traffic on the planes in the form o' armies, merchants, adventurers, an' even migratin' animals. An' one can make a pretty large load o' jink escortin' merchants to protect 'em against the bandits an' thieves around the towns.

When a gate-town slips into another plane, a new town on the Outlands takes its place, seemin'ly at random. The portals move to the new gate-town an' the process starts over again. Most o' the current batch have been around for decades or longer, but the years since the Faction War have some changes in the gate-towns, so give a close ear an' we'll get ye all caught up to date.

## The Gate-Towns

Plane	Gate-Town
Arcadia	Courage
Mount Celestia	Excelsior
Bytopia	Tradegate
Elysium	Ecstasy
The Beastlands	Faunel
Arborea	Sylvania
Ysgard	Glorium
Limbo	Xaos
Pandemonium	Bedlam
The Abyss	Blight
Carceri	Curst
The Gray Waste	Hopeless
Gehenna	Torch
Baator	Ribcage
Acheron	Rigus
Mechanus	Automata

### Courage

One day, Courage was just there. The entire town was just there. It even had name-signs an' everything, just so that nobody could be in any doubt as to its name. Pretty much the only thing it didn't have was people; there was no evidence that anyone had ever been in Courage. But then, there had never been any buildings in that spot 'fore either. It didn't take long for people to start arrivin', though, not once they'd worked out the one really important thing that Courage had. It had the gate to Arcadia. The gate Fortitude once held.

The gate-town is dead; long live the gate-town.

Courage could almost have been designed by a modron, given its layout. The town is built in a grid fashion around the main central square, called the Heart. Its outer walls are rounded an' egg-shaped, much like its predecessor, leavin' many to believe it's just the next in the series. But in general, Courage's residents don't have the same fanatical attitude as Fortitude's folk. In part, that's 'cause some believe that it was Fortitude's arrogant conviction o' its own perfection was what caused the old gate-town to lose the Arcadia gate in the first place. An' undoubtedly the fact that a larger proportion o' Courage's population are neither Hardheads nor Arcadian petitioners affects the overall psyche o' the town.

Still, those who enter the town in the belief that it is a softer touch than Fortitude was are soon disabused o' that notion. It is not a softer touch, merely a different touch. The vast

majority o' the residents are still lawful, mostly either good or neutral, an' devoted to the common welfare an' the perfection o' society for all that is the hallmark o' Arcadia. Many sages believe that Courage's greater humility an' generosity already make it further on the road to slippin' to Arcadia than Fortitude ever reached.

### **Excelsior**

Excelsior is the ideal form o' any burg ye can think up. Gold-flecked streets, orderly an' secure, an' rife wit' paladins. Laid out at the top o' a low hill, the streets 'emselves glow at night, an' warmth (literally) pervades the place, stoppin' the residents from even needin' to light a fire to keep the cold away. In all ways, this place is just itchin' to try to get into the first layer o' Mount Celestia like the nearby Heart's Faith managed.

The city itself is only roughly broken up into districts. The center holds the highest towers an' kips o' those high-ups that don't have their own flyin' domains. Outside the center can be found the homes, inns, markets, an' other buildings o' the town. The fields o' wheat that keep the place fed an' the clay banks o' the nearby river that produce bricks for buildin' are found just outside the edges o' the residential areas. Floatin' castles maintain a protective perimeter around the city from the sky, while on the ground a number o' similar citadels can be found, the homes o' paladins who have retired an' brought their homes to rest on the edge o' town.

### **Tradegate**

As one might guess by the name, Tradegate is a city o' commerce, dominated by a grand bazaar in the center o' the star-shaped city. The inhabitants hope to make their burg a mercantile center the equal, or the better, o' Sigil itself, and they ain't all that far from that goal. Tradegate even mints its own coins, but most o' the town's merchants accept barter as well as jink.

Tradegate is one o' the most commonly used towns for adventurin' parties to hole up in. Nice an' safe, without much to disrupt it, the town has plenty o' cutters from Bytopia or the Indeps to trade wit' an' not too much trouble. Lately, though, ye may want to keep an eye out, 'cause Estavan's Planar Trade Consortium has been makin' waves in this peaceful burg.

The law in Tradegate ain't as oppressive or judgmental as some people find it in Excelsior or Courage. For the most part, as long as a body doesn't do anything obviously evil or harmful—murder, stealin', an' the like—they won't be bothered. The one thing that the locals do get uppity about, however, is sloth. A berk who likes to loaf an' take advantage o' others instead o' workin' ain't goin' to make many friends here, an' there are strict laws against vagrancy an' loiterin'.

### **Ecstasy**

Ecstasy. Wit' a name like that, what could there be not to like? It's a casual place, indulgent in many ways o' the needs an' desires o' its populace. This includes a rather loose definition o'

the word ‘borrow’, but so long as ye don’t throw too much o’ a fuss yer belongings should make their way back to ye ‘fore ye leave. Or ye may just have to borrow ‘em back.

If ye’re in the mood for entertainment or debate, or both, there’s a place in town that hosts ongoin’ philosophical debates. The arguments, an’ they do sometimes get rather heated (that’s the entertainment part), are mediated by an odd fellow known as the Philosopher King. There’s a new king there now, the old one havin’ retired, an’ this King is a fellow I don’t suggest ye tangle wit’. A risen ultraloth, if ye can imagine such a thing, an’ a rather extraordinary debater given his understandin’ o’ the principles involved.

Outside o’ town can be found tall pillars, the ‘homes’ o’ meditatin’ celestials an’ other philosophers that make their case here. Bring yer climbin’ equipment if ye plan to have a cuppa wit’ ‘em, but bear in mind not all o’ ‘em are too talkative.

### **Faunel**

Faunel resembles nothin’ more than a broken-down city abandoned thousands o’ years ago. In fact, that’s probably what it is. Some even think the town absorbs ruins from throughout the Prime, an’ there are a fair number of gates in Faunel leadin’ there. If the gate-town were intact an’ full, it could probably house around fifty thousand people, which gives some idea o’ the sprawlin’ size o’ the place. Now it’s a ruin, overgrown wit’ plants an’ animal life. I wouldn’t suggest tryin’ to build up a real case here though; it’s a wild place an’ the town an’ its residents don’t have any appreciation for construction on their turf.

The town can be split broadly into three main areas, each showin’ a different face o’ nature. Along the spire-facing side, from the route through which most visitors to Faunel approach, the terrain is dry an’ arid, an’ the wind blows dust through an abandoned desert town. Off to the right part o’ town, swamp is slowly taking back the buildings, most o’ which are at least partially submerged. It’s still warm, but much damper, wit’ a constantly high humidity. Mosquitoes buzz through the air, an’ all manner o’ insects an’ other small creatures scrape a living in the undergrowth. The remainder o’ Faunel is jungle, wit’ vines an’ creepers growin’ on the remainin’ stonework, an’ trees pushin’ their way through roofs.

Most o’ the humanoids reside in the jungle or desert parts o’ town, though there is a small community o’ lizard folk that have taken to the swampy areas. Most folk make their case in town under multicoloured tarps, each one distinct enough that there’s no real risk of getting’ lost among the tents. But the majority o’ Faunel’s residents are animals or beasts o’ one variety o’ another. Many are petitioners from the Beastlands, an’ they tend to live in the area that most suits their temperament an’ pattern o’ life.

### **Sylvania**

Sylvania is a party town, wit’ plenty o’ bars, inns, shows, an’ the like. There’s tons o’ eladrin an’ Sensates (an’ Sensate eladrin just to make it more fun) all over the place. It is a place teemin’ wit’ life an’ energy at all hours o’ the day an’ night, an’ a body can always be sure to

find their particular brand o' entertainment in one o' the many inns or taverns that litter the streets. If you're lookin' to relax after a hard couple o' days, this is the place.

There is an atmosphere o' fierce independence, autonomy, an' creativity that permeates the air o' Arborea's gate-town. The diversity o' form an' function is readily apparent when walkin' down any o' Sylvania's avenues. Individualism an' freedom o' expression can be seen in every facet o' life, from architecture to economy to nature. Most notable o' the architectural variety is the Sensate Embassy, which is a majestic pyramid, created entirely o' petrified wood! Amidst the majestic splendor o' the Embassy, a body cannot miss the temples that call kip to this jovial an' irreverent town. In spite o' it all, if a traveler finds their way to Sylvania, they're sure to find a good time...an' perhaps more!

### *Alicia De'Morlina*

#### **Glorium**

One of the smallest of the gate-towns, Glorium is little more than a village perched within a valley formed from the same mountain ranges as the Dwarven Mountain. It can be reached in two ways, by water through the fjord or by land through a road that snakes its way through the rough mountains. Most folks travel by water to this town, for in addition to the poor upkeep of the road, large predators roam the forests of these mountains, and there is always the risk of petitioners of Illsensine or Gzemnid causing trouble along the way. The realms of both of these monstrous gods are somewhere within the tangled caverns beneath the mountains. The fjord is an inlet of the Oceanus, deep enough to accommodate the longboats that are favored in Ysgard.

This is a small place, where everyone knows each other. Outsiders are welcome, though they will find few accommodations for themselves. Glorium has no inns or bars, and visitors who intend to stay overnight will need to make friends right fast with one of the residents. Luckily, they're a hospitable people and they generally have room to spare within one of the long houses of the town. Guests of Glorium had better observe their manners, though, as the locales are not the type of people to put up with attitude.

#### **Xaos**

Now here's a gate-town I can't even summarize. The place is linked to Limbo, and changes almost as fast. The city has many names: Xaos, or Axos, or Soxa, or AdeDaaga. It depends. On something. Maybe. Watch out for slaadi, as they're as like to chew your face off as they are to perform a street mime act for you. Or both. In addition, Xsao has no government, except when it has one. Actually, *you're* in charge of Aoxs. Only not anymore.

Osxa has been about the same—which is to say, always changing—for as long as anyone can remember. Whether or not it's always been the *same* burg is another matter. Chant is Xaso has been constantly slipping back and forth between the Outlands and Limbo for ages, or that it's slipped into Limbo many times and been replaced by a different town. Given the it's propensity

for constant change, and the fact that even its inhabitants change and possibly replicate, it all amounts to more or less the same thing.

You see that earthenware pot over there? The blue one? It's talking about you behind your back. Err...yeah, the place is barmy.

### **Bedlam**

Bedlam's the kind of place where a body can never tell what's going to happen next, but can be pretty sure it's going to be bad. The place is as barmy as Xaos, but in a much more malicious way—the madmen of Xaos may be unpredictable and confusing, but they're as likely to mean well as they are to mean ill, while in Bedlam you can usually count on foul intentions.

The wind that howls from the gate to Pandemonium has the same effect in Bedlam as it does in its plane of origin, and no one in the burg is quite sane. Bedlamites jump at the slightest noise (other than the ever-present howl of the wind), and shuffle about arguing with voices that only they can hear. The price of earplugs here is heavily inflated, so you'd best pick them up elsewhere, since you'll need them if you're going to Pandemonium.

Most of the people in Bedlam won't need much excuse to plant a dagger in a sod's back. They're peery to the point of paranoia, and usually figure they have to get you before you get them. Bedlam is a hotbed of plotting and treachery; a body's got to watch their step here if they don't want to end up in the dead-book or worse.

### **Blight**

Yeah, I've been to Blight, where the old gate-town Plague-Mort use to be. Even shared a piss-tasting drink with an ogre mage there. I guess they figured if they used a different name for the new burg maybe this time it wouldn't shift. It's still right close to the Abyss and has a high percentage of tanar'ri and other miserable sods, so I wouldn't bet on the name change doing much good.

Now, Blight is nowhere near as big as Plague-Mort was, not yet, but it's growing. It's population is mostly evil humanoids: orcs, the bulk of 'em, or at least a good plurality, with a good supply of troglodytes, gnolls, harpies, minotaurs, and other beasties. All those monsters don't get along much better than they do anywhere else, so really, Blight's less a coherent city than it is a bunch of disordered towns that are right next to each other and constantly at war. It certainly ain't the mercantile outpost the last gate-town was, but they're trying to get their act together (the key word being 'try').

The good news, as far as anything 'round here can be called good, is there's not much in the way of tanar'ri influence in the new town yet, and if anything seems able to unite the locales it's keeping themselves out of the Abyss. They're even tolerating a household of Harmonium

orcs that have camped on the outskirts of town. Yeah, you heard me, a whole clan of orcs touting the hardhead creed. It's enough to make you want another drink.

### **Curst**

Curst is a pissy little blighter of a place. Everyone in this town is a backstabbing wench blaming everyone else on the face of the planes for every reason they can think of for why they're staying in the accursed little place. Most of the sods there are there because they've got an axe to grind with someone else and they refuse to leave until they exact their revenge. In the process of course, they trap themselves in this nasty little town, not that any of them are willing to take the blame for anything. Given my druthers it's not a place I'll ever be visiting again. Ever.

The land around the city is red clay, dry, and barren. Scrubby trees, and patchy grass surround the city and a single road leads out from it towards the Spire. There is very little around the city otherwise, and the Guard have made a point of clearing out any trees or brush within five hundred yards of the walls, leaving only the red dirt itself. The walls themselves are tall, with spikes pointed outward and inward. They're covered with razorvine inside and out too just in case they weren't intimidating enough as it was. Regular patrols of the City Guard along the tops of the walls make sure that no one comes or goes without permission, at least not easily. If they could figure out a good way to secure the air above the town they probably would.

The town is arranged in a series of rings, one inside the other and all centered on the Gate to Curst itself. There are five rings, which divide the populace of the town in terms of relative misery and power. The center ring nearest the gate is where the power of the city resides, and the outermost ring is where the worst of the downtrodden berks scratch out a living.

### *Teman Albrack*

[Editor's note: I was quite surprised when Teman Albrack *volunteered* to add his accounts to this work. He's a fairly well-known planewalker, if rather reclusive, said to have been traveling the Great Ring to bring back true accounts to his fellows in the Dustmen about the suffering found throughout the planes. Since the Faction War he's been actively working to bring the faction's philosophy to others beyond Sigil, which I suppose may be part of the reason he approached me.]

### **Hopeless**

The sheer endurance of a basher's spirit in the face of utter despair and pointlessness should not be underestimated. Many souls plod along in life fully aware that they're surrounded by misery and have nothing but misery in this life to look forward to. The gate-town Hopeless happens to be where a good number of such berks gather. It's a colorless pit of apathy, little more than a grey tinged road of depression spiraling down to the gate to the Gray Wastes at the town's center. All the buildings flank the single descending street, the structures composed of weathered grey wood and pitted grayish stone. No colors mark the town save for the

screaming gate, and the dreary, melancholic air that hangs over the town only worsens as one descends down the spiral road, deeper into the city.

Everywhere the situation of Hopeless is the same: depression, gloom, and apathy to mirror that of the Grey Waste itself. Still, the spirits of the locales persist as they find ways to keep themselves occupied, whether it's visiting any of the town's taverns, collecting books and trinkets from passing merchants, or passing along rumors and stories. It's impressive, really, and reason why I think they could use the Dustmen's help. They've already accepted that this life doesn't have anything to offer them, they just need someone to show them how to move on from here.

### **Torch**

Torch isn't exactly what one would call friendly. It's full of knights of the post and berks looking to sell information to or about you. The place is best described as a bit of gilt floating on top of scum, and that applies to the people, the place, the society, and even the food. So, I fully recommend you spend some time there, at least once. Afterwards you'll have an appreciation for the Dustmen's view of this life.

Torch is perched on and around three active volcanoes, called Karal, Maygel, and Dohin. The volcanoes are surrounded by murky acid-filled swamps, populated with giant frogs, rats, plague insects, and anything else disgusting that you can imagine. Once you get near the gate-town, get used to looking up—it's what most of the berks in this burg do. Between the continuous haze of light that illuminates the area at all hours and the occasional lava flow, the locales are always up, always active. They're smart enough to have no interest in seeing the town slip into Gehenna, as for the most part that would make them very small fish in a very large pond.

### *Marila Tendershoot*

### **Ribcage**

Aye, I know a thing or two about the gate-towns to the Planes of Law. Great place to do business, find lore, and acquire services without going to all the trouble of traveling to the planes themselves. Ribcage is a tough place, though; I suppose it's gotta be to keep the fiends out. It's centered in the Vale of the Spine, named after the spires of the mountains surrounding it. They arch up in such a way to nearly meet overhead, like, you guessed it, a ribcage. The residents have built up walls between these ribs, taking advantage of the natural architecture to build up their defenses against assault. Travelers, so long as they keep their noses clean and don't protest any of the local laws, should do fine—but I wouldn't suggest setting up kip there unless you're in the mood to toe the line.

Like most of the gate-towns to the Lower Planes, Ribcage doesn't want to merge with its plane. Baatazu themselves are not welcome within the city limits, and the armies of the Nine Hells are encouraged to find other more welcoming portals through which to march. The city's leaders have also made an effort to create diplomatic ties with gate-towns of more good-

aligned cities, garnering both their positive influence on the town and their support in trade. That's what brings me there these days. While there's some fuss about the legality of slave trade, it must be said that Ribcage is about the safest place to do honorable business on the lower side of the Great Wheel.

### **Rigus**

Like a giant iron boil rising up upon the flesh of the land, the gate-town of Rigus, the Eight-Tiered City, exists as more of a permanent military encampment than a proper burg in many ways. From a distance, it looks like a series of stacked metal boxes, or a giant monochrome ziggurat rising above the surrounding landscape in all of its unwelcoming glory. Approaching travelers will note that in following that *unwelcoming* aura, the lowest, outermost defensive wall of Rigus is constructed of black avalan iron, splotched and mottled with rust, verdigris, and a sticky, almost sap-like coating of contact poison to ward off rust-monsters and potential invaders.

Unlike the vast majority of the other gate-towns, Rigus lacks a true civilian population outside of its own regimented military orders, and it seems to exist largely as a marshalling point for the mercenaries who feed upon the perpetual war of Acheron, and to a lesser extent, the Blood War. If you ask me, the lot of 'em are just soldiers wanting for a cause, though whether it's the desire or the lack of success that keeps them in the Outlands, I'm not sure. The town imports a lot of supplies, but about all it offers are hired goons, if highly disciplined goons.

### **Automata**

Automata is loaded with two things: red tape and nifty mechanical oddities. The one, in my experience, tends to outweigh the other. This is the gate-town to the plane of absolute order, and it certainly looks the part. The entire city is laid out on a strict grid of streets and blocks, and lodged firmly in the center of the outline of a small wheel. Shops of similar trades are located all along the same block, while a hundred other laws dictate codes of conduct and means of doing business. Outside the city walls you'll find a few perfectly straight roads cutting through fairly bland fields on their way to Rigus and Courage.

The city has swollen in recent years with the influx of Guvners and other refugees from the Faction War in Sigil. With the new population growth, the gate-town has experienced an economic boom and is becoming ever more attractive to the interests of traders and merchant houses. Luckily, the influx of people has brought with it a varied lot, so the town has yet to slip over the edge into Mechanus. Chant is the local government has hired mercenaries from Rigus to keep all immigrants firmly in line and put a halt to any fights between visiting modrons and formians, though I haven't seen any need for that.

### ***Places of Interest***

The Gate-towns of course aren't the only bergs in the Outlands. The place is pretty big and there's lots of other places to live in the plane. You'll find the realms of plenty of powers here, and sleepy little villages tucked between rolling valleys, or high mountains. And plenty of not-too sleepy ones too come to think of it.



### The Court of Light

The court is what the greybeards call a 'deific realm; which is to say, it's kip to a goddess and y'don't wanna go traipsing about haphazardly. In this case it's a naga goddess by the name of Shekinester. The place is populated by naga petitioners, where it is populated - most of them reincarnate. The place is a bit risky to go, so I don't suggest it less y'got a good reason or a fast sword or both.

The nagas there are of all kinds, that means good and bad. And the goddess is one of those oddball tripple ones. Rule of three you see, so you may end up with the Weaver, the Empowerer or the Preserver. And well - the place is just a mite unpredictable in those regards. The goddess is all about testing and guiding, and not terribly concerned with anyone that ain't scaley snakeblood, so don't say I didn't warn ya. And if you do end up staring her down in one of her tests... well. Best of luck t'you, it's worth it - if you survive.

### The Dwarven Mountains

The mountain is home to three gods of those short blokes with the beer and the beards. The three specific ones involved are, by name: Dugmaren Brightmantle, Dumathoin, and Vergadain. Their three realms, the three large sections of Dwarven Mountain are Soot Hall, Deepshaft Hall and Strongale. So you know, the Halls aren't little piddly things like you'll find in human cities - they're cities in and of themselves.

Soot Hall's where you'll want to go if y'looking to trade ore or weapons. That's where the dwarves indulge their creativity and gnomish instincts. Not that you should ever say such things in their hearing. But they are excellent inventors. The finest weapons, armor, tools and the like will come out of Soot Hall, and the Hall is always looking for new materials to work with.

Strongale is where you go to squander all that hard earned gold and lose your newest shiny sword from Soot Hall. If you're the gambling type, and I'm not, you can get and lose just about anything in this Hall, and even if you think it ain't something you can gamble away - someone in the Hall will have a way of taking it out of you. Even if it takes the power of a god. Don't forget you are in a deific realm. If you're the drinking type, and I am, you'll find some of the best brews in the 'Land here. I don't suggest you mix the two pastimes.

Deepshaft is the dwarven version of heaven, so to speak. Deep mines, stale air, gold and gems and riches to be dug out of the earth to the patient bloke with a good hammer. A word of advice, don't go down below into the mines of Deepshaft Hall without makin' sure you have a guide you can trust, or a way out - the mines extend for a long ways down and for someone not used to them, one gets turned about right fast. The dark holds that the mines hook up with the cavern structures found throughout this section of the Outlands, and can run you right into Illsensine's kip.

Really, the Mountain makes a great place to visit and do any buying or selling of metal, special irons, gems, weapons and the like, but don't expect everyone to be the most prim and polite of folks. Some of the dwarves are a little cranky, and others are staggering sots just out of the gambling halls. So don't take the attitude to heart, they're just grumbly is all.

### Ironridge

This is a town right on the edge of Dwarven Mountain, leading up almost to the entrance to Strongale. It's mostly humans, and some petitioners - a lot of gamblers and traders, not that there's a big difference between the two I suppose.

### The Caverns of Thought

This is the mind flayer's god's realm, and as far as I'm concerned it can **keep** it. The Caverns are all underground, tunnels carved by his servants or naturally occurring as can be found throughout much of the Lands. The tunnels themselves are described as dank, and slick with fungus - sometimes warm pulsing flesh-like fungus at that. They connect nominally with just about every other underground structure you can find in the Outlands (or at least rumor has it that they do). Yet another reason not to go roaming without a guide or a map.

Illsensine's got a big ego and won't tolerate much of anyone else in his brain space. That's why anyone y'meet here, odd are they'll be a zombie or thrall to the spongy brain with the psionic powers. If you're lucky you'll meet a mind flayer servitor. If you're not... well, there's a spot at the Gatehouse for you, I suppose. If you do happen to wander this way, you'll want to bring some sort of protection for your mind as the god's thoughts wash throughout his realm and can be overwhelming at their weakest and downright deadly the closer you get to him. And since the tunnels all seem to lead back to him... you'll need it.

Why would anyone go there? Well, chant is the big brain has the answer to near any question, and will give it if a berk survives the trip and pays the price. One way or another, you're losing something. As a side note, it's quite possible that Illsensine shares his realm with Gzemnid, the beholder god. The two realms look very much alike from all reports and seem to merge so they may actually be one and the same. So take your pick, beholders or illithids, which would you rather get your head bitten off by?

### The Mausoleum of Chronopsis

The dragon watcher of fate, time, and what have you. What's not to like? Oh yeah, the part where he can eat you in one little nip. Not to say that he will, so long as you're respectful of his turf. This is the realm of Chronopsis, the draconic pantheon's own pocket watch. Don't get me wrong, he's a big power and not one to take lightly. But for the most part, unless you're a dragon or your fate is somehow tied with something he's watching over, he's just not interested.

His place is a wonderful dignified lair, full of magnificent broken down ruins of grand halls and columns. And filled with thousands and thousands of hourglasses. Big, small, and everything in

between. Rumor holds that the hourglasses are his petitioners, each one associated with a dragon, though some of them seem to still be associated with a living one. In either case, he's not someone you so casually ask about such things. Just leave his hourglasses alone and don't cause a fuss and you should be fine.

### **The Norns**

This is an odd little realm, dedicated to the Norns of Norse myth. It can be found at the roots of the great tree Yggdrasil as they rise out of the Outlands. It's a hard place to get to, and the only reason to go is to consult the Norn at the Well of Urd. You might not like the answers though, sometimes it's really better to define your fate instead of letting someone else define it for you.

### **The Palace of Judgment**

One of the largest structures in the Lands, and it has to be to account for all the petitioners, judges, bureaucrats, record keepers, scribes, clerks, guards, guardians, travelers, guides, librarians, judges - I said judges already didn't I? - eh, you get the idea. Lots of people all working with the same goal in mind - judgment of the dead. This isn't a town, this is a processing center. You'll find petitioners of all flavors here from good to evil, lawful to chaotic and in between. You'll also find representatives of each of the associated planes, usually there to lay claim to those petitioners judged by the Palace to belong to them rightfully. The presence of Yen-Wang-Yeh, the realm's power, keeps them in check, preventing any overt fighting amongst his staff and 'guests'.

Of course, getting judged is a complicated thing. A petitioner arrives and is herded into the Greeting Halls, there he is initially judged and given his assignment in the afterlife, then taken to another room to be given his identity placard, then another room to be prepared for his journey, then to another room to head out the door - and of course there may be waiting rooms along the way if there seems to be a hold up. It's not always a swift judgment, let's put it that way, especially if Yen-Wang-Yeh is out to report to the Celestial Emperor on the status of things.

As a note to all those planewalkers out there that have reason to not go through Sigil - the Palace is chock full of portals. It's generally considered second only to Sigil for density of the portals. It has to be to make sure all those bodies go to the right place. You may have to work your way through some red-tape along the way, but odds are good you'll find the portal you need to get you where you're going. Thankfully, since the entire Chinese pantheon keeps the place secure against disruption, the place is pretty stable and acts as a neutral territory.

Of late of course, the Planar Trade Consortium has been making it's inroads, since the Tempest of Doors skewed their gates. But even Estavan may be having some trouble with the bureaucratic system, so I'm tempted to wait and see on that one before I do any betting on their new routes.

### **Thoth's Estate**

Interested in books? How about the grandest library in the Lands? The Great Library, found at the center of Thoth's city Thebestys, is said to hold every book ever written within its depths. Of course, you'll need to spend quite some time looking for it, and hope that the librarians here will let you read it. Thankfully, the city has plenty of lodgings for extended stays of would-be scholars. All in all, it's one of the biggest realms on the plane, with several thousand residents. Mostly humans, but most are willing to pay a little homage to Thoth for a peek at his collection.

If you do any wandering, you'll want to be careful of some of the crocodile headed folks coming out of the River Ma'at - they're Set minions. The river runs round the Lawful side of the seventh ring, past Torch and all the way to Excelsior. The fertile land around it supports a host of villages, many of whom worship Thoth or some of the other Egyptian powers. Speaking of, take some care with that river. It's not the grandest of things; but I've heard some rumors the waters can induce visions and madness in those who take a dip. Like all chant, take it with a grain or three of salt, but I'd still be careful.

### **Tir Na Og**

Tir Na Og means 'The Land of Youth', and here's where you can find the realms of pretty much the entire Celtic Pantheon. That would include Daghdha, Diancecht, Goibhniu, and Lugh, for those of you not up on your temple schooling. It's a pretty peaceful place, very green. Most of the Tir is populated by petitioners, humans, elves, and some odder forms of fey. You'll find a lot of folks willing to trade and some very excellent brews. I don't suggest laying a finger on their cattle though; they get a mite tetchy about that.

Each of the powers has their own specific realm, such as Mag Mell, the Field of Happiness, which belongs to Daghdha. The sea nearby, called Tir fo Thuinn, is the largest known body of water in the Lands and loosely part of the Tir as well, ruled over by the sea god of the Celtic pantheon, Manannan mac Lir. It's populated by sea folks, selkies, and the like, and is pretty peaceful as well.

### **Tvashtri's Workshop**

Near the Dwarven Mountains can be found Tvashtri's Workshop, a.k.a Tvashtri's Laboratory. Some folks have mistaken the Workshop for having walked right into Soot Hall in the Dwarven Mountains, but one quick glance around should make it clear which one you're in. In the workshop, you can find a mix of humans and gnomes. Most all of the petitioners here are concerned with invention and science. Of course, there are plenty of visitors as well, interested in the research of one thing or another. Of note, once the Guvner's got kicked soundly out of Sigil along with the other factions, a few of them ended up here continuing their experiments into the nature of the planes. They've secured their own little corner of the Workshop for their purposes.

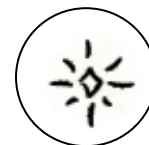
### **Planar Traits**

**Impeded magic:** The Outlands are subject to the effects of the Spire as described above.

**Creatures:** Rilmani, Set minions, fey, dwarves, Indeps, Blood War troops, adventurers.

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ARCADIA



### *Ppexxyrwn*

My name is Ppexxyrwn, though I realize that's difficult for most non-bladelings to pronounce. You're welcome to just call me Pex. Yes, I am a bladeling; I keep my blades filed down, except the ones on my head, as a symbol of my commitment to pacifism and acceptance. And yes, you're quite right, bladelings are native to Acheron and typically don't care for Arcadia. But I was driven out of my homeland at a very young age due to, uh, philosophical differences, and have spent most of my time in Arcadia where both the realm of the god I worship and the headquarters of the faction I belong to are found. So, while I may not technically be a native of Arcadia, I am more than qualified to speak of the Land of Perfect Good. In fact, since many natives of Arcadia have a rather, uh, provincial outlook, they wouldn't be the best ones to get an objective description from anyways.

If I had to sum up the basis of Arcadia in a single word, that word would be "perfection". Not that the plane *is* completely perfect, and still less that all its inhabitants are, but everything here is in just the right proportions and just where it needs to be. The entire plane is devoted to a flawless, harmonious existence. Not only are many features of the terrain perfectly arranged, with evenly spaced rows of crops, straight running rivers, and controlled forests, but there are also idealized versions of many creatures and objects from the Prime and other planes. That's the most common reason planewalkers come to Arcadia, I think; they're in search of the perfect hound, or the perfect rose, or the perfect bottle of wine. And I suppose all those things probably do exist in Arcadia somewhere, but they won't be easy to find. Especially since the plane isn't exactly a safe place for outsiders. The natives... aren't always friendly.

When you consider that Arcadia sits between Mount Celestia, with its focus on personal enlightenment, and Mechanus, the epitome of universal order, you get a good sense of what Arcadia is about. The truth is, more than any of the Upper Planes, Arcadia exists to provide the most good for the most people. It is the realization of so many utopian societies wherein citizens forsake certain freedoms and individual benefits for the betterment of the community as a whole. One way or another everything here is devoted to some set idea of the common good, and if something (or someone) doesn't conform to that end the inhabitants don't really want it here. While the notion that *everyone* in Arcadia is an intolerant fanatic isn't true, unfortunately it's more a slight exaggeration than an outright lie. Not *everyone* is that way, but tolerance and the benefit of the doubt are in short supply among the plane's inhabitants.

Including, I regret to say, many members of my own faction, the Harmonium. They used to be a lot worse than they are now—in fact, there was a time I got so disenchanted with the Harmonium’s methods that I left them and joined the Believers of the Source. But it’s not just the Harmonium, by any means. The formians are another issue. These hive creatures are native to Arcadia and used to live peacefully in their own communities. In the last couple of years, though, they’ve taken to spreading to other planes and colonizing anywhere they can. There’s also the buseni, black oily-looking shapeshifting creatures that patrol the tunnels beneath the surface and guard many of the passages between layers. And, of course, the einheriar, a special subclass of petitioners who act as a sort of planar militia, going above and beyond the normal petitioners’ vigilance against outsiders who don’t fit in.

So it’s often said that every petitioner and planar in Arcadia is unremittingly hostile to anyone not devoted to law and goodness. That isn’t quite true. The presence of my god testifies to that; I worship Meriadar, a god of patience and tolerance whose hidden realm lies in Arcadia’s first layer. Certainly Meriadar’s followers aren’t hostile toward anyone different—that would go against everything their god stands for! Arcadia may be a plane of law first and good second, but it *is* still a plane of good, and not all its inhabitants are the types to attack anyone who disagrees with them.

Well, I’ve talked quite a bit about what lives on the plane, I suppose I should describe the layout of the plane itself. Like I’ve said, Arcadia is all about perfection; its layers are filled with regularly spaced hills and mountains, rivers running in straight lines and turning at right angles, everything laid out in perfect order and beauty. The seasons and weather on Arcadia are as regulated as everything else. The cycle of light and darkness depends on the Orb of Day and Night, a great rotating sphere that sits on Arcadia’s highest mountain. Half the Orb radiates light, and as it rotates day and night sweep over the plane in even intervals. The weather is also carefully controlled by four beings that call themselves the Storm Kings and who live in floating citadels surrounding the Orb of Day and Night. Between them they make sure that every spot on the plane receives just the perfect balance of rain and sun.

There are two layers to the plane of Arcadia, but few planewalkers have passed the first layer, Abellio. It consists largely of fields, forests, rivers, and lakes spread out to meet the needs of the people, with a few patterns of hills and mountains dotting the landscape. There are far too many different cultures for me to describe them all, but I can tell you about some of the more famous sites. The perfectly conical Mount Clangeddin rises 30,000 feet and is home to the dwarven god of battle, Clangeddin Silverbeard. His petitioners train constantly for the day they will be called upon to sacrifice themselves in battles across the multiverse and are renowned for their willingness to face oblivion in service to their deity. It’s not always the safest place to visit, as even when not conducting drills the dwarves are still as rowdy as any basher of Ysgard, but there are a great many services offered in the deep cities. Otherwise, the realm of Marduk, Binder of Dragons, is a testament to the grace of order. In his marble city virtue is nurtured by beauty and wickedness is unyieldingly cut down by the executioner’s blade. As for the numerous formian cities, Mandible is both the greatest and most welcoming. On the surface, human-style buildings make up the city Mercantus where merchants and other visitors gather. The true sights are found in the immense caverns and twisting tunnels of Mandible below, home to many of the remaining peaceful formians.

The second layer, Buxenus, is most often reached by passing through the 50-foot high rune-covered plinths that mark the passageways between the layers. Though the Harmonium has begun escorting some visitors to Buxenus, the petitioners of Arcadia are the only ones allowed through without intense scrutiny. The two layers are also separated by a great mountain range that can be crossed, though the journey is quite dangerous. All in all, with security so tight there's not much known about Buxenus. Having left the Harmonium once, I'm rarely welcome there now. The terrain is similar to Abellio save it's dominated by hills. Everything has its match, though; for each hill there is a plain, for each river there is a dry patch of land, and so forth. Granted, they're usually not of equal size. It's not the Outlands after all.

Chant is this fact symbolizes a deeper truth of Arcadia's second layer; punishments disproportionate to the crime set a clear example for the conduct of others, a little evil's tolerable so long as it brings about a lot of good. In other words, the ends justify the means. I'd like to think my faction has learned the error of its ways, but I'm not so naive as to think all my peers believe as I do. At least the Harmonium has finally owned up to *why* it was keeping people out of Buxenus for so long—they had been practically using the entire layer as a big center of reeducation, trying to force captives into their point of view. Under Factol Faith the faction has phased out the training camps, and I think that's one of the biggest signs that she really believes in reform. I saw the training camps myself before the Faction War, and they were one of the biggest reasons I left the Harmonium.

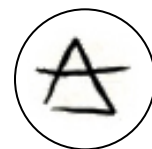
By now you've probably got a grasp for some of the paradoxes that grip Arcadia. Overall its inhabitants are insular folk, but more and more they're looking to expand across the planes. Everyone has to follow strict standards of moral and ethical conduct, but some will turn a blind eye to convenient injustices. Supposedly Arcadia once had a third layer called Nemausus or Menausus, depending on which account you believe, that slid to Mechanus due to the loss of good on the plane, be it thanks to the formians' ruthless campaign of conquest, or even, according to other stories, because of the deeds of the Harmonium. I don't know if any of that's true, but honestly it wouldn't surprise me. Arcadia is a beautiful plane, with much to recommend it, but I fear the way things are going here. Even if the Harmonium's attitude is getting better, the petitioners and the formians seem to be getting worse, increasingly putting order farther and farther above good, such that in time perhaps there won't be any room left for good at all. I sometimes wonder if part of the reason Meriadar chose Arcadia for his realm is because no other plane more sorely needed his message of tolerance and acceptance.

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** Arcadia is mildly lawful. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks.

**Creatures:** Deva, hollyphant, t'uen-rin, Harmonium.

III ⊕ UN+ CELES+IA



## *Alphashiel*

So, traveler, you wish to partake of my wisdom regarding the slopes of the holy mount? Certainly, I know much of the Seven Heavens, though there is much that is still dark from even my eyes. Those who come here have many reasons for making the journey, though there is only one true and worthy purpose. Some seek trade, others exploration and adventure, but true pilgrims make the sacred journey up the mountain in the pursuit of enlightenment. Mount Celestia is the bastion of virtue for the Great Ring, the guardian of its spiritual purity, and all those who desire to understand the holy light of ordered purity need only make the pilgrimage up its slopes. Most assume that only those who already believe and exemplify this ideal would undertake such a journey, but they are mistaken. Any and all who desire to shed the sins of their existence are given the chance. We do not only use the sword to vanquish evil, though the wise do not test the strength of the archons. Though my own past has been washed away with my rebirth, surely my mortal life was marked by virtue. Soon I shall have my final reward as I become one with the plane of ultimate justice and mercy.

Mount Celestia rises up from an endless ocean, underneath which many great beings of the sea dwell. There are seven layers to the plane, each one shielded by a shroud of clouds and mists from the eyes of those below and visible only to those walking the Paths. Still, the brilliance of the Illuminated Heaven bathes us all from the summit. Almost all the petitioners of the plane begin as lantern archons and ascend (both figuratively and literally) through the ranks of hound, warden, sword, and tome archons. The ranks of the holy host comprise most of Mount Celestia's inhabitants, and the archons are maintain with a careful vigilance even as we continue our own quests for perfection. Of course, some petitioners retain other forms designated by their powers, most notably those serving the halfling and dwarf pantheons. Other beings make their homes here as well, attracted by the radiance of disciplined peace, such as the lammasu, shedu, and noctrals. Aasimon and aasimar are also common, and make up much of the armies of our celestial strongholds.

There are few portals that lead above the first layer of Mount Celestia, and certainly none past the midpoint. No, the way to ascend the mountain is to climb, and to do that one must find a Path. The Paths are not simple roads, but take the supplicant on a spiritual journey as well. The Path teaches the pilgrim a truth of law and goodness, and once chosen, a Path must be followed until reaching the next layer. Mortals must make the journey on foot; only the archons fare well in the winds that blanket the mount, and even we must follow the Path's physical route. Once a new layer is attained, the pilgrim may choose to continue along the original Path or choose a new one. Some continue on the same Path, perfecting their understanding of a single aspect of holiness. Others hope to learn something of perfect unity by contemplating the different roads to virtue. The pilgrimage itself is of no fixed length of time; it hinges on the pilgrim's soul. Many give up before the end, despairing of ever reaching the summit after years of travel. But there are those who find their way through the layers with only months of travel. What awaits the supplicant at the peak? Surely we petitioners achieve our union with the very plane itself. But even mortals do not return after they attain enlightenment. Do they sit in quiet contemplation? Do they become some other entity of goodness and order? Do they too become one with the mount? One day I shall have an answer, but I shall not return to tell you the dark of it.



The first layer is Lunia, the Silver Heaven, land of summer's night. Stars and the ray of the moon shine upon the waters and shore of the sea. Almost all portals to Mount Celestia open up over the water. Only the evil need fear, however, for the waves are the holiest of waters. Regardless, the zoveri who live in the sea help all to shore. Along the shores are the citadels and palaces of minor powers and the homes and towns of planars. The towns act as trading centers, and the largest and most-frequented is Heart's Faith, close to the gate from the Outlands. It has docks for those who travel here along Oceanus from the neighboring planes. Pilgrims make great use of its goods, stocking up on food and sundries before taking up their quests.

Sometimes adventurers come to the lowest layers of Mount Celestia. They seek out sites such as the Tower of Fire. This mysterious edifice soars up from a marble outcropping, out amongst the waves, a great distance from shore. The tower is carved from the marble itself, and a blue flame blazes upon its top. Many attempt to reach the tower by flying or teleporting. They are thwarted, but the waves carry them to the tower's door, and the heat of the tower dries the sodden traveler. The interior is somehow made of the same blue fire that can be seen on the tower's roof, but it does not burn flesh. The tower's layout shifts every seven days, which helps to guard its secrets. Some legends hold that artifacts are held within, while others state that the purpose of the tower is esoteric, burning away impurities from those who traverse its maze. Sadly, no one trustworthy has ever claimed to reach the rooftop.

You'll recall that I mentioned even evil outsiders are washed up on Lunia's shore. Remember, even this holiest of places does not absolutely bar the entrance of the corrupt. Indeed, there are many who seek to atone for their past and to learn the ways of righteousness. If they do evil while here, they will be vanquished, but they are given the opportunity for repentance. Of course, we remain on our guard, and the scarred flesh of evil undead and outsiders who have been plunged into the silvery waters mark them well. Most linger on Lunia, though some rare few become enlightened enough to ascend to the next layer.

Above Lunia is Mercuria, the Golden Heaven, named for the soft glow of the air that surrounds it. It is eternally young, like a prime world in its beginnings, with newly formed mountains and deep valleys. The golden air here is thin, but rich with possibilities and potential and the first flowering of spring. Here are the mustering grounds of the celestial armies, as well as their armories. The great citadel of Bahamut, the platinum dragon, can also sometimes be found there. On occasion his palace moves between the first three (some say four) layers, and those with the courage may entreat of the valiant wyrm to make use of this shortcut. But never forget that Bahamut, like all dragons, is a creature of appetite who does not brook those who do not show proper respect and homage.

Then is the layer known as Venya, the Pearly Heaven, suffused by a soft white light. This is chiefly the home of the halfling powers, who name it Green Fields. It is a land of abundance, with fertile terraced fields and meadows, interspersed with moors. The halfling petitioners are much like the halflings of the prime, including their nomadic nature. The communities here can be broken down at a moment's notice and moved to a new location. This is done both to spare the land from over-cultivation and is also part of their own pilgrimage. Rarely does a halfling

make the journey alone; their family and clan take part as well, traveling secret Paths of Venya known only to their own kind, until as one, they are ready to become one with their beloved home.

The fourth layer I know quite well. It is Solania, the Electrum Heaven. Its sweeping skies are silver, suffused with a warm, golden glow. The icy mountains are titanic, looking down upon the deep canyons and the swift rivers. The mountain sides are populated by fog-shrouded monasteries, where the faithful contemplate the majesty of lawful goodness. One of the oldest is the First Monastery, and as its name implies, it may indeed be the oldest. It has been maintained for the last millennia by the valiant Order of the Planes-Militant, a noble sect dedicated to both protecting the Holy Mount and spreading its purity. They tirelessly work to convert the wayward, even successfully shifting portions of the neighboring planes to Mount Celestia, bolstering the holiest of planes. There are those who protest that the Order is made up of the tyrannical or misguided, but such scree only spills from the mouths of those who have cause to fear the spread of virtue and justice. Deep underground can be found Erackinor, where the Soul Forge of Moradin creates the spirits of the dwarves. The petitioner-dwarves build many settlements such as Istor's Forge, Stonefall, and the Rift, which are so grand as to make prime dwarven holds seem paltry.

I know of the upper layers only by rumor, for I have tarried on Solania for centuries. I have not found my way forward, to my shame, and remain in the form of hound archon. As one climbs higher, the storms grow fiercer, and pilgrims must beware the danger of rockslides. The next layer is known as Mertion, the Platinum Heaven, with brilliant white skies that no undead can look upon without bearing the brunt of their positive energies. 'Tis the fabled resting place of the paladins. The landscape here takes the form of black domes, upon which mighty fortresses rise up. The first city encountered is Empyrea, the City of Tempered Souls, which rests beside a mountain lake. Its healers care for injured pilgrims and its traders sell mountaineering gear and hire out guides.

Higher up the layer is Rempha, the City of the Sands of Time. The city has some connection to the Temporal Energy Plane, which upends time's normal flow. I have heard that the solar who rules it is advised by a modron known as Secundus that has been exiled from Mechanus, which cannot bode well. There are rumors of a great machine being built, as large as a town or greater. Its ultimate purpose is unknown, but tales have spread of such uses as the ability to monitor the shrouded origins of the multiverse (or even to travel there!), a great weapon to be used to destroy Celestia if ever it were in danger of being overrun by fiends, or the ability to forcibly open portals across the Great Ring. All such ideas seem fanciful to me, but such a titanic machine must have some extraordinary purpose.

The penultimate layer is Jovar, the Glittering Heaven, with skies that glow with the lambent sparkle of gems, pulsing like the heartbeat of Celestia itself. Here the traveler comes to the peak of the mountain, topped by a colossal ziggurat. This is the dwelling place of the Final Mystery, which is both the ruler of the Heavens and the sum of its knowledge. Only by climbing the ziggurat and reaching Chronias, the Illuminated Heaven, will the seeker understand. Then

shall all that was impure be taken away. Some day, traveler, some day, I shall attain that dizzying height.

### **Variant Rule: Mount Celestia Travel Restrictions**

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Planeshift, teleport and gate spells targeting locations on this layer of the plane are restricted. A Spellcraft check, DC 35 + spell level, is required in order to avoid the spell being redirected to either the base of the Mountian (the first layer), or the last location the caster was on his chosen path (see below). The Mount is rife with portals though, and given enough time and jink, a party should be able to research a portal to wherever they want to go on Mount Celestia. That's the easy way, and for the sake of a DM it will speed up play if the players are not interested in following the established paths.

Travel on this plane is directly tied to personal growth and development of the traveler as they learn the lessons of the Mount - so in order to travel upwards, to the next layer, one must choose the lessons to learn, and of course, going down is nowhere near as hard as going up. The paths are not so much physical roads to travel (though some may reflect that outwardly), as they are a sequence of actions that will allow a follower to find the way to the next layer, or simply transfer him to it directly.

For those entering Mount Celestia at some point and wanting to travel upwards to other layers, they must choose one of the following paths, which are both spiritual and physical. Keep in mind that only one person must actively pursue a path; fellow travelers reap the benefits of travel by virtue of accompanying the path pursuer. Some paths are an adventure in and of themselves, while others are simply a few random encounters to help the passage of time. A DM might want to have more involved paths developed ahead of time.

#### **Prerequisites for all Paths**

The person must be *sincere* in choosing a particular path, must swear an oath to a Power of Mount Celestia when the path is chosen, and must make a sacrifice valued at 100 gp/character level, typically by giving the item(s) to a native. As long as the person is actively pursuing a path, lantern archons will not attack him. The same immunity is not guaranteed any traveling companions.

***Eightfold Path:*** A person choosing this path must demonstrate patience, pacifism, courage, joy, discipline, generosity, kindness, and teaching others. The character will undertake one encounter focusing on each virtue; remember that the character in question is the only one whose actions are considered. The encounters can take place in any order. After successfully completing the first encounter on this path, the traveler gains a +2 sacred bonus to Charisma as long as he remains on Mount Celestia and this path is pursued.

***Path of Five Virtues:*** A person choosing this path must demonstrate honesty, charity, hope, moderation, and tolerance. The character will undertake one encounter focusing on each, played in any order. After successfully completing the first encounter on this path, the traveler gains a +2 sacred bonus to Strength as long as he remains on Mount Celestia and this path is pursued.

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*Restriction:* You cannot progress beyond the sixth layer by following this path.

***Path of Valor:*** A person choosing this path must perform a good deed each day. They will undertake one encounter per game day. After successfully completing the first good deed, the traveler gains a +2 sacred bonus to Dexterity for as long as he remains on Mount Celestia and this path is pursued.

*Restriction:* You cannot progress beyond the fifth layer by following this path.

***Path of Renunciation:*** A person choosing this path must grant constant charity to anyone who requests it, may only carry a single change of clothing and one weapon, must beg for food and lodging, and must physically suffer in some way (flagellation, fasting, vow of silence, vow of chastity, etc). After the first day of successfully pursuing this path, the traveler gains a +2 sacred bonus to Constitution for as long as he remains on Mount Celestia and this path is pursued.

*Recommendation:* This path should last a minimum of two days, and the DM should follow the rules for starvation and dehydration if fasting is chosen as the form of suffering.

***Path of Mystic Union:*** A person choosing this path must meditate, perform cleansing rituals, fast, and seek visions. After the first day of successfully pursuing this path, the traveler gains a +2 sacred bonus to Wisdom for as long as he remains on Mount Celestia and this path is pursued.

*Recommendation:* This path should last a minimum of three days, and the DM should follow the rules for starvation and dehydration. This is a good path for extensive roleplaying sessions, where the character pursuing the path simply meditates all day and the other characters plan, argue, discuss, etc., and then when everyone wakes up the next morning, they find themselves further along the path to the next layer.

***Path of Gnosis:*** A person choosing this path must seek knowledge, studying and researching ancient lore. After the first day of successfully pursuing this path, the traveler gains a +2 sacred bonus to Intelligence for as long as he remains on Mount Celestia and this path is pursued.

*Restriction:* You cannot progress beyond the fourth layer by following this path.

*Recommendation:* This path should last a minimum of one week and should be initiated within a place of learning on Mount Celestia. This path is best to eat up downtime, with one character researching the portal to the next layer, and the others training, making magic items, researching spells, etc.

### Planar Traits

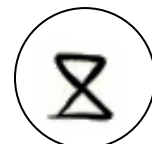
**Alignment-dominant:** Mount Celestia is mildly lawful and mildly good. Those of opposing

alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks. These affects stack for multiple alignments.

**Impeded magic:** Planeshift, gate and other transportational magic or psionics targeting any location on the layer of Chronias fail to function.

**Creatures:** Archon, deva.

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 BY+⊕PIA


### *Bally Whitethroat*

The Twin Paradises have been my home always. I have roamed many of its gullies and peaks, accompanying my master, Falliinkle Greenstaff. A few times, we traveled to other planes, but I have never seen another plane like mine. My master used to say that the two layers of Bytopia, Dothion and Shurrock, are like the bread of a sandwich; when you look up into the sky, you can see the other layer facing you. All I know is that it makes me feel good and right. During the day it's like having a whole world as your neighbor, offering change and a fresh start. Familiar, yet new. Close, but unobtrusive. And when night comes, the sky is dotted by the flickering stars from the campfires and street lights of the layer above. Folk travel here for many reasons, but I think what they talk about most is the sense of opportunity and prosperity, which gives rise to its other title: the Bright Frontier. A basher can lose themselves in the land, forget their troubles, and make a new life for themselves with their own hands. Find friends, build a family, and be a part of something. Is there any better life?

All told, Bytopia is a place of balance, physically and spiritually. Those who live here show this balance in their lives of independence and civil duty, production and conservation. While those in Mount Celestia espouse individual enlightenment and perfection, the focus here is more practical. The gnomes and other humanoids of Bytopia believe in hard work and loving what you do. The thought goes that people tend to be happiest when they find something that's both fun for them and appreciated by others, something that actually contributes to making the world better. But even more than that, those who call the Bright Frontier home believe in struggle. Not the bloody conflicts that some planes see all too much of, but the kind that develops cutters to their full potential. They don't labor because they serve some master, or even for its own sake. Through work, practice, exploration, and innovation, they themselves are made better. Without opposition, there is only stagnation. There is no growth. So individuals and families run their businesses with pride, owing allegiance to no one save whatever guild they might belong to. Many of their creations or goods are developed for the benefit of the community as a whole. Sometimes this is a better tool, or an elaborate pulley system, or just something to bring a smile to your face. And while a degree of privacy is expected, no one hesitates to help a neighbor in genuine need. There are plenty of reasons for folk to form close communities, for the wilderness can be just as harsh as in the Beastlands, and savage creatures stalk it. Bytopia is an endless frontier, a forever unobtainable horizon.

Unlike the Beastlands, though, the plane doesn't resist progress. And the workshops, farms, and even the mines work with the landscape, rather than against it. The gnomes may put a mill beside a river, but they won't dam or divert that river. Wood workers and carpenters strictly monitor the felling of trees. This leads to a harmonious relationship between nature and society, producing some of the most industrial cities in all the Great Ring. Sometimes berks from other planes come and try to exploit our bounty, but the druids and their allies that roam the land keep an eternal vigil. Naturally, the residents here don't look well on lazy, shiftless types. They also don't believe in credit; it's cash on the barrelhead, or trade in service. While the trade bazaars use the coin familiar to outsiders for the most part, services, like inns or healers, actually prefer that visitors work for a meal or a bed. Chop some wood, clean out some stables, and then, when your brow is good and sweaty, you'll be treated like you deserve.

My master and I come from Dothion. Our home is of rolling hills and forests, spread with quiet farms and workshops while bustling towns and trading outposts sell the goods created throughout Bytopia. Masterwork objects of practically every sort can be purchased here, from weapons to fine rugs, and I understand that many merchants come straight to these bazaars when they can, rather than settling for inferior merchandise in Tradegate or Sigil. Gnome artificers sell wonderful creations such as clockwork animals, mechanical pranks, and alchemical goods. Many of these devices are unique, made more for the inspired love of invention than concerns of usefulness. The farmers of the Golden Hills and elsewhere bring their sought-after produce, such as cheeses, ales, fruits and vegetables, to market. My master's gods live there, in the Golden Hills, with gnome planars and petitioners. Such communities are like islands in the vast open wilderness. Though the layer is thought of as peaceful, settlers make sure not to migrate too far from established territories. There are towns and outposts out on the frontier which have been abandoned, some under mysterious circumstances.

Most outsiders see Bytopia as a sleepy, peaceful place, good for shopping and relaxing. But Shurrock's twisted mountains and dark forests, so often besieged by winds and rain, make an environment to challenge any rugged explorer. The layer is mostly the home of wild animals, but there are also deep mines where the gnomes dig for the gems and ore precious to them. They set up rough settlements surrounding the areas of industry, like the underground burg of Quarry. Even with the dangers, I prefer Shurrock to places like Yeoman, the largest town on Dothion. The threats there are trickier and less obvious, with the likes of the Planar Trade Consortium wheeling and dealing and the Order of Planes-Militant preaching against chaos and evil.

Getting between the two layers is tricky. There aren't many portals, and the one's that exist have people in charge of them, either merchants or guardians. The first protect their money, the second protect the towns from creatures that might wander through them. Most folks physically travel between the two layers. There are several mountains that connect the two layers, reaching from the surface of Dothion all the way to the surface of Shurrock, with the biggest and most used being Centerspire. Climb up it, and in the middle, get ready to start climbing down. Once you pass the area between the two layers, gravity reverses towards the other layer. Yes, that's right; it's more than a little confusing. Flyers usually adjust quickly.

Climbers better figure out which direction they're going real fast, unless they want to fall a good ways.

There are many creatures who call the Paradises home. The gnomes, both planars and petitioners, make up a fair chunk of the humanoid people of the plane. They're hardy, industrious folk who love to work. There are also many animals, many of them touched by good (and occasionally law), and a lot of them enormous, dire types. The gnomes especially befriend those of us who burrow, and the ones that roam the tors of the Golden Hills are tinted with gold themselves, as you can see in my own coat. The gnomes and we consider each other family. Now, on Shurrock, the beasts tend towards being dangerous and wild, sometimes attacking travelers and even settlements. The gnomes say that Urdlen, the Crawler Below (may I never see its pale snout) burrows deep under that layer from its realm in the Abyss, and other evil outsiders make their way up to our peaceful lands from those tunnels. Many of them are fiendish burrowing animals, but sometimes worse creatures break through.

Of course, we see any number of Upper Planar creatures, like hollyphants and a celestial or two. Some peculiar creatures call Bytopia home, like the tiny empathes called ethyks, many of which have been tamed for their ability to redirect the anger of others and can now be found throughout the planes. The skies are the hunting grounds for packs of the vicious, wormlike ni'iath. The horrid things evolved in the space between the layers; they are immune to the force of gravity, with four eyes spaced around their heads, and they use their tails to fling hapless, disoriented victims into the surrounding mountains. But the skies above Shurrock, at least, are protected by air sentinels. And the plant world is represented by the treants that protect the wild spaces. They are as aloof as their prime cousins, only making themselves known when the need arises.

But let none say there is no excitement here. Adventurers can prove their worth by protecting caravans, rooting out nests of evil beasts, and undertaking other quests (remember, favors and service are as good if not better than jink to Bytopians). Twisted things burrow from beneath; plunderers seek its treasures and invaders hunt its beasts; mysteries hide within the thick forests; miners uncover things buried for millennia. There is an organization, made up mostly of gnomes from Dotion, known as the Society of Shurrockian Cartographers, dedicated to exploring the uncharted depths and heights of the layer. They are commendable for their spirit, but they often find themselves in difficult situations. They have recently fallen afoul of one of the tso raiding parties that have begun to plague Bytopia. The tso have gotten a taste for hard-working gnome slaves and seem to have found portals to help them in their accursed trade.

I have also heard of dark rumors of a blight growing in the heart of gnome society, made up of those who have been seduced by the Crawler Below. At first, the cult known as the Small Crawlers were found only in the wilderness, but now some isolated towns have reported that cultists have been found amongst the inhabitants. They claim to have no leaders and forsake their names and identities amongst their fellows while performing strange rites underground, wearing masks and bathing in the blood of animals. What is to be done about these misguided souls? Their god is one of evil and chaos, but how do the individualist gnomes remain true to

their own beliefs by forbidding the beliefs of others? They have no answers yet, not as a group. Some call for the conversion of their wayward brethren, while others demand imprisonment and even death. Meanwhile, fear takes hold, as the gnomes become wary of their own neighbors. Those who spend too much time alone or shirk good, honest labor are suspect. There are times ahead which will surely test the spirit of the Bytopians. But this is the way it has always been; this is the way it should be.

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** Bytopia is mildly good. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks.

**Creatures:** Baku, hollyphant, treant, gnomes.

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ELYSIUM



*Alexi Mirrwood*

The Blessed Fields. The Plane of Peaceful Rest. Elysium. It's very name is synonymous with peace and tranquility. Serene valleys, vast mountains, sparkling rivers, it very much fits most cutters vision of heaven. At the center of the Upper Planes, it represents the purest incarnation of good, and is the home of countless planars and petitioners that have earned their rest in the service of that ideal. But it's oh so much more than a place to make one's case and spend the years in quiet prosperity (not that that's such a bad thing, mind you). I should know; I've been courting her for over twenty years now. Park your ears cutter, 'cause Elysium is more than just the sum of its residents or its position in the Outer Planes. I'm not here to peel ya for jink either, so don't give me that look. Just sit down in that chair over there and listen to an old greybeard's tale.

Situated between the untamed wilderness of the Beastlands and the cultivated fields of Bytopia, Elysium is a balance of lifestyles and pleasures, where a basher can live the life they most desire with hardly a care or concern. Here people only work if they want to, as the plane is bountiful enough to provide for everyone's needs. There's a good mix of different types of communities as well, from nomadic tribes to vast cities, and just about whatever life a body chooses is fine by everyone else. What misfortune one might experience here is only an opportunity for another to do good, and it should come as no surprise that the entire plane is a testament to what can be achieved when folk put the welfare of others above their own interests. The plane isn't content to let berks to come to that conclusion on their own, however, and that's where its true nature becomes clear. But we'll come to that in due time.

Elysium is divided into four layers, and each surrounded by the River Oceanus. Amoria, the first layer, is both the most hospitable and populous. It is a land of rolling hills, green meadows,



great forests, and shining beaches. The weather is always tame, neither too hot nor too cold even during the height of the seasons. Most of the burgs are situated along the coasts of Oceanus and glow like jewels during the night. The Transcendent Order has the largest presence here, save for perhaps the guardinals, though the Ciphers don't have any organized forces per se.

Hm? Oh, yes, my apologies, the guardinals are the exemplar of Elysium, celestials that combine animal and humanoid features representing true good. They're generally a peaceful and wise lot, though they have no tolerance for evil and make fierce warriors. Good-aligned folk come to them for advice and help, even other celestials, but don't be fooled by their reluctance to take part in every quest brought their way; the guardinals are easily the most proactive of the celestial races and have their hands in events across the multiverse.

Eronia is the second layer of Elysium, and is very much a rugged version of Amoria. Here the mountains are sharp, the hills steep, and the wind strong. The petitioners here believe the afterlife should still provide its challenges, and most of the planars that come here do so with the intent of testing their endurance and their heart. Whether its great canyons, white rapids, or snow white peaks reaching to the clouds, Eronia is a land of adventure. On the other hand, it has its fair share of tests and hurdles, where failure means a sod's going to be joining the petitioners for good.

Belierin is the most mysterious and least populated of Elysium's layers. It's a mist shrouded land with thick swamps and overgrown marshes, a far cry different from it's neighbors. Few save the guardinals are found here, and the other creatures that make their home here are often monsters that have no problem dragging a berk headfirst into the water, good intentions or not. Chant goes that the layer serves as a vault or prison for things the forces of good would have locked up or otherwise could not destroy. This might explain why the guardinals are so suspicious of people wandering around the plane and why use of divination or transplanar magic draws the attention of the natives.

#### **Belierin Travel Restrictions**

Planeshift, teleport and gate spells targeting locations on this layer of the plane are restricted. A Spellcraft check, DC 35 + spell level, is required in order to avoid the spell being redirected to the nearest guardianal outpost on Belierin.

Thalasia is the lowest layer and the origin of the River Oceanus itself. This layer is the home of the exalted and other archetypes of good that have been hidden away until some future time. It consists of a series of small, mostly tropical islands, but the majority of the layer's population resides in its underwater depths where entire kingdoms coexist out of the sight and mind of the rest of the multiverse. The islands themselves mostly house small communities of land dwellers living in peace with those below, though some serve as havens for the warriors of good. These mystical realms are often spoken of in legend on prime worlds and the petitioners here are the greatest heroes ever known. Reaching any such isle is a quest in and of itself, but the things to be seen there will make one wonder what sway Elysium truly has over the rest of the multiverse. Aye, I do mean the plane itself, for I've seen whole civilizations whisked away at their peak from the Prime to Thalasia, locked away from the multiverse and never knowing

anything had changed. Maybe they're being safeguarded from some great cataclysm, but I have little doubt that their existence will somehow serve the greater good, and thus Elysium itself.

See, the whole sodding plane is *aware*. Not truly alive in any traditional sense, but it thinks and acts to further its own ends as if it were one big power. Travel is the best example; when I said before that one's bad luck is a chance for another to do good, I wasn't being cute. When walking from place to place the plane puts such situations along the way, forcing bashers to choose between helping someone in a rough spot or going about their business. Those that show their good intentions will make it to their destination faster, while those that ignore the suffering of others could find their journey taking hours or days longer than it should. The plane doesn't stop its manipulations there, either. Most everything in Elysium exudes a feeling of safety and perfection. The feeling is so strong that an unlucky soul might even find themselves unwilling to leave after spending only a few days there, even if they have pressing concerns elsewhere in the Great Ring. The pleasure and joy one experiences steadily increases, warping their mind until they can imagine nothing else but the happiness of living here and pitching in to make it a better place. As time passes, even loved ones forget about their previous lives...

Ahem, don't mind me. Just because something is good doesn't mean it has to be kind, cutter. I remember the day twenty years ago when my own sweet Aleasia gave in to Elysium's sweet song. She rose in the middle of the night and walked off into the woods with nary a word nor kiss goodbye, and by the time I had risen she had vanished. I've spent the years since searching every layer and realm for sign of my love, giving up when I felt myself surrendering to Elysium's charms, and then only long enough to bring my wits back to me. The plane itself has lead me on this merry chase, teasing me with clues of her whereabouts to keep my hope alive, pushing me to continue my work so that I might tell others of what I find. Some of you chaotic bashers might balk at one's freedom being so blatantly taken from them, while lawful folk may consider the whole thing unjust, but here the only thing that matters is how it serves the greater good. Even if I should die without ever seeing Aleasia's face again, I'll know what my life has been for.

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** Elysium is strongly good. Those not of this alignment are at a -2 to Cha, Int, Wis checks.

**Impeded Magic:** Planeshift, teleport and gate spells targeting locations on this layer of the plane are restricted. A Spellcraft check, DC 35 + spell level, is required in order to avoid the spell being redirected to the nearest guardianal outpost on Belierin.

**Movement:** . Elysium is entrapping. Visitors to this plane must make a Will save for every week spent on the plane, at a DC 10 + 1 per consecutive week on the plane. Failure on this save results in becoming trapped on the plane, unable or unwilling to leave.

**Creatures:** Baku, foo creatures, moon dogs, per, phoenix, solars, guardianals.




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*Bold*

OK, first of all I gotta say, 'cos I understand that this is going to be in print, so no-one will see me, that I'm a fox. Reddish fur, four legs, in any other place would make noises a bit like a dog. But I'm from the Beastlands, and that means I can talk, because all animals from the Beastlands can talk. Even dogs. Though I gotta say, why you'd want to listen to a dog I can't imagine. Between you and me, they're not all that smart. Got you two-legged folk fooled, but they're really pretty dumb. Keep on talking about sticks for some reason.

So, you want to know about the Beastlands. The ultimate wildlife experience, with the emphasis on wildlife. I'm gonna make one thing clear, just so no one sends any curses my way later. The Beastlands don't really care for visitors. Nothing personal, but here the best life is the one uninterrupted. Those that live here mostly want to be left to their own devices, and they see nothing wrong with keeping life simple. *Natural*. Some even regard anything too fancy or artificial as corruptive, good intentions or not, since it tricks people into thinking they need more than they do and losing sight of what really matters. I'm not judging anyone, but outsiders better mind the plane's rules, as it'll fight you every step of the way if you try to introduce anything that don't fit in. Being a fox and all, I'm pretty content with things as they are.

The Beastlands are unusual, even for the planes. First off, the petitioners are like me. Well, not all foxes. But animals of some sort. The souls of animals are drawn here when they die to serve their lord and learn the way of things before being reincarnated. What to eat, how to raise young, all that. Not sure how it works, but there's also spirits for the trees, rivers, mountains, and maybe everything else. They don't share the same proclivity for talking, but I know a few druids that claim to hear them in the rustle of leaves, flow of water, and stuff like that. Course, more than a few have gone crazy when they experience firsthand just how alive the Beastlands are, so believe what you like.

Anyways, most other petitioners are transformed into animals too, or at least lycanthropes. You could go weeks without running into a two-leg; those that survive here are the ones happy to live in the wilderness and show proper respect. Others... well, they're in trouble. Those are the ones who've heard the other name for the plane, the Happy Hunting Grounds, and got the wrong idea. They think they're coming here to hunt some dumb animal. Well, there ain't any dumb animals round here. We can talk, we can think, and we're smart. We ain't gonna wander along and go "oh look, here's some meat just sitting on the ground with a rope lying around it, I think I'll go up and have a nibble." As often as not, those folk find that they're the ones who get hunted. And the dumbest of the lot come to Karasuthra to hunt. Take it from me, there are things in the darkness that you don't want to meet. Round here, if something goes bump in the night, it's usually pretty closely followed by a scream.

Now then, there are three layers, each defined by the positions of the sun, Selera, and the moon, Noctos. Krigala's the first layer, land of eternal noon, and folks I've met say it's always about midday there. Not sure how a day has a middle, but apparently it's important to you two-legs. I don't get there much because the temperature doesn't really suit me, but I can tell you a thing or two. The place is intense, with huge patches of desert and arid grassland taking up most of the layer, while on both sides of the River Oceanus are the thickest rainforests you're ever gonna find. Not even the darkest storm clouds will block Selera's light or the heaviest cover shelter against her heat, though, and Krigala has all types of odd beasts that have no right existing in the natural state of things as far as I can tell. Not all are bad, though; Ehlonna's realm, the Grove of Unicorns, and Skerrit's Glade, home to the centaur god, are peaceful places tucked deep in the forests with their share of friendly faces.

The second layer is Brux, land of never-ending twilight. There the sun and moon are evenly balanced in the sky; Selera is still visible over the horizon, but her brother Noctos can be seen as a half-moon opposite her, absorbing much of Selera's light. Thus, Brux is much cooler and there are long comfortable shadows everywhere. I'm told that some people find that pretty disturbing, though I can't see why. Still, most of the native two-legs live here: the winged-elves known as the avariel have their nest-towns amongst the trees, while tribes of wild elves occupy the mist-covered land. There's also a fair number of hybrid and were-creatures with their own niche communities. You know, catfolk and werecats, bearfolk and werebears. I hear they're a rare sight on other planes, and I suppose it's natural they'd feel most at home here. Never really spent much time with any of them, but I don't have any problems with the ones that aren't actually, you know, *evil*. Just 'cause the Beastlands are one of the Upper Planes doesn't mean it's lacking some savage and downright malevolent creatures.

I mostly live on the third layer, Karasuthra. This is Noctos' domain, and here the moon sits in the middle of the sky reflecting only a faint amount of his brother's light and absorbing the rest. How much illumination there is depends on the phase of the moon; decently bright at full moon, but more or less pitch black when the moon's dark, and not much can change that. Noctos doesn't like competition, and he'll drain the energy out of most other light sources. I told ya what's isn't natural don't belong, and here that includes torches, campfires, and certain magics too. Which is fine by me, I got my own eyes. I guess the layer is the most unpleasant of the three for other folk, though. There's a lot of things here that hunt in the dark, and most of them, you don't want to be caught by.

#### Lighting on Karasuthra

This layer is known for its darkness. This extends to natural sources of light which are snuffed out automatically, though the heat of a fire may still be felt at full strength. Magical sources of light are at half power, reaching only half their normal distance or dealing half their normal damage in the case of spells such as *searing light*.

Well, that's the general layout. Getting around the plane is pretty easy. There's lots of portals on each layer to all over the place, mostly the Outlands and various prime worlds. I've wandered into a couple by mistake, as the keys are often pretty simple. Actually, gotta tell you, it's a great laugh. Wander onto a prime world, find a local, and start talking to them. The look on their faces just before they start running, it's fantastic! Some folk I know, they do it on a regular basis for the kicks. It's a great laugh, though I guess not as funny if you're not an

animal. Anyways, there's also plenty of paths between the Beastland's layers. Best trick is to keep your eye on the sky, because if you see Selera or Noctos start to move and it begins to get lighter or darker then you're probably wandering over into another layer. Sometimes it can happen pretty quick though, so you don't always get enough warning to avoid it. Brux has the most of those, of course, being in the middle and all. There's few direct pathways between Krigala and Karasuthra, which is just as well because many of the creatures that live on one of those layers would be very badly out of place in the other.

Let's see, what else might you want to know. Gods? Hey, glad you asked, I'd nearly forgotten. You two-legged folk set a lot of store by powers don't you? Well, we don't have that many in the Beastlands. A few, mostly of nature or hunting, or some kind of animal. But we got plenty of the next best thing: the Animal Lords. There's one Animal Lord for each broad group of animals. So there's a Spider Lord for all spiders, a Cat Lord for all cats, and so on. They're not powers, so they can't do the things that a real god can, but they're pretty powerful. Tread carefully around them because if you really annoy them, the chances are that you won't make it off the plane with all of your limbs attached. Heck, even the Lords who have pretty inoffensive followers, like the Mouse Lord, can probably tear most of you two-legs to pieces if they really want to. Now think of the Cat Lord, who's not only tougher in her own right, but can also stick anything in the cat family on you. Ever wanted to be eaten by a pack of lions? Here's your chance.

Yeah, you're right, I eat mice sometimes. And no, it doesn't get me into trouble with the Mouse Lord. See, you gotta play the game by the rules. I eat what I need to survive. That might be mice, it might be berries, it might be some bird, it might be something I come across that some other creature had killed. And I hide from the bigger creatures that might want to eat me. That's the balance, that's OK. Now if I went around just killing loads of creatures for the fun of it, then I'd be a menace and I'd get into trouble. That's how come some of you two-legs get to live on this plane for decades, and others get themselves killed within hours. Live within the rules, take what you need and no more. That's why the fiends and shadow creatures that occasionally come to Karasuthra get themselves killed fairly quickly. I've heard tell from you two-legs that we're all "good" creatures in some way. It ain't really that, we're just natural. And killing for fun, that isn't really natural, so we don't tolerate it. That's the way things are.

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** The Beastlands are mildly good. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks.

**Creatures:** Aasimon, baku, mortai, and normal and giant-sized varieties of any number of animals.



*Excerpt from a Sensate induction lecture by Chaminda Vaas*

At this point in your introduction to the Society of Sensation, it falls to me to tell you about the Plane where we are considered to exert most influence, namely that of Arborea. Firstly, let me introduce myself. I am Chaminda Vaas, and I have been a Sensate for longer than most of you have been alive, something in the order of 150 years now. I lived on Arborea for around 50 of those years, so I am more than qualified to tell people about the plane.

I can say, with a fair degree of confidence, because I've seen it before, that most of the people currently in this room have missed the idea of what being a Sensate is. You've probably got the idea that it's all about finding new ways to get drunk, or have sex, or something equally decadent. Sadly, my experience is that most of the people we recruit are the shallow, vapid type who believes this sort of misinformation.

I am equally confident that most of the people in this room have missed the idea of the plane of Arborea. The common perception is that it is the ultimate party plane, where the booze, the laughter and the fun never stops. Those of you who want to find that in Arborea will probably be able to do so. If nothing else, you can always join the Bacchae, and never be seen again.

What I am about to tell you is for the few who are still listening to my words, and are really hearing them. The few who truly understand what it is to be a Sensate, rather than lusting after pure hedonism. The few who will learn something from my talk that will be useful to them later in their lives, that will be able to look back to this day and say to themselves 'this is when I really started to learn something about myself'.

Arborea is everything that you have heard it to be. It is a place of plenty, and enjoyment, of fulfilment. Even today it provides over one third of the produce eaten in Sigil, be that bread, fruit, vegetables, wines or whatever. It is a place that caters to the tastes of the individual, that allows you to express yourself as you would wish to do so. It is the plane where you may find your inner poet, your inner musician, or inner playwright. It is the plane where the Sensates send their less... inspired members, to let them quietly enjoy themselves out of harm's way, as much as you can be in this multiverse.

And for those willing to look beneath the surface, Arborea is nothing less than a lesson in the nature of life itself.

Almost everything that I have said about Arborea, and almost everything that you know about Arborea, comes from not only one layer of the plane, but one realm of that plane. That realm is Olympus, home to most of a pantheon of Gods called the Olympians, headed by a power called Zeus. The elves in the audience today will know that the other major realm of the first

layer is Arvandor, home to most of the Seldarine, the elven pantheon. These two realms are so closely identified with the layer that depending on who you speak to, the first layer tends to be called either Arvandor or Olympus. The important thing to note is that Arvandor is not quite such a place of revelry as Olympus, and that there is an awful lot of the layer that falls within neither realm, not least the Gilded Hall that the Sensates maintain as their base on Arborea.

If you care to scratch beneath the surface of Arborea, you will find the layer of Ossa, or Aquallor. The second layer of the plane is one of water. You'd better be able to swim, because no-one is aware of any land anywhere on the layer. Breathing water would be handy as well, because the storms that wrack the layer tend to make the surface untrustworthy for ships, and the best place to be is beneath the waves.

But the real lesson is the third layer. This is the lesson that the wise will take to heart. This is the bit that really teaches you something about life, not just on Arborea, but everywhere. Look really deeply, and you'll find something harsh and deadly. In Arborea's case, it is the layer of Pelion, or Mithardir. An endless desert of white sand. Few travel there, and few of those return. There is an isolated realm or location of interest on the layer, but you'd better know exactly where they are because you could spend a dozen lifetimes wandering without finding them. Travel unprepared and Pelion will make your one lifetime all too brief.

And that is what you should really learn about Arborea. Life is struggle. Life is survival. If you need an example of this, look no further than the two main races resident on Arborea; the elves and the eladrin. It is true that both races appreciate fine art, fine poetry, fine wine, fine food and fine living. They appreciate peace and beauty. They like what may be described as the good life. But it is equally true that members of both races would lay down those lives to fight evil, to protect the innocent, to defend the weak. The guardinals and archons may tell you that they do not agree with the emphasis on the individual that the eladrin or the elves place, but that the dedication that those races have to fighting evil, in all its forms, neither the guardinals nor the archons would fault.

Those of you with the right minds, with the right interests, with the right understanding of what the Society of Sensation is about, will learn much from Arborea, and from its residents. You will learn to appreciate the beauty of a tranquil wood at sunrise. The taste of a fine wine. The emotion, the drama, of a good play. The fact that each person must find their own niche, their own appreciation of each sensation, their own understanding. That everyone is different, and unique, and should be treated as such. And that ideas like this, are worth defending, with everything you have to give. That beneath the velvet exterior that, like Arborea, you portray to those who glance casually at you, you must have the steely sinews, the strength, the courage and the determination to fight for individualism and for what is right.

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** Arborea is mildly good and mildly chaotic. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks. These affects stack for multiple alignments.

**Creatures:** Cyclops, foo creatures, giants, sphinx, titans, elves, eladrin.

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YSGARD



### *Thorstein Skammlaus*

Ah, Ysgard, now there's a plane where folk know how to live. Good people, great food, land unlike anything else on the planes, and adventure ready to be had around every corner. It's got the best of the Upper Planes without the boredom or the celestials breathing down your neck. Acheron may be where leaders make war and Elysium may be where champions find their rest, but Ysgard is where boys become men and legends are born! Fill up my mug, cutter, and I'll give you all the chant you need to know.

Smack between the extravagant Arborea and the rolling expanse of Limbo, Ysgard is a place of extremes. It represents the essence of freedom and chaos while not abandoning itself to madness or anarchy. A basher is not only given the right to make their own way, but expected to do so against all odds and come out stronger for it. The plane is a harsh and dangerous place, with rocky plains and jagged mountains combined with scorching summers and freezing cold winters. Giants, dragons, and other monsters roam the land and wage endless war against the inhabitants. The powers and proxies here intervene rarely, and even the help of a neighbor comes with the expectancy that the favor will be returned. All of this comes not out of cruelty, but from the genuine belief that a cutter reaches their peak only when they're truly challenged in life. Here a body's judged not by their abilities or their methods, but by their determination and strength of spirit. Even the weak of frame have a home in Ysgard, for the plane will always give you enough to get by; it's just up to you to make use of it. Sound a lot like them Fated? Yeah, well this is their home, and a good majority of the planars here are a member of the faction. The outlook of that faction is based on lessons learned on Ysgard, and anyone who thinks they're heartless prolly doesn't have what it takes to last long there.

The petitioners and other residents of Ysgard are about the hardest, most stubborn lot you're going to find. They gotta be, else someone or something is gonna eat them up. I hear parts of the Upper Planes emphasize challenges and growth, but here folks aren't interested in giving you a helping hand and no one's pulling any punches. Heck, charity is just a sign that you think someone doesn't have what it takes to take care of themselves. Sure, most everyone follows some sort of honor code and bashers of all sort will band together to vike, but that's only because that's the best way they can make a name for themselves. Even the Valkyrie, who are the closest thing to exemplar the plane really has, are more likely to watch a berk meet his end than a lift a hand in aid. If you see one on their winged steeds on the battlefield there's a good chance you're about to be put in the dead-book.



Still, the Valks are a great lot, and can be real useful if you convince them to help you since their about the only ones who can get from one region to another without trouble. That's damn important considering how the plane is broken up. See, there are three layers to Ysgard, but the first two aren't actually single layers but more a collection of islands floating miles and miles above the third. The bottoms of these earthbergs are aflame and send a continuous jet of steam rising up along the rim, posing a dangerous obstacle to all but the Valkyrie and often blanketing the tops with heavy mist. These isles range in size from that of a small rock to that of a continent - what? No, I don't know why they float; do I look like a sodding Guvner? Keep your trap shut and listen - and get me another mug while you're at it.

The first and topmost-layer, which is also called Ysgard, or Ysgard proper, is where you'll find most of the plane's residents, including the Asgardian pantheon and their followers, the mysterious Vanir powers and their elven and fey ilk in Alfheim, and the nomad tribes of bariaur that call the hills and plains kip. Asgard seems to be the largest realm of the layer, and its here that even mortals can know the joy of glorious death in combat and rebirth in the morn'. Whoever said that rule applies to all of Ysgard was spoutin' pure screed, and prolly looking to have a laugh at sending clueless to the dead-book. The River Oceanus also comes to an end along the realm's shores, which folk use to sail their longships to other earthbergs or to the Upper Planes when seeking trade or going viking.

Of course, the Oceanus doesn't connect to every island, or even most of them, so most rely on airships made specifically for that purpose (few in Ysgard proper trust magic or beasts enough for the task, and neither provide the benefits of a sturdy ship). These vessels supposedly only work in Ysgard, though I've heard a tale or two of ships manufactured to travel across the planes. Once past the curtain of steam along the edges these ships need only worry about the strong winds and occasional storm in traveling to the other earthbergs. If for some reason the airships aren't an option there's always the World Ash, Yggdrasil, whose branches reach many Ysgard's corners, as well as those of other planes. I won't tally on the great tree save to say you should see it just for the sight, but navigating its paths can be tricky at best.

The second most notorious earthberg of Ysgard proper is Jotunheim, land of the giants, a frozen wasteland where the big prey on the small and valor gives way to power, pure and simple. The frost giants, led by their god Thrym, are the uncontested rulers of the land, though the fire giants also dwell in Jotunheim's massive volcanoes. The island is surrounded by a river of huge shards of ice that's nearly impossible to navigate safely (severely hampering the giants' ability to spread to other lands, thankfully). Planar towns are barely able to survive in the realm's endless winter, and those that do have no choice but to offer fealty to the giants and pray that they won't be destroyed on a whim. As if that wasn't enough to keep a sod busy, I've heard tales of packs of vampires migrating from town to town or setting themselves up as jarls, their nature protecting them from most of the realm's natural hazards. Planars in Jotunheim expect everyone to do whatever they can get a way with and act accordingly, but they're truly not evil or vicious, they just do what's required of them to survive.

Now park your ears to me cutter, for if yer going to Ysgard, you need to know this. What good there is in Ysgard dies on its second layer, Muspelheim. There the earthbergs float upside

down, with flames scaring the ground and smoke choking the air. There are endless storms of ash and soot, and even the rocks will cut your feet to ribbon. Trust me, it's all the worst the Elemental Plane of Fire has to offer with none of the amenities. Only the fire giants and their beasts can survive that hell. Surtur, their god, lays claim to all of Muspelheim, though I've heard tales of other powers that inhabit a few of the isles unbeknownst to him. It is a rare planewalker who has journeyed to Muspelheim and escaped the patrols of giants long enough to explore far, and I have heard tales of places where no magic or gear can protect you from the flames. It is said much of the multiverse was once forged from the flames of Muspelheim, and that Surtur guards the dark of its creation and eventual destruction. Screed or not, I have little doubt there are many things of power and value hidden there, but there's more than enough excitement to be found on the first layer if you ask me.

Nidavellir, Ysgard's third layer, isn't the most welcoming place either, but it's a far shot better. While it possesses a surface like most other planes, it's pretty desolate, most of the plane is hidden underground. Freedom is the most important thing here, and the inhabitants have little interest in the conflicts of the planes beyond what it takes to ensure their own independence and livelihood. Its tunnels and caverns are split mostly between the warring realms of Nidavellir proper, populated by the dwarves and gnomes, and Svartalrheim, the underground forests of the dark elves. The dwarves and gnomes are obsessed with the acquisition of wealth for its own sake, believing that it is the only thing that can guarantee their freedom and protect them from any hard times ahead. Though the two races are rivals, together they provide some of the finest crafts and magics this side of the Great Wheel, and they remain united against the dark elves.

The elves for their part seem to want little more than to hide away in their strange caverns, where trees and other plants that don't require sunlight grow. Supposedly they make an existence of hoarding secrets and making pacts with the Court of Unseelie fey, as well as even less savory beasts, but you'll hardly get a word out of them to prove it one way or another. All in all they're nothing like stories of drow I've heard from the Prime, but they're no more trusted. No one's quite sure why either realm wars with the other, but it wouldn't surprise me if the whole thing was just out of paranoia of what the other side would do if left unchecked. Racial wars aside, the gods only know what you could learn from the folk of Nidavellir if you could convince them to let down their guard for a bit. But hey, if they've survived this long the way they have they must've figured something out right.

### Planar Traits

**Energy-dominant:** Some regions have the minor positive-dominant trait, in which living creatures gain fast heal 2 and regeneration. Petitioners of Ysgard raise within 24 hours if killed on the plane.

**Alignment-dominant:** Ysgard is mildly chaotic. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks.

**Creatures:** Foo creatures, hollyphant, planetar, ratatosk, Norse petitioners, drow, dwarves, giants, bariaur.



### *A Strange Petitioner inside a Moon*

Good you see how to. Sit like to down would you? Hah, had you worried I was another one of those bloody chaosmen, didn't I? As if the Xaositects were the only ones who would choose to spend their time in Limbo. As barmy as they come, those *people*, and I use the term lightly. What they lack in intellect, they make up for dedication, however. It's not easy being devoting to the primordial wild that is chaos incarnate. You've shown quite a bit of perseverance yourself, forcing your way past my guards like that. No, I'm not angry, everything you destroyed has already been remade, and in Limbo such obstinacy should be rewarded. Come, I shall fashion seats for you and then we can talk like civilized beings. You will forgive me if I ramble on, I have grown accustomed to the sound of my own voice being my sole companion these past two centuries, for it has been far too long since I last had visitors.

You must have been surprised to see something so large floating in the wild. I modeled this realm after the moon of my home on the Prime Material. It's about the right size and a fair replica if I do say so myself, though perhaps the chaos-matter has eroded it some while my mind wandered. You were swimming through it weren't you, the chaos-matter? Is this your first time in Limbo? Yes, that would explain that little spell on you, something to protect you from the more dangerous properties of the plane. Really not necessary, and you never know when such magic will go awry at an inopportune time. It's not hard to create air to breathe and even ground to walk on. Surely you saw how the chaos-matter changes. The stuff is made of equal amounts of the four elements, but randomly shifts in consistency. Bubbles of air ignite into flame or become solid rock. Earth changes to water and back again, before reverting to raw chaos-matter. I know it can be quite disorienting at times, there being neither up nor down, and it must be terrifying for those afraid of drowning. Or of being buried alive, or of catching on fire! Really, traveling through Limbo can be quite like swimming through a thick, deadly soup. So I've been told, anyways.

Amazing isn't it? All of Limbo filled with this chaos-matter, no layers or boundaries to give it any semblance of order or definition. It can be hard to appreciate until you realize that all Creation was once like this, that the Great Ring itself originated here. Few people know that about Limbo, and plenty would rather disregard it for other tales tailored to their beliefs. No, I won't try to answer how it all came into being. I'm just as willing to believe it a random act as the providence of some long forgotten deity. After all, strange and wonderful things pop into existence all the time here. If you think about it, with the chaos-matter continually changing you're bound to find something a bit more interesting than elemental pockets eventually. More often than you'd think I've seen realms that look like they were ripped straight from the Prime; masses of earth complete with grass, trees, and other terrain, sometimes even air and gravity all their own. Mazes of coral reefs, castles made of crystal, explosive symphonies of light and sound, and other sights and sounds far more amazing. The plane spontaneously forms it all, and just as spontaneously tears it apart. The most beautiful, impossible things can be

found in Limbo, only to vanish without a moment's notice. I've spent days on the surface of my realm watching diamond tears rain upon the ground, sat in the middle of a sun as its light and heat transformed into musical notes, let my body dissolve under the acidic caresses of...

Er, pardon me, I'm rambling again. Anyways, it'd be a real tragedy that such things fade away if not for the fact that a strong mind can hold it together or recreate it at will. That's what I was getting at a minute ago when I said it's really a simple matter to survive without magic. Even mortals can shape the chaos-matter to their whim, from altering the elemental shifts to bringing one's wildest dreams to life. With a tad bit of luck even the most unskilled can control the area around them enough to create pockets of air to breathe, while anarchs, the true masters of chaos-shaping, can create entire cities or bend the very laws of reality. That's how the githzerai in ages past went and made themselves a civilization out of nothing. Most techniques of chaos-shaping used today are muddled derivations of those invented by the githzerai chaos-shapers of the Anarch Guild, though I honestly doubt any of them have the expertise to make something as grand as this realm of mine! There are any number of folk who have attempted to follow in their footsteps, going off in the wild to make realms of their own. Then they see this place and think I'm just dying to spend a decade teaching someone to make a moon of their own! They should stick with the githzerai, they make excellent teachers, assuming you can convince them you're "worthy for instruction" and all that. Otherwise, you can always find a mentor among any of the lesser Anarch Guilds. Just make sure you're dealing with someone reputable.

### Wild Magic Effects On Limbo

*Any spell or spell-like ability used on a wild magic plane has a chance to go awry. The caster must make a level check (DC 15 + the level of the spell or effect) for the magic to function normally. For spell-like abilities, use the level or HD of the creature employing the ability for the caster level check and the level of the spell-like ability to set the DC for the caster level check. Failure on this check means that something strange happens; roll d% and consult the following table. DMs may feel free to develop their own tables as well. Additional tables for wild magic effects may be found in the Wild Magic section of Chapter 5. In keeping with the nature of this form of magic, the DM may feel free to use whichever table he wishes at whim.*

d100	Effect
01-19	Spell rebounds on caster with normal effect. If the spell cannot affect the caster, it simply fails.
20-23	A circular pit 15 feet wide opens under the caster's feet; it is 10 feet deep per level of the caster.
24-27	The spell fails, but the target or targets of the spell are pelted with a rain of small objects (anything from flowers to rotten fruit), which disappear upon striking. The barrage continues for 1 round. During this time the targets are blinded and must make Concentration checks (DC 15 + spell level) to cast spells.
28-31	The spell affects a random target or area. Randomly choose a different target from among those in range of the spell or center the spell at a random place within range of the spell. To generate direction randomly, roll 1d8 and count clockwise around the compass, starting with south. To generate range randomly, roll 3d6. Multiply the result by 5 feet for close range spells, 20 feet for medium range spells, or 80 feet for long range spells.
32-35	The spell functions normally, but any material components are not consumed. The spell is not expended from the caster's mind (a spell slot or prepared spell can be

	used again). An item does not lose charges, and the effect does not count against an item's or spell-like ability's use limit.
36-39	The spell does not function. Instead, everyone (friend or foe) within 30 feet of the caster receives the effect of a heal spell.
40-43	The spell does not function. Instead, a deeper darkness and a silence effect cover a 30-foot radius around the caster for 2d4 rounds.
44-47	The spell does not function. Instead, a reverse gravity effect covers a 30-foot radius around the caster for 1 round.
48-51	The spell functions, but shimmering colors swirl around the caster for 1d4 rounds. Treat this a glitterdust effect with a save DC of 10 + the level of the spell that generated this result.
52-59	Nothing happens. The spell does not function. Any material components are used up. The spell or spell slot is used up, and charges or uses from an item are used up.
60-71	Nothing happens. The spell does not function. Any material components are not consumed. The spell is not expended from the caster's mind (a spell slot or prepared spell can be used again). An item does not lose charges, and the effect does not count against an item's or spell-like ability's use limit.
72-98	The spell functions normally.
99-100	The spell functions strongly. Saving throws against the spell incur a -2 penalty. The spell has the maximum possible effect, as if it were cast with the Maximize Spell feat. If the spell is already maximized with the feat, there is no further effect.

As you can see young adventurer, there's no place quite like Limbo. A few planes come close, namely the Ethereal and the Dream, each with its own take on raw dynamism and creativity, but what they lack is the most important quality of Limbo: freedom. Freedom from scarcity, from the social mores and dependencies of society, and most of all freedom from others trying to set the course of your life. If you don't like the way of things in a given community, there's little to stop you from setting out to live life as you, to literally make the world into what you want it to be. The chaos-matter can be shaped to meet most physical needs, there's no demand for farmers, cobblers, smiths, or any number of professions people take up in order to survive. A body can make their own food, tools, or home. You can choose to live on an island in the middle of a vast ocean, in a dense forest of tall trees and wild flowers, or among the stars of a night sky. Build a community with like-minded fellows or strike out on your own as you see fit. Individualism at its purest.

Hm? A fine question! With the option to live like a god, you'd think there'd be a lot more people making their way to Limbo. Ironically, most are scared off by the dangers of chaos-matter before realizing the potential it has. But more importantly, becoming proficient enough in chaos-shaping that you do not have to continually concentrate to maintain what you create requires years of dedicated training. As if the prospect of crafting your own world wasn't alluring enough, some people are just so reliant on the social constructs of their home community that they refuse to do what it takes to claim control of their lives! Sadly, not all of those who do accept the challenge are up to the task of constantly pondering subjective reality, and they simply lose a bit of sanity along the way. Ironically, such individuals tend to demonstrate amazing capability for chaos-shaping, even if they can't tell the difference between what is a figment of their own creation and what isn't. Perhaps they're better off that way. The Xaositects appear happy enough, and I've often thought that might be how they

got started. No, but we dislike them. Insane little vermin, constantly milling about trying to tear away pieces of our realm...

The greatest threat to living out one's days in a fantasyland, however, are the native beasts of the Limbo. The plane hosts a number of very dangerous creatures that will hunt others for food or sport, most of which are highly adaptive and natural chaos-shapers. Anyone that spends an extended in the wild has to be able to fend off monsters themselves or find strength in numbers, meaning that one has to be pretty resilient to hold onto a realm on their own. The slaadi are the most well-known and prevalent predators of the plane; there are even more of the accursed toad-men than Xaositects floating around in the wild, and they're equally likely to try and gnaw on your bones! Don't waste any time trying to strike up a conversation with one, slaadi see other creatures only as *things* to do what they want with. While they don't normally gang up on their prey, they love to travel in packs and will attack travelers or even entire colonies. The only recourse a realm has is to have a militia ready at all times for the inevitable assault.

How do I survive by myself? Oh, I was made a green slaad's meal ages ago. No matter, things have been on the up and up ever since. I can't explain to you how liberating it is to no longer be confined by a physical body. You never realize how much such things limit you until you're forced to give them up. Don't look so dour; embrace the freedom Limbo offers and you'll have an eternity to make a moon of your own!

**Alternate Rule: Shaping Limbo as per Manual of the Planes**

If you don't wish to use the Control Skill for your game you will need to use the rules as found in the Manual of the Planes for shaping Chaos matter on Limbo. A Wisdom check of a DC 16 will establish control, and the check can be repeated every round as a free action if the first attempt fails. Failure on this check twice in a row provides a +6 circumstance bonus on the next attempt.

Once the chaos is controlled the controller may choose any environment he prefers, and it will last as long as he remains in the area. If more than one controller has taken over an area (or controlled areas overlap) then the higher Intelligence wins. In a tie of Intelligence, the higher Charisma wins. Controlled areas drift at a speed of 1d4x10 feet per round, in a random direction. If the controller has a high enough Wisdom, the controlled area becomes stable and will not revert back to Limbo when the controller leaves - the area will still be subject to any damage caused by changes in its surrounding Limbo.

**TABLE 8-4: CONTROLLING LIMBO**

Controlled Limbo Area		
Wisdom Score	Controlled Area (radius)	Stabilized Area (radius)
1-3	no effect	-
4-7	1 ft	-
8-11	5 ft	-
12-15	10 ft	-
16-19	15 ft	-
20-23	20 ft	5ft

24+

+5ft per 4 Wisdom

+5 ft per 4 Wisdom

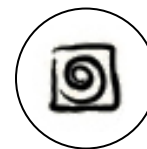
### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** Limbo is strongly chaotic. Those not of this alignment are at a -2 to Cha, Int, Wis checks.

**Modified magic:** Limbo is subject to wild magic effects as described above.

**Creatures:** Githzerai, slaadi.

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 PANDEMONIUM


### *Clurston-and-Friend*

You hear that, mate? That moaning, shrieking, whistling, sighing? You'll hear that a lot here in Pandemonium. Matter of fact, you can't really get away from it. At first, the constant sound of the wind plays tricks with a sods' minds, makin' 'em angry, or depressed, or hysterical, or one after the other. After a while, though, you'll get used to it. 'Course, there are those who say the only way you get used to the wind is by goin' completely sodding barmy. Now, Clurston an' I, we've been here long enough, we don't even notice the wind anymore unless we're specifically listening for it. Who's Clurston? He's the basher standing right next to me; who do you think he is? What do you mean you don't see him? He's a seven-foot walking elephant shrew; he's kind of hard to miss, ain't he? Hey, don't get sore at me, berk. It's easy to get sore here. That's just the wind gettin' into your head. You'll get used to it.

Yeah, all of Pandemonium's like this, pretty much. Just endless caverns, with the wind whistlin' through. Gravity's toward whichever side o' the cave you're closest to, so you can walk around a bit an' find yourself on what a minute ago you were seein' as the ceiling. An' the whole plane's dark as a loth's heart, if you ain't carryin' your own light source, which'll sure draw attention from anything nearby. Actually, if you're claustrophobic, the lower layers are worse. Here on Pandemos, the first layer, sure there are some narrow tunnels, but there are a lot o' great big caverns, too, huge enough to fit a good-sized burg in and have plenty o' room to spare, so most of the locales make kip here. But Cocytus, well, the rooms an' passages there are a little smaller, and a little twistier, an' the wind, it's a little louder, an' a little shriller. Well, a lot louder, actually; you think the wind *here's* bad, go to Cocytus and you'll see it could be worse.

Phlegethon, the third layer, well, maybe it ain't much more cramped than the upper layers, and maybe the wind ain't as loud there as in Cocytus, but it's got issues of its own. For one

thing, it's *cold*. Cold as a hag's embrace, it is—not like the Plane of Ice, maybe, but cold enough to make a body uncomfortable who's used to warmer climes. For another, there are rumors of all sorts of terrible beasts there, huge dragons and giant oozes and the Lady knows what else. Not that there's much to back those rumors up, so it could be all screed, but you won't catch me wandering around there tryin' to find out. Also, it might be worth mentioning is that the gravity there only works one way; you can't walk around on the ceiling like on the other layers—'course, this means dripping water gets the chance to build up, an' you can see all sorts o' beautiful cave formations there—least, that's what I'm told. I ain't been to Phlegethon myself, and like I said I ain't got much desire to go there.

Finally, Agathion, the lowest layer—well, it's just a few little pockets of air in a great expanse o' stone. Which makes it real hard to get around there, but it also makes it a good place for stickin' things a cutter don't want found. Chant is the bubbles of Agathion are peppered with imprisoned terrible monsters and hidden treasures and artifacts—though if they are, they're like to stay imprisoned and hidden for a good many long years yet.

What's the matter now, berk? Yeah, something's the matter, the way you're standin' there slumped. What? Oh, I'm sure you'll be able to make a good report out of all this. You know what? You're just feelin' hopeless 'cause the wind's gettin' to you. That's all. It's just the wind gettin' in your head. You'll get used to it.

So, yeah, like I was sayin', all the layers of Pandemonium are just solid stone with a few caves in 'em. You know what, though? If you look closely at some o' that stone, you can see what looks like the marks o' tools. In the second layer, at least, it's obvious though here an' there I've seen what I could swear looked like chisel marks on the other layers too—they're just hidden better.

Pandemonium's where the headwaters are o' the Styx, too, incidentally. You'll see streams and tributaries runnin' all through the plane, along all the surfaces of the caves an' sometimes just through the air right down the middle. Fortunately, here on Pandemonium gettin' a little Styx water splashed on you won't hurt you none, though the stuff still ain't safe to drink. Ain't safe to take a dip in, neither, unless you twig to gettin' swept along in the current and endin' up in the middle of the Blood War on the Waste, or the moat of an evil titan's castle in Carceri. Now, I know Pandemonium may not be most bashers' favorite spot to be, but there are places I'd like to be less.

Calm down, berk, calm down! I was just gettin' to that! No need to get so excited! Eh, but I can't blame you; it's not really your fault. It's just the wind gettin' into your head, that's all. You'll get used to it.

So, inhabitants. Yeah. Now, Pandemonium, it's not home to any big planar race, like the tanar'ri or the yugoloths or the slaadi. I mean, you'll see some of any of those in the plane occasionally, but there's no race that *comes* from here. Not anymore, anyway. Unless whatever



dug those tunnels is still somewhere out there, hiding. Clurston, now, he says he saw one once, a weird thing like a giant clawed hand with a face on it, that moved about on a mass of tentacles. But Clurston—well, don't tell him I said this, but sometimes he sees things that ain't there. I've even caught him talking to imaginary friends. Sad, really.

But anyway, even if there ain't any big exemplar race that hails from here, that don't mean there ain't other creatures that do. Like the howlers, for one. You think the wind is bad? Wait till you hear one of *those*. Their howls are like the winds o' Pandemonium in concentrated form. An' there are the murska, giant carnivorous beetle things that can wear the skins o' their prey and imitate them to lure their former comrades within easy reach.

'Course, like all the Outer Planes, Pandemonium has its petitioners. They're easy to tell apart from petitioners elsewhere, too—and I mean aside from the fact that they're all barmier than a drunken slaad. They're all real thin an' emaciated-like, the better to withstand the force o' the wind, an' they have claw-like fingers an' toes, an' clawed heels, too, the better to keep a grip on the cave surface when the wind blows hard. An' they don't wear much in the way o' clothing, seein' as the wind would just whip it around or tear it to shreds anyway.

And then, of course, there are the humans and other mortal planars who live here. Not as many as on some o' the other Outer Planes, but there are a few. Now, a lot o' the people here, they're exiles, banished to Pandemonium for one reason or another—there's even a whole sect o' berks, the Dispossessed, who mainly call kip in Pandemonium, an' spend their time stewin' about how they've been wronged, an' how they're gonna get back at the people who wronged 'em. Their main case is a burg called Windglum, in Phlegethon, but you'll find 'em elsewhere, too. 'Course, while we're on the subject o' factions with a presence in Pandemonium, I guess we've gotta mention the Bleak Cabal. They've got their own case in Pandesmos, called the Madhouse. An', having visited there myself, I can tell you the place earns its name. Oh, I'm not sayin' the Bleakers are any barmier than anyone else here. Well, not much, at any rate. Most everyone you'll meet here is barmy as they come, from an outsider's viewpoint, though they ain't all barmy in the same way. Even Clurston here. I told you he's got an imaginary friend, didn't I? So anyway, I—

What's that you're doin', mate? I—don't know why you're drawin' things in your own flesh with your dagger like that. Don't look too healthy. But then, I guess that's your way of adaptin' to the wind, ain't it? We all got our own ways o' dealin' with it, and maybe that's yours. Like I said, the wind drives everyone barmy, in their own way. Nah, you don't have to believe me. Seems no one believes it when their own twitch is pointed out. Heh. Still, looks to me you've finally got used to the wind. Welcome to Pandemonium, blood.

### Winds of Pandemonium

<i>d100</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Save</i>
1-10	Hit by flying pebbles for 1d4	Reflex 15 for half
11-20	Hit by flying stones for 2d6	Reflex 18 for half
21-30	Confusion as spell 1d4+1 rnds	Will 15 negates
31-40	Hit by flying boulders for 2d8	Reflex 20 for half

41-50	Smashed into wall for 2d10	Reflex 22 for half
51-60	Confusion as spell 2d4+1 rnds	Will 20 negates
71-80	Smashed into wall for 4d10	Reflex 24 for half
81-90	Smashed into wall for 4d10 and <i>then</i> thrown into the Styx (two saves)	Reflex 24 for half, Reflex 20 negates
91-100	Permanent insanity	Will 22 negates

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** Pandemonium is mildly chaotic. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks.

**Movement:** Pandemonium is known for its strong winds as described above.

**Creatures:** Howlers, howling dragons, cranium rats, tanar'ri, slaadi.

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THE ABYSS



### *Serenity-of-Pain of the Former Gate-Town of Plague-Mort*

Citizens of Plague-Mort, life is hell. This is obvious to the Bleakers, driven mad trying to find sense in a senseless multiverse. It's evident in the philosophy of the Dustmen, each of them pining for escape from this cruel life. The Doomguard understand this fact best, for they see entropy's hand at work as strife breeds greater hatred and violence, and all that was once good is torn apart. The maxims of power and corruption are the only constants in the multiverse, my friends, and beyond this gate we shall find those truths made manifest!

Don't believe me? Then ask yourself, why is there not a single world in the Prime Material that is free of war? Why do the forces of Good bicker and fight with one another rather than vanquish evil from existence? If we know that even the exalted gods of the Upper Planes are impotent before the terrors through this gate, then we know that peace and harmony are but a stopgap, a futile resistance against the inevitable. Evil continues to fester throughout the multiverse, and the seeds of corruption can be seen buried in all things! We do not fall into damnation this evening; the consequences of our misdeeds have not caught up with us. You see my compatriots, we have always been in hell! For no matter where in the Great Ring one might run, the Abyss was there first!

There are countless tales of what we can expect to find. It is true, the Abyss is the largest of all planes, hosting an infinite number layers, one for every evil act possible and torment

imaginable. Some house forests of blood drinking trees, sunlight that sears flesh from bone, or living darkness that drains away the warmth of one's soul. Can one hope to imagine prisons constructed from screams, or pits where all one's senses become mute and useless? Horrors to be hold, certainly. Horrors to inflict upon one's rivals, upon those worms beneath you, and ultimately upon those who dare claim to be better than you! Those of you who are smart enough, fast enough, will become masters over your leatherhead peers and find exultation in orgies of food, flesh, and violence. You will come to know the wonders and allures of the Abyss, discover firsthand what draws planars and primes, bloods and berks, to the Infinite Hells.

Here, now, before this great gate, I shall be your guide. Not out of mercy, nor out of any hope of cooperation, but because when you abandon your fear and restraint as I have our little burg will join the gate-towns that have gone before on the Layer of Infinite Portals, first layer of the Abyss! Yes, I know much of the land beyond the gate. It is a barren wasteland burning under a bright red sun, riddled with iron keeps and pits that lead further into the Abyss. The forces of evil gather there to make war upon the Great Ring or move from layer to layer, but no man nor demon nor power can claim the first layer as their own. Roving mobs, dozens or hundreds strong, demonstrate that even the weakest know real power in numbers. Such gangs will provide you your first opportunity to prove your worth, or, at least for the clueless, a faster death than what the plane might give you otherwise.

The strongholds and few towns that have managed to survive the chaos and destruction of the plane can provide for most of your needs or desires, assuming you have what it takes to buy or seize them for yourself. Food, weapons, drugs, slaves, and magics of every sort—many of which are unknown or illegal in the rest of the multiverse—can be found in their markets, but you'll find junk holds little true worth compared to the intrinsic value of blood, flesh, and souls. Some of you may be able to trade for services, but only fools accept one's word in a deal, and fools are put in the dead-book might quick. Likewise, any gully merchants thinking they can make an honest profit from the Abyss deserve whatever you can give them. Honesty and honor are some of the first lies to be stripped away like oh so much deadweight.

Now scan this, you sodding maggot-brained rubes! The clueless amongst you have been flapping their bone-boxes about resisting the Abyss' pull hoping you can avoid the nastiness of the Blood War. You think we ain't part of it already? You think the baatezu don't send their spies through here, hoping to pick up some chant on their enemies? You think the tanar'ri don't use our little town as a meat-shield to guard this here gate? They've been grabbing folks to serve as cannon fodder from this burg since its founding. We're already part of the Blood War, just like every piking planar and power in the whole multiverse. Aye, the battles of the Blood War come to the Abyss, especially the first layer, and when they don't the demons are often looking to snatch some new recruits. But there can be no freedom from it, it is the rage and the hatred of the Abyss reaching out to consume the Great Ring. The only recourse a blood has is to prove to every berk and basher that they're too damn mean and tough to be put on the front lines.

What of the lower depths of the Abyss? Yes, the baatezu rarely make it past the first layer. Even if they did, they'd just as soon be made slaves or food for what lies below. Many of the

plane's layers are held by monstrous deities and their petitioners, whether they be the drow of the Demonweb Pits, lizardfolk of the Phantom Plane, beholders in the Realm of a Million Eyes, troglodytes from the Rotting Plane, or other fell creatures without name. Aye, the Abyss has more deities and petitioners than any plane of existence, countless monstrosities, human and not, of every form. Some can be reasoned with, but many will just as soon tear you to bloody mist while exalting the name of their god. If you're truly lucky, you might be welcome amongst the worshippers of one of the dread powers and ascend to a purer form.

No, bar that, if you're truly lucky you'll live long enough to find places where vice is made manifest and evil finds true reward. Temples to sadism, cults of lust and greed, and dens of debasement and degeneracy are rare treasures hidden throughout the Abyss, where the savageness of life momentarily gives way to the purification of a specific form of sin. Sometimes they are dedicated to a god or demon lord, other times they are simply led by mortals demonstrating a capacity for evil beyond their humble means. In such places even the tanar'ri can find pleasure, relax, and appreciate a world without virtue or restraint.

Ahh, the tanar'ri, greatest of all demons, of all fiends! They and the abyssal lords above them are the true masters of the Infinite Hells, for their numbers are endless and can be found in nearly every realm and layer of the Abyss. They are the exemplar to which we must all aspire, for the tanar'ri are unadulterated power, constantly evolving spirits of wanton pain, destruction, and sin. Their lust and gluttony are boundless, their anger and hatred affirmations to the cruelty of the Abyss and of all Creation. They possess a singularity of purpose that other beings can only dream of, for the tanar'ri recognize that in the deepest regions of soul, under the false guises of civility and moral conscious, each individual is a monster all their own. Theirs is the freedom to indulge in every dark thought and every foul impulse, to do everything we secretly desire to do and revel in every second of it. Each is a unique being all its own, a product of the individual hell that has been its life. Only their pride and jealousy of one another has prevented them from overrunning the Great Ring, but that is what makes them strong, for those who can survive the treachery of their fellows rise in rank and power until they can be counted among the true tanar'ri. There is no greater form save that of a god itself, and yes, my dear friends, the dark is that the tanar'ri lords may eventually rise to the status of power! Freedom and power, the enticements of the Abyss, of evil itself.

Do you hear it now? That voice in your heart that cries to be free, that demands the abandonment of all virtue and restraint? It has undoubtedly grown loud in the ears of many of you, else we would not find our little burg sliding into the maws of the Abyss. Embrace it! It is the voice of truth, long smothered by the tyranny of conscience and shame, and it will drive us to untold ecstasies and power. The time will come when all the multiverse returns to this natural state, when the Planes of Law and Good are nothing more but layers of scorched ruins lost in the Infinite Hells. By then we shall be lords of the tanar'ri and gods amongst men!

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** The Abyss is mildly chaotic and mildly evil. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks. These affects stack for multiple alignments.

**Creatures:** Eyewing, fetch, fire shadows, quasits, retrievers, tanar'ri, viper trees.

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CARCERI



### *Siclin Jade*

I bet you hate me. I can see it in your eyes. That rage, that desperate need to hurt me like I've done to you. But you've already put me through far worse, and let me tell you berk, you don't know the first thing about real hate! What you're feeling now, imagine it like flame burning away at your insides for a hundred years, until all that's left is a toxic sludge where your heart and soul use to be. Now imagine swimming through that hate, breathing it in, living off plants and animals that have been nourished by it. It's everywhere, and there's no escape. The Tarterian Depths of the Red Prison of Carceri... the name does the prison plane no bit of justice. Bound by words, or deeds, or chains of iron, or even by ones very nature, it traps you at the same time it opens up the very worst in you. You're gonna see just what it opened up in me, and then you're gonna wish you were anywhere but here. And you'll be in luck, 'cause I happen to know the prison plane has room for one more!

Six layers to the plane, six wards of the prison, six brands of sinners to torment. Oh, it's got something for everybody. Each layer holds a string of planets suspended in an infinite void, each orb isolated from the next by miles of empty space. Some say they stretch on forever, as many planets as layers of the Abyss. If that we're true, you'd think the plane wouldn't be so sodding crowded! Betrayal, deceit, lies, hatred and treachery. All of these are the nature of the Carceri, and most of the beings that dwell there embody one or all of them. Yet few can leave, for the plane prevents its inmates from escaping, and even outsiders are hard-pressed to find a way out. The yelling, the fighting... sometimes the only thing resembling peace is to be found flying through the gulf between worlds. Then there's just the wind and your own demons to keep you company.

### **Incarceration on Carceri**

Incarceration on Carceri is a tricky business. The plane has a reputation as being easy to get into and hard to get out of with good reason. Portals that lead away from Carceri are rare and very valuable things. If a victim is sent to Carceri not of their own free will (kidnapped through a portal, planeshifted, or condemned in some other way) they will find the normal avenues of escape more difficult to obtain. An additional key is often required to leave the plane: the portal used may not have been opened by the one using it. This means of course, a trapped victim must convince someone else to open the way for them - and that can be a costly endeavour.

### Rules Variant: Incarceration

Another theory goes that you must be stronger than the one that put you in the Prison Plane to leave it. A DM may choose to use this variant to restrict his prisoners instead, by denying the use of any portal or planeshift spell to the victims until they meet or exceed the character level of their jailer.

Each layer is nestled inside the orbs of the previous layer like some bizarre shell game, each layer embodying some further aspect of the plane. I know 'cause I've visited them all, one by one, in my quest to be free and set things right! For me, it started on Othrys, the first layer of Carceri, the destination of corrupt politicians, religious frauds, and other traitors to their people. My home was a planet called Dinor that was much like any other world on Othrys, the surface covered by insect choked swamps and quicksand, alternating with barren rocky planes and steep ranges of mountains. But Dinor, well... I knew the distinct pleasure of being trapped within an iron tower that stretched from the swamp bottom hundreds of feet into the air, yet that was so packed as to make it impossible to move anywhere without walking on top of someone else. The exits were guarded by nightmarish skeletons that saw through all deceptions, and who refused to free their captives even when the swamp waters rose to drown the unfortunate bashers on the lower levels. I guess that was their population control!

You can't imagine what it's like to wake in such a place, imprisoned by phantom guards immune to all bribes and appeals, with no memories of your previous life but the name of the blood who put you there ringing in your head. But I figured out a way out! It took me forty years, but I got as far away from that wasteland as the River Styx would take me. It's channels wind throughout Othrys to other orbs with their own unique cages or to blasted worlds that serve only as battlegrounds and marshalling points for the Blood War. The yugoloth have made the first layer their home and they embody the principles of Carceri well, their mercenary armies fighting alongside the baatezu or the tanari'ri, only to double-cross them at an opportune time. The plane's inhabitants know well enough to avoid the fiends as best they can, and by then I knew where the true powers of the layer were to be found: Mount Othrys, a mammoth fortress locked between the nearly touching spires of mountains on two adjacent orbs. There the titans, imprisoned millennia ago by the Hellenic pantheon, rage and brood in exile. Nearly gods themselves, even they are utterly powerless to change their positions in the Red Prison. Yet they know the dark of Carceri better than anyone does, and it is in the court of Cronus, greatest of the titans, that I wrested secrets as to how to regain my lost memories.

From there I journeyed to Carceri's second layer, Cathrys, a land filled with scarlet-lit grasslands and suffocating jungles. The air burns with the sting of acidic fumes and the poisonous forests are a source of obscured horrors that lurk beneath the verdant canopy. The layer is occupied by all manner of leatherheads who in life abandoned reason and humanity for bestial instincts, and now live as savage barbarians more wild and crude than most animals. Hill giants, fiends, and other horrid creatures roam many of Cathrys' orbs, but the world I visited was claimed by a horrid people who had learned to draw psionic power from their feral egos. They're considered the "wise" of the layer, and I lost half my arm in exchange for learning from them how to move deeper into the plane.

Minethys is a vast desert waste, devoid of resources and cut with windblown sandstorms to strip the flesh from ones bones. The layer is what remains when all is consumed and nothing is made, a fitting home for petitioners who were greedy bastards in life, hoarding everything they could even when they would've been better served to share. This surely seems like justice to you, but they are not alone in their suffering. There are the Gautiere, an entire race cursed to reside in Minethys for some betrayal long forgotten. Watch their children live and die in the biting winds, and then dare think of *justice!*

Now Colothys is something quite different, a ragged, harsh land of jagged peaks, boulder-strewn valleys, and hidden vales. Those that reside there lie and cheat for its own sake, and many could bob a baatezu and give 'em the laugh without a hitch. They are hardly alone, though, for the yugoloths and some other native fiendish race are often fighting it out there, while the Revolutionary League is making a lot of noise about busting free those trapped in Colothys and "making a hole in Carceri's chain" so as unlock the Red Prison itself. Whether utter screed or the genuine article, you'll be proud to know that the Anarchists were mighty keen on aiding my quest when I mentioned your name, not that I'm surprised word of your crimes has earned you enemies so far away.

They gave me what I needed to make my way through Porphatys, the small orbs of which are partially submerged in a shallow, acidic sea of icy slush. The petitioners were condemned there for their vanity and self-centered apathy towards the troubles of others even when it was well within their means to help. Not that their punishment has taught them a thing. They mostly crowd around the cold and burning waters, hoping to feed off the remains of those that fall in and drown. In the end, the waters claim all, except perhaps for the lone, bone white Ship of One Hundred that crosses the layer without crew, carrying some deathly cargo, never to go to port, a prisoner like all others. Not foolish enough to step upon it's deck, I nevertheless followed the great vessel for weeks as it sailed across Porphatys, until it finally led me to my destination: the Midnight Garden, where frost-covered trees grow fruits that can restore lost memories, even those of a petitioner, if a costly sacrifice is made to the garden's matron.

Yes, I know everything that transpired before you cast me into hell. I remember the plan that was to make us kings of that backwater prime world, just as I *never* forget the pain of your treachery. That is why I have no hesitation now in sending you to Agathys, sixth and deepest layer of Carceri, a frozen cage of false friends and betrayers of confidence. Yes, I descended into that nightmarish realm, but I will not speak further of it, or how I eventually won my freedom from the Red Prison. Suffice it to say that your actions that have led us here today, and that I wholly believe that you will fit in nicely with the backstabbers and turncoats that anguish in Agathys. This is not justice, nor will be the eternities of torment you will soon come to know. This is a gift in *thanks* for making me an instrument of revenge and hatred so pure as to only be found in Carceri, your new home!

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** Carceri is mildly evil. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks.

**Movement:** Incarcerated petitioners and characters on CArcerei are subject to travel restrictions as described above.

**Creatures:** Gehreleth, greater titans, hordling, imp, larva, nightmares, quasits, shadow fiends, yugoloth, Blood War troops.

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THE GRAY WASTE



### *Hylel*

It was wise of you beseech us for the knowledge you seek. The guardinals have spent many centuries attempting to understand and even reconcile the existence of a plane that is opposed to everything we live for. The Gray Waste is the lowest of the Lower Planes and the blackest pit of despair in the entire Great Ring, the very embodiment of true evil in the multiverse. And yet, it is neither as vicious as the Infinite Abyss nor as nefarious as the Nine Hells. So what is *true* evil? Is it mindless hate and violence, an utter lack of restraint or conscience? Is it the devious cunning of someone that sees others as tools to their own ends? Or perhaps it is simply selfishness, a willingness to benefit at the expense of others. No... true evil is despair. It is the belief that nothing matters, in this life or the next; neither laws nor rights, neither life nor death. Just as darkness is born in the absence of light, evil is born in the death of good, in the loss of hope and prosperity. When there is no hope for a better existence, when one believes that their actions have no effect or meaning, then all incentive for kindness and cooperation fades away. In that emptiness, there is no need for ambition or sadism as motivation, evil is done for the sake of evil alone, because it appears to be all there is and ever will be.

The Gray Waste embodies the essence and concept of pure evil, unsullied and undiluted by the essences of law or chaos. It is an indomitable presence, pervasive and unrelenting; a palpable force that governs all that takes place. Inhabitants of the Waste have a saying: there is no cause and effect; things happen because they must. Events occur not because of logic or will, not because they matter, but because of the agonizing and inexorable march of fate. Their belief in the inevitability of evil leads them to feel no responsibility for their own horrid actions, to view their lives and the lives of others as insignificant and meaningless. The strong willed attempt to bring about some small pleasure or personal gain from the evil around them, but most simply surrender, becoming powerless victims of the plane.

Each of the Three Glooms bears its own form despair, abject misery, emotional wasting, and an ever-present crush of pointless and inevitable agony. There is neither sun nor stars to brighten the sky, and little to mark the passage of one dreadful moment to the next. The first layer, Oinos, is the eternal, central battlefield of the Blood War, and that is all the reason one needs to avoid it. The ash-colored, largely featureless plane is decorated mostly by the carnage that lingers in the aftermath of the meetings between armies of baatezu and hordes of tanar'ri, for their slaughter knows no bounds and no end. Mortal mercenaries in the Blood War often find



themselves hurled into hopeless battles as chattel rather than valued soldiers, promises of power and wealth revealed to be nothing but hollow words regardless of which side they were pledged. Almost as horrendous as the wars that ravage the layer are the diseases that fester in the corpses left behind, plagues of no equal that scour the surface like nearly sentient things. The swiftly flowing and often bloodstained waters of the River Styx meander across Oinos, while the infamous marraenoloths patrol its length and provide transport for those who can pay their price. It is typically the fastest and safest way to cross the layer and reach the bordering planes of Gehenna and Carceri, but a drop of the Styx is a sure way to lose ones memory and life. It is but another testament to the senseless loss that Oinos embodies.

Rising high above layer, perched upon the brow of the Lower Planes, is the Wasting Tower of Khin-Oin. Stretching some twenty miles high and an unknown number of miles below, the stone tower is said to be the spinal column of a god slain by the yugoloths ages ago. Khin-Oin is the base of their power on Oinos, and from its apex the greater yugoloth vie for position while carefully watching the battles that rage below. The bowels of the tower are the heart of evil, possibly the strongest concentration of it within all existence, and perhaps the birthplace of the yugoloth race itself. While a great number of fiendish races can be found on the Gray Waste, the yugoloths are the true exemplar of the plane. While it would appear the bulk of their race has moved to the neighboring furnaces of Gehenna, even in absentia the machinations of the yugoloths run deep. Make no assumptions that what they lack in apparent numbers belittles their power across the Three Glooms; the yugoloth spawn directly from the essence of the Waste, and even if one does not see them flooding across the plane as often as the armies of the baatezu and tanar'ri, it is their plane, and they are its children.

### Diseases of Oinos

There are many diseases that may be found on the Gray Wastes, the metaphorical origin of disease itself. It is rare for travelers on the plane to avoid contracting any disease at all, but particular ones are more common to the plane than others. Travelers may be commonly exposed to malaria, flu, numerous poxes, cholera, tuberculosis, typhoid fever or anything else the DM may wish to inflict upon the characters.

#### *The Grays*

This is a disease of the spirit more than one of the mind. Spell resistance of at least a 10 will protect against the grays, otherwise a Will save of a DC 13 must be made every 24 hours spent on the Waste. Failing this save causes 1 temporary Wisdom damage, down to an eventual minimum of 1 Wisdom after prolonged exposure. The lost Wisdom does not return until the victim leaves the Waste. This disease is characterized by apathy and despair, and may be physically detected as color is leeches from the victim.

Considering the many hazards upon the first layer, many planewalkers use Yggdrasil, the World Ash, and travel directly to the second layer of the Waste, Niflheim. Named for the realm of Hel, the Norse goddess of death, Niflheim is heavily forested and perpetually shrouded in a thick billowing fog that limits vision and dampens both body and spirit. It is all too easy to become lost in the gray woods, and terrible beasts haunt the wilderness, including wolves, trolls, and flocks of wastrels whose melancholy calls drain a blood of their will to live. The

layer holds danger, but more haunting and claustrophobic threats than the wars and diseases of Oinos. Even in the middle of such gloom there are still spots of respite to be found, however. The town known as Death of Innocence sits perched among the mist-cloaked pines of the layer. While the origin of the burg remains a mystery, it provides rare shelter and a friendlier atmosphere than elsewhere in the Waste. The draining effect of the Gray Waste doesn't touch those within the city, though the pressures of the neighboring powers is its own source of misery. Because the Blood War so rarely comes to Niflheim, a number of powers hold their domains there as well, such as Mask and Shar of the Faerunian pantheon, Ratri, the Indian Queen of Darkness, and Annwn, the Celtic god of death. Many of their realms offer some protection for those who find them, though each has its own morbid take on life that rarely leaves visitors unscathed.

Pluton, third layer of the Waste, is a blighted land of withered trees and solitary olive groves. The land is almost peaceful compared to the previous layers, but it is the sad calm of resignation. A feeling of inexorable doom hangs in the air, as if everything on the layer is aware of its own mortality. The lowest fringes of Mount Olympus, home of the Greek pantheon, connect to the edge of the Underworld, domain of Hades, which sprawls across Pluton and is perhaps the single most known landmark all of the Gray Waste. Many other powers reside there as well, including Hecate, Greek goddess of magic and dark portents, and Cegilune, who demands the worship of the night hags. The Gray Sisters are easily the most numerous of fiends on Pluton and can often be found wandering the layer on foot or upon nightmare steeds, herding larvae collected from throughout the plane. The crones hold a monopoly upon the trade of evil souls across the Lower Planes, and woe to any who would seek to change this. Mortals sometimes come to the layer seeking the lost souls of their dead loved ones, be they wrongly condemned to Hades' domain or killed and sold as part of the fiendish currency of soulgems in exchange for larvae. Most just end up a part of the night hags' collections.

Sigh... nothing I've said truly captures the bleakness of the plane. The gloom touches every aspect of life, draining things of pigmentation and vibrancy until they are dull and gray, robbing people of their hopes and dreams until they can see no point in leaving the plane or doing much anything else. The petitioners are the greatest victims of this draining. Overwhelmed by years of apathy and sadness, many of them are so depleted by the plane as to become pale wraiths without substance. Most of them were selfish and malicious in life, and now that evil has devoured their souls and left them hollow shells. They instinctively flock to any signs of life or emotion, desperate to feel the slightest trace of the hope all living things possess. These miserable shadows can provide little help for themselves, let alone others.

Places free of the draining are few and far between, with Death of Innocence being one such haven in addition to some of the divine realms situated across the Three Glooms. Perhaps the most frequented is the City at the Center, a unique location where all three layers of the Waste meet. It is a three-part city, built upon the spot that borders and connects each part of the plane. Center holds itself as a trader's city, and a place of refuge from the Blood War, the diseases of Oinos, and the soul sucking embrace of the Waste. Entrance is free and without tax, and exit is likewise without restriction. For all of the wealth that could be garnered from transit between the layers, it is odd that the lord of the town, a tiefling named Dandy Will, allows it to happen for no charge. Yugoloth have been seen coming and go from his palace,

however, so like many things in the Gray Waste, the City at the Center likely bears a cost, but one that is paid unasked.

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** The Gray Waste is strongly evil. Those not of this alignment are at a -2 to Cha, Int, Wis checks.

**Movement:** The Gray Waste is entrapping. Visitors to this plane must make a Will save for every week spent on the plane, at a DC 10 + 1 per consecutive week on the plane. Failure on this save results in becoming trapped on the plane as a petitioner, unable or unwilling to leave.

**Creatures:** Yugoloth, night hags, nightmares, hordlings, larva, Blood War troops.

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GEHENNA



### *Jerini ap Nuatha*

The Bleak Eternity of Gehenna, the Fourfold Furnace of Perdition, the bastion of the yugoloths. None of these names can fully encompass the reality of the plane. Gehenna embodies the concepts of greed, control, and self-serving evil tinged with enough law to create a hierarchy in which will is all that matters. That is, the will of the strong, for all others must follow or be ground to dust under the machinations and power struggles that consume those of true ambition. Yet even they are fooled, deceived by their own delusions of free will. Of all the planes, Gehenna is one of the least desirable destinations for a petitioner, for here amid the four mounts there is no chance of rising to become a fiend and gaining a taste of real power. Here there is no such hope, no hope at all, for even the most driven and capable of petitioners are at best simple resources for the yugoloths. True there are opportunities, albeit small ones, to rise to prominence as a tool of the 'loths, but there is forever an upper limit to how far one can climb, and so very far for one to fall.

Are you not lucky then, my nameless friend, that with your skin as my parchment, your life shall come to some better use? No, do not waste your energy trying to speak. There is no need to thank me.

Gehenna exists as perhaps the smallest Outer Plane of the Great Wheel. Its four layers are each a great fiery mountain only a few hundred thousands miles across, though suspended in a truly infinite and starless void. Each mount has its own characteristics, its own persona, but each is without pity or kindness, refusing even to grant level ground upon which to stand. There is not one foot of flat surface anywhere upon the plane, save in one of the few domains where a power exists to bend the plane or where the yugoloths have carved out areas for their own citadels. Oh, if one can avoid falling, rockslides, and streams of lava then Gehenna might seem

pleasant compared to some of the more vicious Lower Planes. But that, like everything here, is exactly how we wish it to seem.

The yugoloths are the true power within Gehenna. We first began forging the plane from nothingness in the early days of Creation, with it becoming fit for the mass of the yugoloth race to migrate to only a few eons ago. We have held a stranglehold upon it since that time, controlling transit across the plane by the River Styx, as well as the few passable routes overland. It is fair to say that the yugoloths directly mirror the ideals of Gehenna: the strong control the weak, power is everything, and everything is admissible in that rise to power. One makes their own truth, while laws and rules are followed only as long as they remain useful. Likewise, the 'loths of Gehenna will tolerate a blood only as long as they can be made a tool or have power enough of their own to garner a grudging respect. Naturally, bargains are held to the letter of the law only as long as the agreement suits the fiend in question, but provided their convenience in holding to it, any agreement can be made.

The petitioners of Gehenna are rarely in a position to offer anything of value to the yugoloth, and thus live lives of constant misery and torment, making a meager yet defiant existence for themselves while ever fearful of native monsters, the progress of the Blood War, the sloping land, and the alternating fiery, frigid, or acidic environment they dwell on. They are spiteful and eternally selfish, mirroring the sentiments of the plane and its masters. The petitioners cling to the idea of free will and its expression, even if they no longer have any, even if their fate here within the Furnace of Perdition makes the concept a mockery. They are the evil that will do anything, betray anyone, and pay any cost in order to further their own ends. Never mind that the same ambition which keeps them standing ensures they are ever alone and weak, never mind that it is their selfishness that leads them to turn upon one another, without fail. They can only be bargained with when given a deal they cannot refuse, and even then, simply out of disgust of the outsider who, unlike them, is capable of trusting another soul, they'll sometimes betray them anyways.

Do you writhe now at the declaration of your doom? Rejoice, for your life will serve some purpose. Upon your flesh a testament is being written to the nature of the Fourfold Furnace and the fate of those who live here, a warning to all outsiders that come thinking to find fortune and power in hell. Is it more difficult to accept with all your memories taken from you? I assure you, your life was no better before I found you floundering in Styx. Yet the more you move now, the slower I must dig my blade and the less your skin shall serve as worthy parchment for my words.

Khalas, the first mountain layer of Gehenna, is crisscrossed by steep valleys, sporadic pits, and more frequently than not by raging battles of the Blood War. It exists as a great mountain of black obsidian and basalt, casting a crimson glow out into the ebon void, shadows stretching upwards from the dim flaming light. Tributaries of the River Styx reach the layer and steaming, boiling waterfalls fall from the slopes, mixing with the flaming rivers of magma that cross the surface and fill the air with a mixture of burning ash and boiling wind. Sitting upon the quickly plunging and cascading rush of the Styx lies the Teardrop Palace, seat of power and domain of Sung Chiang, the Chinese Pantheon's Lord of Thieves. The god's avatars are more willing than

most to sit down and deal with visitors, but everything about the realm makes it clear how little one matters in the eyes of Sung Chiang. Khalas also connects to the gate-town of Torch in the Outlands. However, with the gate suspended in midair arrivals are bound to make their entrance by tumbling hundreds of feet down the mountainside and off into the void. Members of the Fraternity of Order determined to get a foothold in Gehenna have of late made efforts to maintain an outpost next to the gate, but unless you're explicitly welcomed and expected by the faction they're unlikely to lend a hand in aid.

Chamada, the second furnace of Gehenna, is perhaps the most dangerous, with its perpetually burning slopes covered in vast rivers of magma and dotted with spontaneous, explosive eruptions. The air is filled with a near constant rain of soft gray ash, blown in intervals of near storm-like intensity and periods of almost gentle ash fall. The burning slopes of the second mount are home to the Tower of the Arcanaloths, citadel of the planners, wizards, and contract binders of their race, a blot of utter evil even within the plane itself. The massive, mile wide and tall tower, decorated in bladed spires and etched in glowing runes holds the records of the yugoloth race and their own meticulous records of the course of the Blood War. Every contract and every betrayal is recorded here in perfect detail within untold miles of titanic carved vaults where petitioners lie strung and branded like books and parchments upon hooks and lines farther than the eyes can see, knowing only their pain and the details branded into their flesh.

Mungoth, the third furnace of perdition floats within the void in contrast to the first two layers and a harbinger of the fourth. While the Khalas and Chamada are covered in flame and burning rivers of magma, Mungoth is a dying volcanic mount, its slopes covered in ice and snow, broken only by the occasional minor eruption and a brief river of lava. The air, while peppered with ash, is more typically whipped through with blizzards and rains of acidic snow strong enough to strip the flesh from the unprepared. The petitioners of the layer are understandably hostile in their pain and discomfort, especially given that the layer is also home to Loviatar, the Finnish and Faerunian goddess of pain and torture. A rare spot of shelter from the layer's weather can be found in the Valley of the Outcast, an isolated chasm jutting deep into the basalt and ruled by a fire giant wizardress named Tastuo. She lives in constant fear of her enemies, but she is willing to provide shelter as long as visitors might wish so long as they threaten no harm. If you are not wise enough to question the reasons for such generosity, however, it's doubtful you'll live long enough to set eyes upon her haven.

Krangath, the fourth furnace of perdition is a furnace in name only. In truth, the mount died untold millennia ago. A dead volcanic cone, its heat lost to the leeching of the void, leaving it a frozen husk, Krangath is abandoned by most of the planes residents. Even the yugoloths are less frequent here, though ever watchful of the layers residents, which include one of the powers of the orcish pantheon and Melif the Lich Lord, a powerful arch-Lich and, as some would suggest, an actual power. Little here is of interest to outsiders, unless they seek to visit in worship to the orcish powers of the layer, or to avail themselves of the necromantic magics of the tomb city of Hopelorn, demesne of Melif. Melif is paranoid and perhaps insane in undeath, fearful of the wrath of the yugoloth, against which his own power would be meaningless. Visitors, regardless of their power or intent, would do well to remain respectful, if the Lichlord doesn't simply kill them first.

Is there more to Gehenna? Yes, there certainly is. But let these words discourage planewalkers from seeking adventure in our little plane. Some may question the trustworthiness of my account, as well they should. No matter. Most will be wise enough to take their travels ever elsewhere, while the foolish will provide a ready supply of tools, slaves, and of course, more parchment.

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** Gehenna is mildly evil. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks.

**Creatures:** Yugoloth, Blood War troops.

BAA+⊕R



### *Arishdacq Serpent'segg*

You're here, good. Any shadows? Al'ight, scan this, cutter. You, me, the others, we're going to make our way down the Nine Hells, all the way to the lowest pit of Baator. I ain't barmy, just listen! You and me, when we're deaders we're ending up in Baator for sure, and we've got nothing but an eternity of torment to look forward to. But before we're done, we're going to plumb the depths of the Nine Hells for the biggest prize of them all. You've heard of it in hushed whispers, but here's the dark of it. Those that make the trip, from top to bottom, well bloods like that are prized by the fiends and made into greater baatezu right then and there. So it's up to you; you want to count down the days until you're reborn as some mindless larvae, or you want to make such a name for yourself that even the Lords of the Nine take note? It won't be easy, I won't lie, but nothing worth it is, right?

Some of this you already know, but I'm gonna drill it in just to be sure. Imagine the plane like a mountain, but inverted, each pit smaller than the one above, yet the deeper you go the more of the plane you can see. Layer to layer, the path gets harder, and it don't start easy to begin with. In Baator, the virtues of temperance and fortitude feed centuries-old feuds of vengeance, feelings of friendship and kindness fester into the ultimate malice, and order itself is perverted into a weapon to be used against others. The plane tempers one's soul by forces subtle yet pervasive; the dangers are less blatantly vicious than in the Abyss, the inhabitants more interested in using you for their own designs than mindlessly killing you. Any rule that can be exploited is, while to trespass against the system means being crushed under its weight. Thus, it can be a fine place for evil bashers like us to get ahead, provided you can survive the machinations of those around you.

There's a few ways into Baator: portals in Sigil, the River Styx, and the gate-town Ribcage. We'll be going to Ribcage to get a guide. I've been to Baator many times, but I know better

than to think we can get by without one. Not only will the guide show us around, but they're also helpful with the natives. It's better to do things nice and legal; get a writ of passage from one of the Lords of the Nine. Guides can help negotiate that. Sneaking in's possible, but without one of those writs, you're fair game. We'll come in as merchants looking to expand into the Blood War trade. All this usually takes hard bargaining, both to get in and out. But that's the thing: the baatezu can be dealt with, unlike their demonic enemies. Just keep your eye on loopholes; just 'cause they're lawful don't mean they won't cheat.

Okay, so we're going to meet all sorts of interesting people. Though there are a couple different races of devils, the most numerous are the baatezu. They're ordered in a strict hierarchy, the low serving the high. The leatherheaded lower-ranks may be weaker, but are more dangerous, since they have less self-control. Those with their brain-boxes strapped on right get promoted, then get to torture and rule their lessers. The Dark Eight, pit fiend generals of the Blood War are about as high up as they can aspire to, but far above them are the rulers of the layers, the Lords of the Nine. Was a time that many Lords were unknown, even the Lord of the Ninth. There's names for all of them now (though maybe not the *right* names). Hundreds of treaties have been written about their laws and customs, many by the baatezu themselves. You'd be wise to read some of them; study it long enough, and you might be able to pick out the utter screech from the stuff that has bits of truth to it.

There's petitioners in Baator, like every other Outer Plane. Most of 'em are larvae or lemures, the lowest of the low, subject to the tortures of those above them. They can't be killed, of course, so they'll endure great suffering for eons, until they're considered worthy of advancing. Bar that, I don't fancy being flayed until I earn my next step. No, I'm going to leapfrog the ranks while I'm still alive and give the lesser baatezu the laugh.

We'll also run into visitors like ourselves, especially in the cities. Merchants do business in the Hells, just like anywhere else, and mercenaries can find all manner of work. Adventurers go there often enough as well, usually on a specific quest - looking for an artifact, rescuing someone, and sometimes they just want to see how many devils they can kill. That's usually a short game, but fun to watch. Then there's those who've made their home in Baator, so as not to be bothered. They usually have enough power to keep the baatezu at bay. Some of these hermits choose to live on the Hells because of their own peculiar studies, or because they're hiding out from cutters who won't look for them there. Not all of them are evil, and some of them can be mighty useful, if you show the proper respect.

All right, so we're going to start from the top. There's shortcuts to get into some of the lower layers, but we need to do this right. First is Avernus the Blasted, a land of twisted earth and bloody rivers that flow into the Styx. We'll want to hurry; besides the legions led by Bel, the pit fiend Lord of the First, and tanar'ri invaders, there's the exploding spheres of flame that continuously shoot across the sky. No cities here, but there's some fortresses we can take shelter at. There's also Darkspine, which was a gate-town that got sucked up. The berks who live there are cutthroats, at least with each other, but they tend to be hospitable to visitors. We can get supplies there, but ask the merchants for warranties on their goods. We'll also stop

at the Pillar of Skulls. It's got so many heads, some of 'em's bound to have answers we'll need. They tend to bicker, though, and they all have their own bargains to make.

The portal to the second layer is at the back of the Cave of Greed, guarded by the dragon queen Tiamat and her consorts. Just be brave and polite, and they'll be willing to deal. That'll take us outside Dis, the Iron City, which gives the second layer its name. Its iron spires point accusing fingers at the ash-green sky, and its burning hot iron streets stretch as far as can be imagined. The city is forever expanding from the labors of the petitioner slaves, and it can be damn hard to tell where the burg ends and the rest of the plane begins. Still, it's welcoming enough to visitors, at least in the Foreign Quarter. More importantly, some of the petitioners here are actually shades with fragments of their memories intact. The secrets of the dead can be plenty useful to the living, which is one of the reasons I suspect folk come here. We'll do some trading for goods and chant, then head to the third pit.

Minauros the Stinking Mire is a bog drenched in polluted rain, oily sleet, and razor-sharp hail. The main city is Minauros the Sinking, made from the black volcanic stone of the area. The slaves keep shoring it up, but the stone's getting scarcer. It'll be a few millennia before it sinks completely, but it keeps the inhabitants in a sour mood. There are a few other realms, such as Jangling Hiter, City of Chains and home of the kytons, as well as a couple communities of slaves who've actually escaped their shackles. I know just such a group who are willing to show us paths to the next layer in exchange for weapons and supplies.

Phlegethos of the Flame, the fourth layer if you've been keeping track, is a hellish land of volcanoes and liquid fire. Chant goes the flames actually moves to some dark design, either seeking out those who don't belong, burning away the good in a berk's heart, or some such. Supposedly, the only city of the layer is Abriymoch, built in a mostly extinct volcano's caldera. Look out for a sign saying simply "Greth." That marks the site of a hidden magic shop, where we should be able to get some real sweet deals, right under the devils' noses.

Then it's Stygia, the Great Sea. The Styx's headwaters are said to be here, worming its way through the frozen sea. I'm told there are a number of cities built upon the ice floes, but things stranger than the baatezu dwell beneath the water. With any luck, we'll find a path to the next layer in short order. If all else fails, out in the trackless wastes is the Oracle of the Hungry Ice. Feed it a piece of yourself and ask your question. The more important your need, the greater the cost in body parts. Hopefully we shan't have cause to use such a grisly device, but be prepared.

Information on the lower reaches of the plane is hard to come by, so we're gonna have to play it by ear. Malbolge the Crushing is a tilted land showered eternally by boulders rolling down its surface under a sky of red steam. We'll look for hints of the tunnels that are said to twist beneath the debris, though something lives down there, older than the baatezu. After that is Malodomini the Ruined. The Lord of the Seventh is never satisfied and commands his servants to build new cities on the shattered remains of the old. Grenpoli, the domed City of Diplomacy, is often spoken of by the baatezu, for the place epitomizes their love of politics and deceit.



Don't trust the smiles you'll be greeted with; get what you need, then give 'em the laugh before heading to Cania the Glacier. Colder and meaner than the fifth layer, we'll need to come up with a way to bore deep into the ice. See, there's things buried there. The Guvners have done it before; so can we. Those sods came back trembling pale, murmuring stories of celestials and fiends frozen in eternal combat with strange, spined beings and of alien cities. The secrets of the ancients are down there, I say, and I mean to have them.

One way or another that should take us to Nessus, the ninth layer, land of opposites. The hottest flames, the coldest ice, the deepest pits, the steepest cliffs. The most revealing lies. Making our way where few mortals ever have, we will solve the ultimate riddle. Every level we travel, our knowledge of evil grows, until we reach the final depth. From there, we can see back to all that came before. All of it. And then we will be granted power beyond our small imaginings. We will seize the birthright of the hellish blood that flows in our veins and take our rightful place in the Nine Hells.

### Planar Traits

**Elemental-dominant:** Specific layers are elementally dominant. Phlegethos is Fire dominant. The open flames deal 3d10 points of fire damage per round of exposure. Water creatures take double damage. Stygia is Cold dominant. All creatures and objects take 3d10 points of cold damage per round. Creatures of the fire subtype take double damage each round.

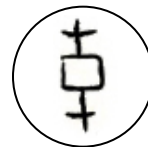
**Alignment-dominant:** Baator is mildly evil and mildly lawful. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks. These affects stack for multiple alignments.

**Impeded magic:** Planeshift, gate and other transportational magic or psionics targeting any location on the layer of Nessus fail to function.

**Creatures:** Baatezu, hellcat, hell hounds, hordling, imp, larva, sympathetic.

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ACHERON



*Maharaja Harajji Atharta*

Of course I can tell you about Acheron. I am one of the masters of the plane, after all. Oh, I know, few recognize us as such. The rakshasa, they think, are just another race that happens to inhabit the Infernal Battlefield. They don't know how much influence we secretly have. Why am I telling you this, if it is such a secret? Well, I could tell when you came in, from the way you looked at me, that you *expected* such a thing. In fact, had I *not* said something of that sort, you would have become more suspicious. Am I wrong? So am I really revealing secrets, or is it just idle boasting? I will leave you to wonder.

You *will* try one of these pickled abrian tongues, won't you? They're quite delicious.

So. I have often heard Acheron called a plane of war; many planewalkers think of it as nothing but a site of endless battles. But that confuses the part with the whole. The lower layers of Acheron are no more warlike than anywhere else in the Great Ring—certainly much less so than the Blood War battlefields. The first layer, though, Avalas... well, yes, indeed there are wars going on. Endless wars. Between the spirits of dead prime creatures called orcs and goblinoids, mostly, though there are other, independent armies. The legion of Boretti, the Necromancer-King, for one. The company of the bladeling House of Reddirk, for another. Still, putting such things aside, Acheron is first and foremost a land of order and discipline. It just happens that the law tends to come off a tad draconian to some. A former Guvner friend of mine once said that Acheron is where law forsakes reason and anticipation gives way to the presumption of inadequacy. I assure you, however, that the residents *appreciate* the exacting demands of their superiors. Whatever cruelty or evil exists is but a tool towards strengthening society as a whole. There is Resounding Thunder, for example, the realm of the Chinese god of thunder, a place not of slaughter but of justice and retribution. On one cube, Wreychtmirk, where the River Styx flows on all six faces—

Oh. Cube. Yes, I get ahead of myself. Perhaps before I talk too much about the inhabitants of the layers I should say something about their layouts. All layers of Acheron consist of grey shapes, floating endlessly through a dimly-lit void. But the natures of the shapes differ. Avalas is filled with floating cubes, sometimes bumping against each other and crushing whatever is too slow or foolish to get out of the way. It is not difficult to get between the cubes, for those who know the way; there are many portals linking the cubes together, and while there may be no direct route connecting a given pair of cubes there is sure to be some way to get between them through other cubes, at least.

Thuldantin, the second layer, is much the same, except that the cubes are hollow. Oh, there are certainly tunnels and hollows in the cubes of Avalas, but in Thuldantin *all* the cubes are hollow, and their surfaces riddled with pits that lead inside. Indeed, it is the insides of the cubes that most visitors see—what few visitors the layer gets, for though few planewalkers visit Avalas, even fewer visit Thuldantin, and the layers below fewer still. Yet there is reason to come to Thuldantin, for the cubes, though hollow, are not empty. They are filled with all manner of devices both mechanical and magical. No one knows where they come from—or perhaps I should say rather, those who do know do not tell. I suspect they are from wars elsewhere in the multiverse, devices deemed too dangerous or unconventional, and eventually forgotten or destroyed. However they come to be there, these objects are hardly in pristine condition; there is a curse upon the layer that turns all these items—and anything else left here too long—to an iron-like stone. Yet still there are things worth salvaging that attract inventors, wizards, fiends, and even modrons. Indeed, in one particular large cube, the Mines of Marsellin, the Sodkillers and others carry out great mining operations at considerable risk, for there creatures as well as items are vulnerable to the layer's strange form of petrification.

My apologies, I have digressed again. I was discussing the plane's strange terrain. The third layer, Tintibulus, bears not just cubes but blocks of many shapes. Some have four sides, some

six, some eight, some twelve or twenty. And in the last layer, Ocanthus, rather than solid blocks, the land is in thin plates—razor thin, and capable of delivering nasty, even fatal, cuts to the unwary. These plates are not made of iron like the cubes of the layers above, but of black ice broken from a vast sheet that fills the bottom of the plane. Some say that this is the end of the Styx, though they disagree as to *which* end, the source or the outlet. The chant goes all the memories lost to the Styx are trapped within the ice, and retrievable by those who know how to do it.

What? You ask me whether these rumors are true? Ah...let us not taint a good story with worries about *truth*. For now, I think it is better they remain a mystery.

You have not tried the jellied saasin? Do. They are sublime.

So. The first layer, Avalas, the Battleplains, is the one I had started to speak of. I have already told you of the armies that battle there, and that give the place its name. There are many combatants there, but it seems there will never be any more than there are now. Some principle is at work in Avalas concerning the conservation of spirits, and ensuring that no new petitioner can enter the layer until an existing one is killed. As to whether this rule applies to planars as well, there is less agreement, though most think not. But then, truly, a similar principle applies to other aspects of the plane as well. Cast a spell in Acheron, and a reversed reflection of the spell also appears, and rushes off through the void...

Your pardon; I digress. While the orc and goblin petitioners, and the other combatants, they are very *noticeable*, with their noisy battles, but do not think they are the only residents of the plane, and certainly not the most important. There are, of course, my own people, the rakshasa. We keep out of the wars, hiding our homes with strong illusions. We may not be as *obvious* as certain other races, but do not discount us. Oh, yes, and the achaierai should perhaps be mentioned. These evil birds have a strange appearance, but are more intelligent than they look. The Sodkillers—not a race, but a faction—they make their home here, in the fortress of Vorkehan, that the Mercykillers tenanted before they split in the Faction War. And of course, some creatures found on the neighboring planes can also be encountered there; baatezu, yugoloth, imps, and other fiends from the Lower Planes are not uncommon in Acheron. As far as unintelligent wildlife goes, there are bonespears and forges, among others, but what one will see the most is birds—birds of many sorts.

Speaking of birds, have you tried the braised wastrel wing? Please do. I am sure you will find it most delectable.

The second layer, it is more quiet. Some of the same creatures from Avalas can be found here, but more rarely. It also bears the realm of some exiled dwarf god, Laduguer, protector of the duergar, or some such. All manner of equipment can be purchased there, perhaps the finest in all of Acheron, but the duergar are ever in a sour mood. One must not forget the rust dragons, which are more numerous in Thuldanan, or the modrons, though not native to Acheron, are

increasingly common here. I've heard some whisperings of an army of the strange things gathering in a remote cube, emptying it out, and constructing some sort of immense apparatus within, but if so the curse should take care of that soon enough. Other than that...well, there are creatures that haunt the mines, but the accounts of those differ, and I shall not dwell on them now. Those one encounters in Thuldandin are usually outsiders looking to salvage some lost treasures among the scrap heaps.

The fourth layer...perhaps its most notable inhabitants are the bladelings. Humanoid creatures with metallic skin and blades jutting out all over their bodies, living, most of them, in Zoronor, the City of Shadows. The bladelings do not take kindly to other races. You have met bladelings, yes? You did not find them too unfriendly? But remember, those you have met are those who have *left* their homeland; they are the exceptions to the rule. The bladelings of Zoronor...they do not treat strangers well. You best have a truly good reason to seek their home, but then really, Ocanthus is dangerous for even blooded planewalkers. Better to stick to more hospitable grounds, wouldn't you agree?

Well, yes, I have skipped Tintibulus, but I have a reason. You see, the third layer...well, most people believe it to be uninhabited. Naturally, that doesn't mean it *is*. It simply means they haven't looked hard enough. It hasn't had many visitors, after all, but then, that's true of Acheron as a whole. Of all the Outer Planes, Acheron is one of those that has been least visited by planewalkers. Of course, that means it's one that has the most secrets left to find.

But again I digress. The third layer. Yes. As I was saying, the common wisdom is that it has no native inhabitants. But the common wisdom, it can often be so...unwise. What? Yes, of course *I* know whether there are really any native inhabitants of Tintibulus or not. But, well, do you plan ever to go there? Yes? Perhaps? Then why should I spoil the surprise?

I *insist* you try the bloodberry tarts. They are truly delightful.

## Petrification and Other Cubic Dangers

On *Avalas*, the first layer of Acheron, the greatest risk comes from the impact of a cube upon another cube. The cubes are continent sized pieces of metal that move in orbit amongst each other. They are large enough to produce their own gravity well. The impact of one cube upon another can cause a great ringing noise, and extreme harm to those caught between the faces. If a character (or army) is caught unexpectedly between the faces of two impacting cubes he must make a Reflex save at a DC of 40 to find some divot within the area, or be instantly smashed into paste. If a character has found a divot (or made one) in which to take refuge the impact is still a stunning event. He is automatically deafened for 1d4 days, and at the moment of impact takes 10d6 nonlethal damage from the force of the impact and shuddering of his shelter.

On *Thuldandin*, the cubes are still in mostly cube form and will impact each other with similar effects as on *Avalas*. Thankfully because they are rusted and pitted, it is much easier to find refuge in an emergency and a Reflex save at a DC of 20 is enough to find a pit in the surface to hide in. Otherwise the effects of impact are the same. *Thuldandin* has another property that is much more dangerous to a traveler. It will slowly petrify organic matter (living and nonliving) that remains on the plane unless it is otherwise protected by magical means. Petrification becomes a risk after a continuous week has been spent on the plane. After a week, the object or victim must make a Fortitude save at a DC of 20. On failing the save, the victim becomes subject to a *flesh to stone* effect. Thereafter, for continuous each day the DC for this save raises by one. On leaving the plane and returning, the week is reset.

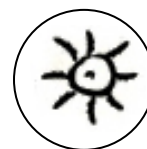
*Tintibulus* and *Ocanthus* are dangerous for the flying shrapnel and occasional large (up to content sizes) meteors that fly through the layer. These objects are generally hard to see coming in the darkness, and likely to shred an unprotected body in their way. Unprotected characters take 2d6/rnd of damage from the small sized shrapnel automatically. Larger objects hurling through the darkness may deal more damage, but are more rare and should be handled as an encounter by the DM.

## Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** Acheron is mildly lawful. Those of opposing alignment are at a -2 to Cha checks.

**Movement:** Movement on Acheron is complicated by the condition of cubes and debris on each layer as described above.

**Creatures:** Baatezu, imps, modron, rakshasa, rust monsters, rust dragons, yugoloth, orcs.



## *Mwama*

Greetings, blood. This unit is called Mwama. It is—no, the name is not in any strange language. The first adventuring party this unit fell in with after breaking away first just referred to it as “modron with a missing arm”, and when they decided this unit needed a name, they just made an acronym of that. Since this unit had no other name, it kept it. This unit has called kip here in the Fortress of Disciplined Enlightenment for many years now, giving travelers information on Mechanus, the Clockwork Universe, in exchange for jink. It has made study of the plane its specialty, so it can certainly tell its visitors about it, if they are willing to pay its fee.

Mechanus is the plane of ultimate law, all else—including good and evil—is subordinate and unimportant. The entire plane is composed of interlocking gears of varying sizes, all turning according to a complex pattern incomprehensible to any mortal or exemplar. All of the major realms and buildings in Mechanus are constructed on the surface of one of these cogs; many gears possess environment types that are common on other planes, but there are also mounds of pipes and cables, tracts of crystal obelisks, fields of metal domes, and other unique terrain features. Each side of a cog has its own gravity, so it is possible for structures to exist on both sides and to travel from the top to the bottom—though which side is the top and which is the bottom depends on the side a basher is on. Some communities even create tunnels through a gear in order to reach the other side, either to allow for expansion or simply to facilitate travel.

Although no one has tumbled to all the laws the gears move by, their precise sequence of operation, or their ultimate purpose, there are those who have learned enough about them to be able to traverse the complex system of conduits and portals that links them together. This system is called the Labyrinthine Portal—though it is not really a single portal, nor a physical labyrinth—and it is extremely difficult for most mortals to wrap their bone-boxes around. It not only matters which portal one passes through, but also the sequence, the timing, and sometimes even the thoughts one is thinking at the time. With mastery of the Labyrinthine Portal, a cutter can quickly reach any cog on the plane. But a less well-lanned sod could find themselves wandering lost in places they really don’t want to go. There are guides who will lead a basher through the Labyrinth, but some of them are cony-catchers who will only get a sod lost faster than he would on his own.

Please note that although Mechanus represents order, that does not mean it is uniform, for there are many diverse cultures and places of interest throughout the plane. In fact, almost anything that one imagines can be found on the plane if one knows where to look. Some cutters journey to Mechanus specifically to seek something that they have conceived of but have been unable to locate elsewhere; though the realization of this goal may not exactly match what was expected, success rates are statistically high. Unfortunately, the reasons for this have received extensive debate without attainment of a conclusive explanation. This unit theorizes that it represents the Axiom that all things have a purpose and place. A truly comprehensive system of order must accommodate, and perhaps allow, every possibility. If desired, this unit can direct you to other Guvners that specialize in this feature of Mechanus.

Those who mistakenly believe that pure law is sterile and lifeless are proven wrong by the fact that Mechanus is constantly evolving and is full of living creatures. There are, for example, the moignos, two-dimensional mathematical equations obsessed with the intricacies of the number pi. And the paraii, beings that, behind their porcelain masks, may be nothing more than balls of light that feign humanoid form with an empty black dresses, and that are devoted to turning bloods of exceptional qualities into paraii like themselves. The inevitables, too, make their home on Mechanus, powerful mechanical constructs that strictly enforce principles of death, truth, and justice.

But this unit calculates that there are three groups on Mechanus that particularly deserve mention. First, of course, there are the modrons, like this unit. The modrons exemplify law like no other creatures. They are organized into a strict hierarchy led by Primus, the One and the Prime, and comprising many other levels, down to the lowly monodrones. The modrons work as a functioning whole; each modron is aware of those of the ranks immediately above and below it, but are unable to directly perceive modrons of other ranks. If a modron is slain, a modron of the rank below is promoted to fill its position, and so forth on down, until a new monodrone is created from Primus's energy pool. All the modrons work in perfect unity, tending to the maintenance of Mechanus' gears.

At least, things usually work that way. Every once in a while, however, some modron obtains a spark of individuality and becomes aware of itself as a separate entity. These modrons are known as rogues, and are hunted down and destroyed in order to prevent them from corrupting the whole society. Some escape, though it is not be easy—this unit lost its arm in its own escape from the modron hierarchy. The chant is a new system has been put in place to allow the peaceful exodus of such deviants, but that cannot be easily confirmed and may be so much screed. Regardless, even rogues cannot completely free themselves of the modron mindset. This unit, for example, has managed to learn what is called planar cant—though it has been told that it uses cant words somewhat awkwardly and unnaturally—but does not feel right using certain pronouns. It understands, intellectually, what is meant by words like “I” and “you”, but the underlying concepts are too alien to its thought for it to feel comfortable using such words itself.

Another important group of Mechanus is the Fraternity of Order, the faction of which this unit is a member. Of course the visitors know of the Fraternity of Order, since they are currently visiting this unit within the faction's headquarters. This faction is devoted to discovering all the hidden laws underlying the multiverse, the links of cause and effect by which everything works—so, of course, what better place to do that than Mechanus, the plane of pure law? The Guvners have greatly expanded their numbers in Mechanus and its neighboring planes since banishment from Sigil, and members can be found here in the Fortress of Disciplined Enlightenment or beyond exploring all facets of reality.

Last, there are the formians, originally from Arcadia, but who have recently overtaken much of the plane. This unit understands that the formians were originally peaceful, but those that have spread to Mechanus and elsewhere are set only on expanding their territory, and conquering anyone in the way. The hives of these centaur-ants are all over Mechanus, the

largest being on a huge cog that is simply called the Center. Some people think it is called that because it is the center of the plane of Mechanus, but this unit knows that is screed. If Mechanus has a center, it is Regulus, the realm of the modrons.

Some chant says the formians have been able to take territory from the modrons because the modrons were weakened by recent events. Not long ago a Modron March was launched ahead of schedule, during which the modron displayed many bizarre behaviors. The modron have not yet returned completely to normal, and it is because of this, they say, that the modrons have been unable to stop the formians' advances. Others theorize that the modrons are allowing themselves to be replaced, accepting that their time has passed. This unit does not believe that is true. This unit believes the modrons have been busy in preparation for some plan to oppose the formians. The modrons and the formians have not yet come into direct conflict, and when they do it is not obvious to this unit that the formians will win.

It may appear that Mechanus possesses its share of disparate elements either with no relation or completely at odds with one another. But causality and fate connect all things into a single whole; one event leads to another to another until everything in Mechanus and all the multiverse feels the repercussions and reacts in kind. Only the powers are capable of perceiving the grand design, but most of Mechanus' inhabitants follow personal and social codes of behavior with the utmost rigor both because it is conducive to a productive and untroubled lives and because it makes it easier to control the consequences of one's actions. Likewise, lawmakers of a burg tend to thoroughly consider the intent and effectiveness of the rules that govern their land; though they may seem arbitrary to outsiders, every law exists to bring about some specific end. Visitors—this unit speaks generally, not just of the visitors who are talking to it right now—are expected to follow the laws with the same rectitude, and punishments for violations can be very severe. This unit strongly advises anyone planning to visit anywhere on the plane to learn the laws of the place they are visiting before going there.

Of course, there are still criminals who deliberately flout the laws of the land, either berks from the other side of the Great Wheel who want to sow a little chaos or those who have no apprehensions about exploiting the system for their own ends. Transgressors are pursued relentlessly, though perhaps without much passion. Enlightened minds recognize that even such deviants are important elements of an orderly system. Chaos and lawlessness, while anathema to the ideals of Mechanus, in small amounts can challenge a society to become stronger and more adaptable just as violence and war destroy what currently exists to make room for something vibrant and new.

A thought has just occurred to this unit. Perhaps the modrons and the formians will both put each other in the dead-book, and leave room for a *third* race better suited to exemplifying law in the current era to come in and fill the void. Hmm. That...would be interesting.



### Gearwork Damage

The entire plane consists of a massive gearworks. Travelers in this plane need to be prepared for climbing across these gears, and most importantly for avoiding being crushed by them when traveling from one gear to the next. Gears may catch on clothing, stray shoestrings, unbound hair, and unattended limbs. The gears are very difficult to jam up, as they are powered by the might of the plane itself, so it is best to simply avoid getting caught in the first place.

Stepping from one gear to the next requires skill as the gears are generally turning counter to each other. Gears that are too small to be stood upon as individuals should be handled as a whole as if rough terrain. For larger gears, a character will need to make a Reflex save to avoid falling within the gearwork and taking damage. Merely jumping from gear to gear does not negate the need for this reflex save. A Tumble check at a DC 20 will reduce the save DC by 10. Flying eliminates the need for a reflex save as it allows the character to take some consideration when landing upon the new surface.

The difficulty of this save is directly related to the speed of the gear the character is stepping onto. The following table presents two ways of measuring the speed, for DM convenience, in both cases this is the speed of the gear turning at its outermost edge.

### Gear Save DCs on Mechanus

Speed	MPH	Tactical Speed	Reflex DC
Not moving	0 mph	0 ft.	No save required
Crawling	0.5 mph	5 ft.	No save, unless in combat at DC 15
Very Slow	1 mph	10 ft.	No save, unless in combat at DC 20
Slow	2 mph	20 ft.	DC 10
Average	3.5 mph	30 ft.	DC 15
Quick	7 mph	60 ft.	DC 20
Fast	14 mph	120 ft.	DC 30
Very Fast	20.5 mph	180 ft.	DC 40
Speeding	27 mph	240 ft.	DC 50

### Gear Damage on Mechanus

Size	Weight	Diameter	Damage
Fine	1 lb or less	6 in or less	2pts
Diminutive	1 lb - 8 lb	6 in - 1 ft	2pts
Tiny	8 lb - 60lb	1 ft - 2 ft	1d6
Small	60 lb - 500 lb	2 ft - 4 ft	3d6
Medium	500 lb - 2 tons	4 ft - 8 ft	9d6
Large	2 tons - 16 tons	8 ft - 16 ft	20d6
Huge	16 tons - 125 tons	16 ft - 32 ft	20d6, Fort DC 25 or lose a limb
Gargantuan	125 tons - 500 tons	32 ft - 64 ft	20d6, Fort DC 40 or die
Colossal	500 tons or more	64 ft or more	* Best handled as an encounter

*The damage caused by the gears is directly related to the size of the gears involved. The amount of damage is determined by the largest gear involved. Gears that are three size classes or more smaller than the character cause at most 2 pts of damage.*

DMs are also encouraged to make interaction with larger gears or large sets of gears into an encounter, overriding the use of these rules.

### Planar Traits

**Alignment-dominant:** Mechanus is strongly lawful. Those not of this alignment are at a -2 to Cha, Int, Wis checks.

**Movement:** Movement on Mechanus is complicated by the spinning effects of the planar gears, as described above.

**Creatures:** Marut, modron, formian, Guvners.

## THE INNER PLANES

### Quinn Blackgem

Alright, come, come, please have a seat and get yourself relaxed. It's not often I get such esteemed guests looking for a guide to the Sphere. What is a humble earth genasi to think? I suppose I should be glad you have noticed my years of devoted work, and grace me with your presence. Is there anything I can offer you? The food here is quite a bit different from that you'll find in Sigil, I know, but I have only the best. No? Well, straight to business, certainly.

As you likely know, the Inner Planes are the building blocks of reality as we know it. Air, earth, fire, water, life, and its anti-thesis of undeath. It is with these basic elements and energies that all the rest of the Great Ring is built. Makes them sound pretty important, huh? Well, that depends on who you ask. Those planars from the Outer Planes who pride themselves on their intellectual discourse tend to think of the Inner Planes as a simple place, largely devoid of the philosophical conflicts that give meaning to the struggles of the multiverse. Naturally, those from the Inner Planes often say other planes are but a pale reflection of the purity of their own homes. If there is a real difference in mindset between the two cardinal planes, I would say it was this: the Outer Planes are about the proper way of acting and viewing the world, the Inner Planes are about the right state of being and intrinsic value of substance. Thus, there is a great deal of emphasis on purity, beauty, and utility on the Inner Planes.

For those from elsewhere in the Great Ring, the Inner Planes can seem quite alien. For starters, each plane is made almost entirely of the elemental or energy it represents. Earth has little air of its own, and few natural materials that are flammable. Most liquids vaporize immediately on Fire, and what ground exists is just as hot as the rest of the plane. The Energy

Planes have almost no elemental matter, just an infinite supply of raw power. Naturally, materials can be shipped in from elsewhere or magically created (albeit with some difficulty). There's also the elemental pockets, which are formed when elemental matter slips into another plane, though many of the natives greatly dislike such impurities. Elemental pockets can provide opportunities for rest and shelter from a plane's hazards, but they're often short-lived, and many are plenty dangerous all their own. Who would want to sleep in a pocket of fire, or ooze?

### Environmental Dangers on the Elemental Planes

Many of the Elemental Planes have natural hazards simply because of what they are, since these planes are composed of energies that are hostile to the life of the average adventurer. A wise adventurer will find some way to deal with these energies; either by means of a spell such as *attune plane* or *immunity to element*, or by means of a magical item or other simple protection. Those foolhardy, or unlucky, enough to go unprotected onto a hostile elemental plane will have to deal with the environmental hazards of that plane every round.

More importantly, the environments of many of the Inner Planes are incapable of supporting life from other planes. Largely dependent on some mixture of the elements, most folk can't survive in lands without air and water without a lot of magic or special equipment. Some planes actively destroy whatever comes into them, particularly those bordering the Negative Energy Plane. For that reason, most creatures native to the Inner Planes are elemental in some fashion, and outsiders steer clear or only visit realms where precautions have been made to support them. Each of the Elemental Planes and a few of the other Inner Planes has one or two metropolises where planewalkers can visit in relative safety, making them important sites of commerce and politics while leaving the majority of the planes to the locales (which is generally how they like it, anyways).

Another thing that strikes many planars as odd is that there are no divisions along moral or ethical lines. The Inner Planes themselves simply do not recognize such abstract ideas, and are ambivalent to the forces of Chaos, Evil, Good, and Law. Which isn't to say that the residents are all neutral, or don't have their own philosophical conflicts! But to say that Fire is bad because it destroys most things that come to it, or that Positive is a power of good, is, well, the height of ignorance.

### Natives of the Inner Planes

Each plane has its own unique creatures based on the plane's environment and nature. Elementals, paraelementals, and quasiaelementals make up the vast majority of life on each plane, and are more or less equivalent to the exemplar of the Outer Planes. Though most think of elementals as mindless, instinctual creatures, they're significantly smarter on the Inner Planes and have their own societies, customs, and individual lives. It's certainly hard to relate to the life of a lightning quasiaelemental, but you're asking for trouble if you treat them like simpletons. [Studies have indeed shown conclusively that elementals on the Inner Planes are significantly smarter than those seen elsewhere. Whether this is a result of some trauma endured during summoning, or some handicap imposed by leaving the pure elements, is unknown. —The Editor] Most elementals are neutral and stick to their own kind (they have just

as much trouble understanding us as we do them!), but a few are good or evil. Such individuals tend to serve one of the archomental, incredibly powerful elemental beings that serve the cause of Good or Evil and are responsible for many of the wars fought on the Inner Planes.

For the most part, the archomental are the closest thing to powers on the Inner Planes. Few deities choose to reside here, likely because the planes themselves are immutable and resistant to change. There are a few, gods of the elements and the like, but they're usually recluses and discourage visitors. So while you're less likely to find a divine realm, that means there's more room for other creatures to form their own kingdoms and have a hand in the plane's affairs. The various genie races have taken the greatest advantage of the opening, and their cities are spread across their respective planes. There's one genie race for each of the Elemental Planes: djinn of Air, dao of Earth, efreet of Fire, and marid of Water. They don't have any particular friendship with one another, but they're usually welcoming of travelers and fine hosts. Their half-breed children, the genasi such as myself, have been showing up in increasing numbers and are thriving where their human parents continue to struggle. It may only be a matter of time before entire genasi communities begin appearing. Finally there are the mephits, one for each Inner Plane save Positive and Negative. The tiny winged creatures vary widely in nature and temperament depending on their species, but their numbers allow them influence in the Sphere, especially on the Paraelemental and Quasielemental Planes.

Not all the creatures are of an elemental nature, to be sure; planars from all over come here for one reason or another and there are a number of prime races that have migrated here. Humans, dwarves, elves, and gnomes have been working to carve out a place for themselves for ages. The gem dragons are natives of the Inner Planes, and they're joined by other dragons both common and rare. Mindflayers, githyanki, undead, giants...well, the list goes on.

### Organization of the Inner Planes

The Inner Planes are best conceived of as laying on the surface of a sphere—or better yet, a globe. At the top and bottom poles are the **Energy Planes**: Positive and Negative. Around the equator are the **Elemental Planes**: Air, Earth, Fire, and Water. Also around the equator, between each of the Elemental Planes, are the **Paraelemental Planes**: Ice, Magma, Ooze, and Smoke. Between the Elemental and Energy Planes lie the **Quasielemental Planes**: Radiance, Mineral, Steam, Lightning, Dust, Ash, Salt, and Vacuum.

Each plane is infinite, but it's possible to move from one plane to its neighbors. It's not as simple as believing it and it being so, but with a planar guide getting to a border region is normally a trip of only a few days. There are border regions between neighboring planes that serve as landmarks indicating that you're about to cross over, and as you walk you'll find the environment beginning to resemble that of the place you're trying to get to. Since there is no astral connection in the Inner Planes, teleportation spells don't work so there's a lot more reliance on the Ethereal to speed travel along. Unfortunately there are all sorts of predators looking for just such attempts, and it's easy to get lost in the ether mists. I'd say, it's best to shell out the money for a guide, if you can.

### Controlling Movement with Subjective Gravity

Many of the Inner Planes does not have normal gravity. Instead the gravity is at the choice of the individual. You simply 'pick' which way is down and start falling that way. Landing is more difficult and if not done with care, to change the direction of gravity, falling damage will be taken in proportion to distance travelled. Specific areas (large chunks of rock or the like) may have their own gravity wells that trump this planar quality.

## THE ELEMENTAL PLANES

The Elemental Planes reflect the four primary elements: air, earth, fire, and water. All matter is formed from the combination of these elements, and all matter eventually breaks down into them. These four planes are the purest examples of the four elements and are situated in a ring, with Fire and Water opposite one another, and the same for Air and Earth. Despite the fact that some of the Elemental Planes are closer to one another and linked by one of the Paraelemental Planes, the residents tend to consider their respective element the best and dislike the other elements equally.

### THE ELEMENTAL PLANE OF AIR

*Jenni Montwork*

Hey, cutter, watch it there. Do you have any feathers on you? 'Cause this here alleyway holds a portal to Air, you know, the Boundless Blue. You were about to stumble into it. Oh, you were headed to Air? Well, let me rattle about the plane for a couple minutes then. My father was a djinni and I've spent a bit of time there, I'm sure I could enlighten you on a couple things that'll make your trip easier.

Yes? Now, I know Air is considered the safest Inner Plane, and it probably is. But blitz in there unprepared and you'll be penned in the dead-book a tad early. The most important thing is gravity. I'm going to explain it to you, and I'm sure you'll still get it wrong. Hey, don't be throwing mithril—I told you it's complicated. Anyway, here's how it works: there is no down. This is very hard for dreamers to accept, so let's go with an easier concept: down is subjective. You can pick whichever 'down' you like, to help you get around. Now, this works great as most of the plane is empty space—or air, rather. The point is, you can get around pretty quick by picking a down and falling that way, but if you're going anywhere on the plane (I'm guessin' you are) you'll need to figure out slowing down, or you're in for a quick stop on an earthburg. That's the big thing you'll find, bits of earth with cities on them, or free-floating castles. The castles you'll want to be careful of, as a lot of them are pretty hende wizards, and they don't often like being dropped in on.

That brings me to my next point: a lot of people live on Air, likely because it's so hospitable. Most of the time the djinn think they're in charge and it's often better to let them continue on

that way. Their high-up is Husam al-Balil ben Nafhat al-Yugayyim, Master of the Clouds and Son of the Breezes, Ruler of All Djinn, Defender of the Heavens, Commander of the Four Winds, Prince of Birds, Storm of the Righteous, Master of the Air, etc, etc, blah blah blah. My father made me memorize that, and if you can remember 'Great Caliph' and one of those illustrious-sounding titles, you should do fine. Don't refer to him by name unless you want to spend every loving breath showering him with titles and commendations, though. And don't mention any friendly dealings with the cloud and storm giants of Air, or the efreet of Fire. The djinn have been warring with them since long before my time, or yours.

Also of note are the elementals, but most of the time you won't notice them. Unless you understand Auran, in which case you'll hear constant conversation between them. You get used to it after a while. Now, worth mentioning is Air's pair of archmentals—one good, one evil. The good one is Chan, the evil one Yan-C-Bin, both of whom wander the plane and are locked in a quiet war of moves and countermoves. It's unlikely you'll meet either of them, since they're both naturally invisible and prefer to act subtly, but it's not unusual for others to become unwitting proxies in their plots.

Anyways, anyone who's been to Air can tell you how beautiful it is. Endless vistas of blue sky, with seas of white cloud drifting lazily through infinity. My words do it no justice, though; you really must see it for yourself. It should come as no surprise, then, that there are places of great beauty to be found on the plane. One of these places is Borealis, a great palace built around a vortex to Radiance. It's inhabited by a race called the nyth, which resemble will-o'-wisps. Chant is that the entire structure is built from panes of solid light, though I've no idea how someone could accomplish that. It's a wonderful place to visit, but you must remember to keep to the tops of the spires; venture deep into the palace, and the nyth'll surround and kill you. They're protecting something, but nobody's lived long enough to discover what.

You remember how I mentioned djinn earlier? Their capital is a great castle they call the Citadel of Ice and Steel. It's made mostly of *eternal ice*, a kind of ice from the paraelemental plane of the same name that never melts, no matter how hot the environment (I'm sure some spots in Fire would melt it, though). The Citadel is another lovely place to visit, representative of the djinn's taste for fine craftsmanship. Be prepared if you go there, though; djinn love receiving gifts, and it's only proper tribute to be generous to your hosts. Chant is that somewhere in the Citadel is the Invisible College, said to be a cabal of djinn sorcerers and illusionists who protect the Citadel. I wouldn't go asking about it; djinn are very secretive when dealing with outsiders. Also, if you see a large ruby palace hovering nearby, the Citadel is closed to visitors. That's said to be the palace of Sardior, king of all gem dragons, and he puts the Great Caliph in a sour mood.

One place you simply must visit—conveniently located near the Citadel of Ice and Steel—is the Waterspout. It's one of Air's lovely enigmas. The Waterspout is a pair of vortices to Water, apparently inextricably tied together. A great gout of water erupts from one vortex and falls into the other, creating a large and very pretty waterfall. Not the kind of thing you'd expect to find on the gravityless Plane of Air. It kicks up a lot of mist, wreathing the whole thing in a great fog bank. Keep your eyes sharp when visiting; last I heard, some genasi basher was trying

to connect a vast system of water wheels to the ‘Spout, and he gets a little touchy about people trying to interfere with his work.

Oh, someplace a planewalker would want to avoid is the Great Funnel, and it’s not hard to miss the place. The Great Funnel is a vast whirlwind, large enough to encompass entire prime worlds. This in itself is enough of a danger to warrant steering clear, but it’s also the home of Akadi, Queen of Air. Though she’s not good or evil (she’s no archomental), she’s a mighty powerful air elemental, and best to be left alone. As if the whirlwinds weren’t enough, Akadi has a cadre of trained air genasi warrior-maidens that act as her guards and spies. You’ll never find bloods more skilled in combat in Air.

Now, cutter, I think you’re ready to step through that portal. Thanks for listening, and remember what I’ve told you. Hey, wait! You weren’t going to take all that friendly advice without a few coins in return, were you? A basher needs some jink to make ends meet, you know? ‘Sides, what’s a few gold pieces to a great planewalker like you?

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Subjective directional gravity. Inhabitants of the plane determine their own “down” direction. Objects not under the motive force of others do not move.

**Elemental-dominant:** Air-dominant. There are few locations with any form of recognizable ‘ground’.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create air (including spells of the Air domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create earth (including spells of the Earth domains and spells that summon creatures with the earth subtype) are impeded requiring a Spellcraft check at a DC 15+ spell level to cast.

**Movement:** In addition to the movement modes enabled by the subjective directional gravity trait, natural flight is also possible in Air.

**Creatures:** Air elementals and mephitis, djinni, invisible stalkers, sylph, tempets.

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## THE ELEMENTAL PLANE OF EARTH

*Havan al-Davhi*

Welcome to the Great Dismal Delve, cattle. Pay attention for I will not repeat myself. Hold still for our physician, our Lady wouldn't want the brand to become infected and waste our investment. You are graced with the honor of serving the Lady Jasi Merua al-Benham al-Davhi, Gem of the Deep, Empress of Stone, ad-infitam—or, to you lowly skimmings of her Ladyship's breakfast leftovers, "Mistress". She is the one you have given such umbrage to by mining in her domain, so foolishly attempting to steal from this land's great riches of metal and gems. However, the Lady understands that you are simple creatures driven by your greed, and thus has shown mercy by making you her slave.

I am her eyes. Her ears. Her arm. Her whip. And you will obey her command.

Do not run.

I will tell you slaving beasts what you will find on leaving the grand estates of our Ladyship. For those of you who are unenlightened beasts, rejoice, you now serve in the heart of the dao empire. I beg of you, flee. I will enjoy watching you slink back to your Mistress's feet begging her to chain you to her footstool.

Outside of her Ladyship's estate you will first find others who choose to reside in the shadow of our Great Khan. Lords and Ladies, Khans and those who serve them. You will be spotted. You will be returned to us. You may even be returned to us with both of your feet still attached. Should you look upon our Great Khan, Kabril Ali al-Sara al-Zalazil, the Perfect Compass, Fountian of Wealth, The Roots of the Mountian, the Stonefaced Lord, ad-infitam, you may assume your eyes to be forfeit.

That would be a blessing upon your lowly heads.

For, should you be remotely unlucky enough to pass beyond the gates of our capital, you will find yourselves in the Sevenfold Mazework. You will wander the mazes. You will cry for our Lady to come, find you, and kill you. You will starve. That is your first punishment if you flee your duty to your Mistress.

Should you survive the hunger and thirst, there is more to come. This place, the Plane of Earth, the Anvil, does not tolerate its injuries long. It will heal itself of any passage you dig. And you will have to dig, for there is no other way to travel. Any gap you find will close. Any hole you chisel to conceal yourself, as the whimpering curs you are, will collapse around you. You will choose: sleep or breathe. Rest in your burrow and you will be trapped, your moaning muffled beneath the stone. Your second punishment will be crushing death.

We will find your bones in our mines.



You will choke lest you can breathe dirt. And we have marked those among you who have that gift, mind you. You will find only pockets of poisoned air outside of the safety we afford you. Perhaps you will be lucky and the air you find will merely ignite as you breach it, or kill you with its poisons. Your third punishment will be suffocation. This is Earth. There is no air here. You breathe even now at the grace of her Ladyship. You will be as one blind without our light to guide you. This is Earth. There is no light here. There is only one thing you will find if you flee your Mistress's safety, you will hear the moans of the damned, for this is Earth. And Earth carries sound very well. I will hear every footstep you make as you slink away.

As you lay gasping in the depths of whatever hovel you have found to secure your body for the moment, you will receive your final punishment. Earth is slow, and patient. And when it moves it moves with the power of a mountain. With the force of our Great Khan's own anger, and the speed of your Mistress's wrath. It will grind you asunder as it moves, turning itself over with the strength of the inevitable. Provoke the fury of an earthquake, and your last punishment is dismemberment.

This is where you are safe.

I see the looks passing amongst you. You think I am a fool? You think if you can escape, if you are strong enough, clever enough, if you use your previous experience digging in the dirt, that you will escape your punishments? Ah, indeed, fools. The very personifications of Earth will not aid you. You will find Ogmoch's followers first, the Evil Prince of the Elementals, and he will merely return you to us, perhaps as a fine paste upon the stone. You may have heard rumors of other Elemental Princes, of Sunnis, or Grumbar. Grumbar, the supremely neutral, will not care about such lowly fleshy beasts as you. And Sunnis the Good has no followers and no time to tend to flocks of needy cattle such as yourselves. You will not find her before your punishments take you. Stick with the Lady you know will feed you at the end of the day, not the one who will demand a grand treasure of you before she deems you worthy.

There are giants here, and cyclops. Dragons and basilisks, medusas and other beastly creatures that burrow in dirt and stone. Oh, there are others, small folk. Dwarves, gnomes, and shad, some with great cities and domains all their own. They tend to their own needs, their own survival, their own crafts, their own secrets. None of them will be your friend. None of them will feed you. None of them will give you water or clothing or shelter. You will find no purpose outside of your Mistress's domain.

You have no value. Remember that. Resign yourself to that now. Your purpose is as your Lady decides.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Normal, heavy gravity. All Climb, Jump, Ride, Swim, and Tumble checks suffer a -2 penalty; all weights are doubled, while weapon ranges are halved; falling incurs 1d10 points of

damage per 10 feet fallen, up to a maximum of 20d10. Gravity is oriented towards the largest gravity well in an area.

**Elemental-dominant:** Earth-dominant. The plane is nearly completely solid.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create earth (including spells of the Earth domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create Air (including spells of the Air domain and spells that summon creatures with the subtype) are impeded requiring a Spellcraft check at a DC 15+ spell level to cast.

**Breathing:** This plane is mostly solid. Travelers who arrive run the risk of suffocation if they don't reach a cavern or other pocket within the mineral matter. Many pockets of 'air' in Earth contain toxic or explosive gases.

**Vision:** There are no natural light sources on Earth. Sound, on the other hand travels very well; all Listen checks enjoy a +5 circumstance bonus.

**Creatures:** Dao, earth elementals and mephits, lava mephitis, xorn.

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## THE ELEMENTAL PLANE OF FIRE

### *Mahmud Han bin Abdulhamid*

You? Your soft flesh and mortal form cannot withstand the vigorous, pure reality that is the Crematorium. If you were wise, you would stick to the cold and dark planes from which you come. Perhaps with sufficient magic you may be able to violate natural law for a short time. Since you are clearly foolish and proud, I may as well warn you of what you will encounter in my home. It is only hospitable, after all.

Allow me to explain the terrain. Yes, of course it is all made of fire, but it comes in different degrees and kinds. There is a solid fire, the volcanic stones basalt, obsidian, and pumice that are analogous to the earth upon which you now stand. There are various forms of liquid fire, ranging from viscous magma to thin, volatile oil. Be wary of the seas of oil, as horrendous firestorms often wash over them that will handily overcome any magical resistance you may possess. Finally, there is a fine, malevolent fumed form of fire, which pervades and subsumes the very air of the plane. Hah, I say again, you are not suited for Fire, as you will need more than protection from the heat; you will need a way to breathe. The wonderful fumes and smokes that provide us with such sustenance will scorch and suffocate your meaty lungs. That aside, even with your most potent magics, there are places you must never go. There are regions of my burning, illustrious home that are hot enough even to wound the elementals.

There are a number of creatures on Fire. Most of them are insignificant; fire bats, genasi, planewalkers. There are four races of any importance on the plane: efreet, elementals, azer, and salamanders. The elementals are the most numerous, but the efreet are, clearly, the most powerful and influential. Formed of ever-burning basalt, bronze, and living flame, my people are built for this most glorious of planes and are greatest among genies. Efreet cities and military outposts can be found throughout Fire, from which we launch assaults on our enemies, the djinn of Air and marid of Water. Though your kind calls us cruel, none argues that our rule of Fire is not right and proper. Address us properly and, more importantly, offer proper recompense for the services we offer. Treat an efreeti well, and your time on Fire will be easy.

Yet, if you are not graced with the company of an efreeti guide, then you would be wise to avoid the other inhabitants of Fire. The salamanders, who are often found as slaves of my people or in their own tiny kingdoms guarding portals to other planes, are generally uneducated and violent. They have their own nobility, but all the salamanders value is size and strength, and they offer none of the hospitality of my kin. Now, the azer, they are good smiths, not unlike the dwarves from Earth, and quite useful if you need any metalwork done. However, their customs are unsettling, for the azer place honor and subservience to their laws above all things, even their own lives. It is unlikely you will happen upon them, for though they have a number of mines and towers, they keep to themselves.

Fire has seen many epic battles and glorious, savage wars. Much of this can be laid at the feet of Imix, Prince of Evil Fire Creatures, who strives to destroy all those who will not bow to him. His warriors control much of the plane, and he seeks to dominate more of it. I believe once he's done that, Imix will seek to burn the entire multiverse. Do not interfere with Imix's rule; his good archomental counterpart, Zaaman Rul, was recently defeated by him and sent running like a bastard cur. I can assure you that Zaaman Rul is stronger than you are. Imix's armies are vast, and ever fewer are willing to oppose him, though as of yet he has not dared to challenge Kossuth, Tyrant-King of Fire Elementals and God of All Flames. Since you're from the Outer Planes, I'm sure you know all about deities and why they should be left alone.

More important than the feuding leaders of the elementals is Sultan Marrake al-Sidan al-Hariq ben Lazan, the Lord of Flame, the Potentate Incandescent, the Tempering and Eternal Flame of Truth, the Most Puissant of Hunters, Marshall of the Order of the Fiery Heart, the Smouldering Dictator, the Crimson Firebrand, Master of the City of Brass and Sultan of All Efreet. He rules my people, may his reign be everlasting and prosperous, and is the leader of the City of Brass, the largest and most important site on the Plane of Fire.

The City of Brass? It is too big for me to describe in great detail. A brief overview, however, I can provide. It lies on a great brass hemisphere over forty miles across which floats above the surface of the plane, slowly moving over the Sea of Scorching Flame. About once a week it dips down into a bay of magma and oil to allow fireships to dock at the harbor. Not far is the Obsidian Fields, where slaves tend to the fields and gather the harvest, and the Sable Forest, one of the greatest forests in Fire and the hunting ground for many noble efreet. The City of Brass itself is home to many hundreds of thousands of elemental creatures. It is the best place on the plane to purchase slaves and supplies, and we have many merchants from Baator and

Earth that journey to our home to partake. The most important thing is to be mindful of the laws for visitors, which are well-posted at the gates and inns.

There are a number of other important sites around Fire, but most of them are so subtle as to be lost to the perception of one not wholly composed of flame and basalt, as I am. One place to avoid is the Crimson Pillar. This is the realm of Kossuth and, as I mentioned earlier, gods are best left alone. The biggest concentration of azer is called the Crucible. Although plenty of azer smiths live and work in the City of Brass, if you're nowhere near the City and close to the Crucible, this could be a more convenient place to go for metalworks. The Plain of Burnt Dreams is a large area that contains the Temple of Ultimate Consumption, which is where Imix lives. As I mentioned before, you do not want to challenge him. If you're interested in joining his forces, on the other hand, this may be a place of interest.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Normal gravity. Gravity is oriented towards the largest gravity well in an area.

**Elemental-dominant:** Fire-dominant. The open flames deal 3d10 points of fire damage per round of exposure. Water creatures take double damage

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create fire (including spells of the Fire domain) are both maximized and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create water (including spells of the Water domains and spells that summon creatures with the water subtype) are impeded requiring a Spellcraft check at a DC 15+ spell level to cast.

**Breathing:** Breathing in Fire is as normal, though in some areas the oxygen may be too thin to breathe requiring the use of spells or items.

**Movement:** Movement in Fire is as normal, natural flight is also possible in Fire.

**Vision:** Below the surface, vision is obscured. Above the surface, the blazing fire usually provides normal illumination.

**Creatures:** Azer, efreeti, faerie elementals and mephitis, fire snakes, flame spirits, hell hounds, salamanders.

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## THE ELEMENTAL PLANE OF WATER

*Shah Agharassi al-Zi`ir*

So! You wish me to tell of the Plane of Water, greatest of the planes! Of course, I will be glad to tell you what you wish to know; all must realize the glory of this plane, and recognize how brightly it outshines all the others, in beauty, in importance, and in power! And I promise you that my account will be completely and absolutely objective, with no exaggeration. After all, who needs to exaggerate when speaking of the Bottomless Deep, the keystone and crowning jewel of the vast multiverse?

It is appropriate, I think, to begin the discussion of this most important of planes by speaking of its most important inhabitants—those, of course, would be the marids, of which I, Shah Agharassi al-Zi`ir, have the humble honor of counting myself an example. The marids are a race of genies, whose wisdom, grace, and puissance far overshadow those of any other race among all the planes. The capital of their mighty empire is Citadel of Ten Thousand Pearls, where Padishah Kalbari al-Durrat al-Amwaj ibn Jari rules from the Coral Throne. Marids are often accused of being capricious and untrustworthy, but ah! It is only that they know the way of the flowing water, and they have the prudence to follow it; their actions are fully sane and laudable, and it is only the limited perspective of the unenlightened that sees them as otherwise.

But wait! Perhaps before going on about the inhabitants of the plane I should speak more of the plane itself. The Bottomless Deep is, of course, an infinite expanse of water, that most noble and most vital of elements. But only a fool would think for that that it is all the same. There are many forms of perfection, and the Plane of Water embraces them all. Surely much of the plane is simply clear water of the type that might be found in the purest of the lakes on a less pristine plane. But the Plane of Water has also many other parts to it. There are vast fields of bubbles, each one like a tiny jewel. There are charming meadows of water plants that extend in all directions for farther than the eye can see. There are the lovely red tides, torrents of water dyed red by tiny creatures—though I understand that these areas, despite their beauty, may be dangerous to mortals who are susceptible to disease. In any case, the variety of the Plane of Water is truly as infinite as its extent.

Of course, there are times that matter from other planes gets into the Plane of Water. Although one could say that this dilutes the plane's purity, perhaps in a way this is as it should be, for as the most wonderful and perfect of planes, Water should embrace all others as well. Thus one may find in the Bottomless Deep pockets of air, blocks of stone, shards of ice and even of cursed salt. Sometimes these may pose problems, such as when a pocket of mineral or ooze dissolves and makes an acidic region that some planewalkers call "burn water". But this, of course, is only a demonstration of the imperfection of the other planes, and reflects no ill upon the Plane of Water itself.

Getting around in the Bottomless Deep is simple. There is no gravity, no up or down unless you choose to imagine it, and one can easily swim wherever one wants to go. Naturally, the water is not still; the plane is a living and turbulent place, as it should be, and there are many currents and eddies and whirlpools to confuse and batter the incautious traveler. Natives know how to avoid these tides, or even to use them to speed their journeys. Oh, I suppose, too, many planewalkers not adapted to the glory of water might also have a problem breathing on

the plane, is that not so? But there are, I think, spells to get around that, and it is well worth going through such means to be able to experience the magnificence of Water. Even better, I would recommend that the benighted dry races *polymorph* themselves permanently into aquatic creatures, but ah! I realize that few would have the vision to undergo such a step. At least vision would pose no problem, even for those that cannot see in the dark; through most of the plane (though not all of it, for again, its variety is astounding) there is a soft rippling light suffusing the water.

Now I shall speak of the plane's inhabitants. It seems almost a superfluity, since I have already spoken of the marids, and ah! After that, what more must be said? Yet although the marids are by far the most important inhabitants of the planes, they are not the only ones. There are, of course, the elementals, as on all the Elemental Planes, and the mephitis, though water mephits are foolish, babbling creatures, hardly worthy of such a splendid home. Many of the creatures found on the watery parts of other worlds find their ideal home here on the Plane of Water, but there are also many creatures here unfamiliar to most planewalkers, who have not had the honor of fully coming to know the wonder of our plane. The bzastra, an intelligent creature made of rings of flesh entangled in seaweed. The suiseen, a great shapeless being that is nearly invisible to those who do not know the water well. The ungulosin, a protective spirit that forms from amassing lesser creatures together. So bountiful is the Bottomless Deep that I could go on for days and still name only a tiny fraction of the creatures that are found here! But, again, I have named the marids, who are the most important, and let that be enough.

You know of the powers, yes? Gods? Even they crowd together to partake of the splendor that is my plane. Why, I do believe Water is home to more deities than any other Inner Plane. And who can blame them! There's Eadro, patron of the merfolk, and Persana, god of the tritons both visionary architects of Water. I've heard he personally helped in the construction of the Citadel of Ten Thousand Tears. Even the realms of Ben-Hadar, Prince of Good Water Creatures, and Olhydra, Princess of Evil Water Creatures, are amazing feats of coral design.

The mortal inhabitants of Water have built, too, a vast city, the greatest city on all the planes—next to the unparalleled cities of the marids, of course. This is the City of Glass. I have heard Sigil lauded as the greatest city of the planes, and the City of Glass called the Sigil of the Elements. Pah! Better to call Sigil the City of Glass of the Alignments, for truly it is the City of Glass that is the greater of the two, and Sigil the reflection.

Yet, that matter aside, it is true that Sigil and the City of Glass do have some things in common. Both are filled with portals, to all over the multiverse, and are major centers of planar trade. Both are inhabited by all manner of race and creature (though the particular mix of creatures is different, of course). The City of Glass has, as one might expect, many inhabitants native to the Plane of Water, as well as a sizeable population of wormlike creatures called ormyrr uncommon elsewhere on the planes. But there are humans and halflings and giants and representatives of all the other lesser, dry races as well. There are even some marids that condescend to live in the City of Glass, despite its clear inferiority to their own glorious realms. Still, it's inhabitants do try, very hard, to make their city the gleaming jewel of the multiverse. Few places can boast of such magnificent design; every building is a unique

artistic masterpiece, and the streets themselves are paved in glowing pearls. Artists, collectors, and simple admirers from the planes over come to share and add to the city's beauty. You simply cannot fathom the majesty such a place until you see it for yourself.

What? So soon must you go? But ah! I have had not the time to tell you of the tiniest fraction of the many marvels and blessings of the plane! Why, many volumes could be filled on the wondrous Plane of Water without but giving a minuscule glimpse of the prizes it has to offer! Yes, yes; if you must go, I will not impede you, but I hope you will do your best to get across the majesty of the plane. Truly, the rest of the multiverse does not appreciate the paramount supremacy of the Plane of Water.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** No gravity. A body merely floats in place, unless other resources are available to provide a direction for gravity's pull.

**Elemental-dominant:** Water-dominant. The quenching waters deal 1d10 points of damage to creatures of the fire subtype per round of exposure.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create water (including spells of the Water domain) are both extended and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create fire (including spells of Fire domains and spells that summon creatures with the fire subtype) are impeded requiring a Spellcraft check at a DC 15+ spell level to cast.

**Breathing:** For creatures that must breath, water breathing spells are a necessity, otherwise the creature will drown. A creature can hold her breath for a number of rounds equal to twice her Constitution score. After this period of time, the character must make a DC 10 Constitution check every round in order to continue holding her breath. Each round, the DC increases by 1. When the character finally fails her Constitution check, she begins to drown. In the first round, she falls unconscious (0 hp). In the following round, she drops to -1 hit points and is dying. In the third round, she drowns and is dead.

**Movement:** In order to move in Water, one must Swim. The exceptions are incorporeal creatures and creatures of the water type; their movement is not hindered in any way.

**Vision:** Below the surface of the water, all sight (including darkvision) is limited to 20 feet. The exception are natives (water elementals and mephits, creatures with the water subtype, etc.) who see normally. There are few natural light sources, but artificial ones function well enough.

**Creatures:** Water elementals and mephitis, ice mephitis, marid, Nereid, tritons, and water wierds.

## THE ENERGY PLANES

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*Quinn Blackgem*

The planes of Positive and Negative Energy are unusual. Nearly devoid of matter and inimical to foreign substances, they're perhaps the purest planes in existence. But don't you listen to a single word any of those clueless out there may have to say about how "positive energy is good" and "negative energy is evil". That's rubbish through and through. The energy planes couldn't give a cranium rat's tail about morality or ethics. They just exist and that's enough for them, and it ought to be enough for you too. But knowing most planewalkers, you'll come up with some reason for going there. I'll tell you what I know about the Energy Planes, but don't say I didn't warn you about tempting the fundamental forces of the multiverse. [It must be noted that this particular subject prompted a much longer rant about "worm-brained primes", which has been removed, and seemed to be a sore point for an otherwise tranquil and gracious host. —The Editor]

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### THE NEGATIVE ENERGY PLANE

Negative is the energy of death, undeath, and the unmaking of things. The Void, Oblivion, the End, the dead-book, or just Death; it's been given many names, and most cultures are inclined to think it's some manifestation of evil. But they'd be wrong, 'cause Negative is as fundamental to the multiverse as any of the Inner Planes, and it has no use for morality. You might think of it as Entropy, if you were into that sort of thing, and it's not necessarily bad, just dangerous. Negative can sap away the life from a person quicker than you could say "I wanna go home!", and can snuff light and warmth in a heartbeat. Suffice to say, connections to the Negative Energy Plane are what give the undead their mobility. If you're a necromancer, or just like to play with corpses, this is the place for you. Most necromantic spells or clerical controls of undead involve channeling little bits of this place, in small enough quantities not to harm the caster. When you're at the source, though, you better be protected.

From the moment you enter Negative, the plane begins sucking life from body and soul. It won't stop until you leave, put up some magical protections, or die and be transformed by the negative energy into some sort of undead creature. Even if you manage to avoid that fate with a *protection from negative energy* spell, it's completely dark and all your senses are slightly numbed, making it nigh impossible to perceive your surroundings. Fire and light is snuffed out instantly as the energy gets wicked up and away. If you happen to run into trouble, be careful; healing spells aren't going to be nearly as effective as normal, as the positive energy is drained by the plane. Also, if you do manage to kill any living creatures in there, get away from the body. Fast. Or use a spell to keep it from rising as undead, cause otherwise it'll get right back up and try to chew your face off. Really, the only thing that's simple about Negative is you can move by force of will, and there's very little to impede you.

#### Lighting on Negative

The plane of Negative Energy is even more adverse to light than Karasuthra. Both natural and magical sources of light are snuffed out automatically, though the heat of a fire may still be felt at full strength.



As you can imagine, Negative kills off most creatures that come here, leaving it home to the few beings that thrive on negative energy, such as the undead. Simple corporeal undead like skeletons and zombies are overwhelmed by the amount of negative energy and explode like living folks on Positive. But that only deals with the weakest undead, and plenty of others are empowered by the plane. Some vampires and liches have probably moved in, but thankfully they remain few and far in-between, and no doubt want to be left alone more than anything. Beyond the undead, there's the negative energon known as the xeg-yi, incorporeal orbs of negative energy with a couple tendrils at their side. They're vicious and kill any living things they cross, though no one knows why. Could be that the existence of positive energy angers them, but that would assume they had emotions bashers like us can understand.

It's a pretty rough place to go, so it's surprising that some folks have managed to set up kip there. The most important of those who have are probably the Dustmen. One of their greatest strongholds is in Negative, a place known as the Fortress of the Soul. Many of the Dead make pilgrimages to the place to meditate by what they consider to be the true manifestation of True Death, and though its population has increased sharply since the Faction War, it remains a rather subdued place. Fortunately the Dustmen are willing to give sanctuary to anyone who gets lost in the plane, though they'll send guests on their way as soon as they can. Best be appreciative and respect their privacy.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Subjective directional gravity. Inhabitants of the plane determine their own "down" direction. Objects not under the motive force of others do not move.

**Energy-dominant:** Living creatures on Negative take 2d6 negative energy damage per round of exposure. Any dead body on the plane will raise as undead within 5 rounds. Rebuke and control undead is at a +10 for HD affected.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like effects that utilize negative energy are maximized.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like effects that utilize positive energy are impeded requiring a Spellcraft check at a DC15 + spell level to cast.

**Movement:** Movement is enabled by the subjective directional gravity trait.

**Breathing:** There's absolutely nothing to breathe here, so artificial sources are a necessity for most beings. How the lack of atmosphere still allows for a steady pressure and a constant temperature (both fairly very low), no one is quite certain. It just does.

**Vision:** Vision in Negative is as normal, not that it does any good with a lack of light sources.

**Touch and Sound:** Touch and sound are also impeded, and both senses are subject to a -6 modifier on related skill checks such as Listen or Detect Traps.

**Creatures:** Xag-ya.

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 THE POSITIVE ENERGY PLANE

Positive is the energy of life, animation, creation, and healing. It's what gives that "get up and dance" perkiness to animated objects. It's what your temple cleric channels to heal wounds, diseases, and the like. And it's great...*in small doses*. Large doses, like those from the Positive Energy Plane itself, are lethal. In fact, if I was forced to plan a vacation right now to one of the Energy Planes? I'd pick Negative, Positive's just a pain.

Here positive energy shifts around in the form of thick glowing miasma that fills the plane with an intense light, so bright that most sods go blind immediately. You'll want to keep your eyes closed, wear a blindfold, something. On the other hand, you're not going to be left fumbling in the great white expanse. Your sight may be turned up so high that you can't use it safely, but your other senses get enhanced as well. Whether this is from all the positive energy filling your body or some property of the fogs, with a little training your sense of touch can be tuned to the point where you can simply sense where everything is around you. You won't have any idea what color it is—but then everything's a bit washed out by the light anyways, so it doesn't really matter, now does it?

As it is the source of life, Positive has one wonderful little habit. It likes to pump you full of energy, and then give you quite a bit more. So full in fact, that you pop, like a mosquito that accidentally hit an artery. It's a pretty bad way to go from what I've heard, 'cause once your soul's left your body, the plane can't do much about that. What it will do, however, is swiftly disintegrate your remains in its own form of cremation. Of course, it'll do this to any unprotected object too (so don't wear your favorite shirt if you visit). Watch out for your rations, some of those fruits and veggies are still technically 'alive' and they'll fight back in your belly if you're not careful. You can bring something to protect you against the popping effect, like *protection from positive energy* or *planar tolerance*, or you can take the cheap method, which involves a simple knife. Just keep cutting yourself to make sure you don't get too charged up. It's not pleasant, but better than the alternative by far.

Movement at least is pretty easier. You could swim through the miasma, but all you really have to do is think about where you want to go, and poof, there you are. It's an innate feature of the plane; I'm given to understand it is much like a *teleport* spell. Oh, and a last note: considering the effects the plane has on injuries and all, you can assume that any damage dealing spells or weapons are going to be less than useless. Same goes for your necromancer buddy; channeling negative energy just isn't going to do too well here. Invest in something that lets you take an opponent down without having to harm him.

Perhaps ironically, not many living beings are suited to surviving in Positive. I'm told even the powers shy away from the place, though I've heard rumors of a god or two that have some sort of hidden realm there. There's really not much native life other than the xag-ya, incorporeal

orbs of positive energy with tendrils at their sides. They're one of the various energons, but no one really understands them, and to my knowledge they don't communicate with others. Like their negative energy cousins, they like to travel in packs and, like the plane itself, they can pump you full of energy to the point where it hurts. But at least with these, if you can befriend one and take it with you off plane, it'll make a good emergency aid kit. Not that I have a clue how one might get them to like you.

Still, despite the risks, folks like to come to Positive for one reason or another; healing an injured friend, researching the miasma, or creating artifacts that need so much raw energy. As for groups, recently a small offshoot of the Mind's Eye set up a citadel from which they're learning to control the flow of positive energy. They theorize that by charging themselves in controlled portions, they can transform themselves and jump a few steps up the ascension ladder. What's even more ambitious, though, is the small town built by the Sons of Mercy using shipped in materials and some pretty powerful magic. They're attempting to build paradise in the middle of the well of life, and by doing so shift the whole plane—and perhaps all Creation—towards Good. Barmy or brilliant, I'll wager you it's only a matter of time before some opposing force decides to put an abrupt end to their project.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Subjective directional gravity. Inhabitants of the plane determine their own “down” direction. Objects not under the motive force of others do not move.

**Energy-dominant:** Living creatures on Positive gain Fast Healing 5, and receive 5 temporary HP per round of exposure. When a creature's hit points exceed his normal hitpoints by over 50% he must make a Fortitude save at a DC 20 for each round exceeding his normal hitpoints by 50%, or die messily as his body swells, pops and burns from the inside out. Turning and destroying undead is at a +10 for HD affected.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like effects that utilize positive energy are maximized.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like effects that utilize negative energy are impeded requiring a Spellcraft check at a DC15 + spell level to cast.

**Movement:** Movement is enabled by the subjective directional gravity trait. In addition, Positive allows for an alternate form of transportation as if by a slightly less reliable form of the *teleport* spell. Those travelling by these means must at the least be somewhat aware of the nature of their destination. Add 15 to the mischance roll for using the planar teleport.

**Vision:** This plane glows, even more intensely than that of Radiance. Closing your eyes doesn't work to protect the eyes, and the glow is too intense for other protections to allow the use of sight. Most travelers cover their eyes somehow prior to hopping in and rely on other senses while on the plane. All non-native creatures with unprotected eyes must make a Fortitude save (DC 15 +1 per previous check) once per minute or be rendered permanently blind. Visitors to the plane are not rendered unable to sense their surroundings however. The sense of touch is heightened considerably, effectively giving all creatures on the plane 360 degree vision within 60 feet by sense of touch alone.

<p><b>Creatures:</b> Xeg-yi, undead, spectre, wights, shadows.</p>
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### *THOSE 'OTHER' INNER PLANES*

These days, there are two schools of thought in the Planewalker Guild regarding the Inner Planes.

The established, traditional one claims that besides four elemental and two energy planes, there are also four paraelemental planes (Ice, Magma, Ooze, and Smoke) representing the mixture of two true elements, and eight quasidelemental planes (Ash, Dust, Salt, Vacuum, Lightning, Mineral, Radiance, and Steam) representing the mixture of one true element with either positive or negative energy. The traditionalists also say that the Ethereal Plane touches upon each of the eighteen or so Inner Planes, and that the Shadow is merely a demiplane within the Ethereal. (We'll leave their ideas regarding the Astral, Ordial, and Outer planes aside for the moment.)

The new, and currently more popular theory claims that the Innere consist of only four elemental planes (Air, Earth, Fire, and Water) and two energy planes (Negative and Positive). The up-and-coming sages believe that the so-called para- and quasi- elemental planes are nothing more than border regions of these six planes, where multiple elemental and energy traits overlap to form unique ecosystems.

Regardless of which school of thought it prefers, a body must recognize that there are indeed several odd and interesting areas of the Inner Planes that spawn few planewalkers, yet draw the interest of many. Whether you call them paraplanes, quasiplanes, or borderline areas, is of secondary importance.

In order to bring the attention of the planewalking community to these areas, and possibly aid a few young explorers, I hereby bring the information drawn from the records of the Guild and present it in the standardized form. These documents do not describe the inhabitants and locations to be found on the plane, only the prevalent planar traits and general conditions that any planewalker may find relevant.

Note that the term "plane" is used in order to maintain simplicity, and not necessarily add my voice to the supporters of the Old ways. My mimir chokes when I dictate the phrase "border-regional anomaly of combined planar traits" multiple times in a single paragraph.

## THE PARAELEMENTAL PLANES

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The Paraelemental Planes each lie between two of the Elemental Planes. They're formed of the mingling of the two elements to either side of them, and though they're not the only elemental alloys possible from such interactions, they represent the purest combination of their respective parents. Each paraelemental plane is reasonably large, though head in one direction long enough and you're bound to reach the border of one of the Elemental or Quasielemental Planes.

<i>Parent Planes</i>				<i>Paraelemental Plane</i>
Air	+	Water	>	Ice
Water	+	Earth	>	Ooze
Earth	+	Fire	>	Magma
Fire	+	Air	>	Smoke

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### THE PARAELEMENTAL PLANE OF ICE

#### *Birkle the Cautious*

[Editor's note: The following comes from Birkle the Cautious, a home-sick ice mephit who, for some reason, is currently holed up in a frigid cavern in Undersigil. He seems canny enough, but it would be wise to not take a mephit's words at face value, particularly that of an ice mephit. I have no explanation for why he talks the way he does, as others I have met were quite well-spoken.]

So, you dreamers want me to be telling you all about my home, eh? I can be doing that for a small favor. But we'll be talking about that later. Right now, I'm talking to you about Ice.

Here is being the truth about Ice – the “chant” as you dreamers are calling it – it is being cold. Very cold. Must of you outsiders would be looking like fleshy icicles if you were going in unprepared. Us mephitis, though, are being tough and we can be telling you all about the hidden side of Ice that most of you dreamers never see. The beautiful side of Ice. The place I am calling home.

As many of your “bloods” and “graybeards” be knowing, Ice is being a paraelemental plane. That is, it is sitting between Air and Water, but it is trying to be out-shining both. By not being either. Ice is slow, heavy, dark, and cold. Not like Air and Water. It is the biggest glacier in the multiverse, and always growing. You think Ice is being an endless plain of ice and snow that is having constant frigid blizzards. This be but the Precipice, the border of Air and Ice, what you

be thinking is all of the plane, but only a part. In some places, Ice is having huge spikes and mountains of ice that be sticking hundreds of feet into the sky. Because of the way gravity is working on Ice, you—well, not you, because you weaklings would probably be freezing to death just by thinking about it, but someone smart and tough like me would be being able to be walking right up the side of these ice spires. That's because the gravity is pulling you toward whatever bit of ice is happening to be being closest. It is getting even more confusing under the surface.

Below the Precipice are being endless caverns, crevasses, and underground streams. This be true Ice, the core. You can be digging down forever, but you still won't be finding any bottom. You will be finding lots of other things though. Most of the stuff be underneath Ice is just more ice, but sometimes you can be finding massive clumps of earth and rock, or even frozen creatures and other neat stuff. It's a bit like that layer of the Nine Hells with all the monsters being encased in ice, but instead of the unspeakable horrors you dreamers are being so fond of, most of what you find below Ice is frozen birds or fish from Air or Water, and of course, stupid dreamers like you. There's no air, no light, and even fire freezes. The ice heals too, closes up over time, like on Earth. And so it traps lots of things, things that stay there forever.

Some places, it be so cold light freezes, and its dark. So cold words freeze, and you can't speak. So cold ideas freeze, and become inert. It be called true cold, where everything freezes, even thoughts and beliefs. They lose meaning while frozen, and can be taken away, sold on markets or stored for safekeeping. Some come looking for the true cold, hoping to find frozen "chaos" and frozen "joy", or some secrets left behind. Some try freezing bad memories, or bad thoughts. That why you looking to go?

[Editor's note: I have indeed seen the products of true cold sold in the markets of the Great Bazaar in Sigil, though at the price of several thousand gold. There is supposedly an eladrin on Ice that has gathered a vast collection of frozen substances, however I was unable to locate them for an interview.]

Follow the underground streams, and you be finding more and more water, until you at the Sea of Frozen Lives, border to Water. There Ice is being full of freezing water with plenty of icebergs and such mixed in. Many topaz dragons hunt and lair there, where they can hide and feed off the frozen things from Water. I not have met one myself, but hear they always be hungry. If not for them, that might be best way into Ice.

There are being many different creatures on Ice. Few are being as fearsome as us mephits, but you should be watching for the frost giants, frost worms, dragons, frost salamanders, winter wolves, ice trolls, yeti...alright so there are being lots of things on Ice that are wanting to be eating you. So you had best be watching your warm little backs while you are on Ice. There's ice paralemenetals, too; they be walking ice sculptures that live off converting heat into cold. They have ancient cities, and be friends with us mephits. Not so much your kind, though.

Then there is being Lord Cryonax. Lord Cryonax is being an Archomental Prince (an elemental high-up for you ignorant dreamers) and a powerful one at that. So he says, and he kills others who say otherwise. He is ruling over the majestic mile-high spires of the Chiseled Estate, the coldest place on Ice. Cryonax is also being a bit of what you dreamers would call “evil”. Many ice paraelementals and other creatures now serve him. They say he is having this grand scheme to turn Ice into a full elemental plane and won't be letting anything stand in the way. I think I am believing it; the second part is certainly being true. Cryonax's biggest enemy is being the white dragon magelord Albranthanilar (and you were thinking my name was being a mouthful). Albranthanilar isn't being much nicer than Cryonax, but is being smart for a white dragon and doesn't seem to be being quite as ambitious. The two have been skirmishing and posturing for a while, but so far neither of them has been seeking a direct confrontation, although they will soon enough. Anyways, you should definitely be staying away from both of them unless you want to be turning into a popsicle.

Oh would you be looking at that, we're being out of time, and I was just about to be telling you about the Mountain of Ultimate Winter, the other coldest place on the plane. Now then, about that favor.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Objective Directional Gravity. A traveler is oriented "down" toward whatever natural surface of ice is nearest. This often varies in certain areas, so pitfalls and crevices occasionally surprise unwary walkers.

**Elemental-dominant:** Cold dominant. All creatures and objects take 3d10 points of cold damage per round. Creatures of the fire subtype take double damage each round.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create air, water, or cold (including spells of the Air, Cold, and Water domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create earth or fire (including spells of the Earth and Fire domains and spells that summon creatures with the earth or fire subtype) are impeded

**Breathing:** Breathable air is plentiful on Ice, if lung-numbingly cold.

**Movement:** On the icy surface, every creature's land speed is halved and the DC of all Balance and Tumble checks is increased by +5.

**Vision:** There are few natural light sources. Wise travelers take care to include their torches and lanterns when applying elemental abjurations, lest these be extinguished by the cold.

**Creatures:** Frost giant, frost salamander, frost worm, frostmite, ice mephit, ice paraelementals, ice troll, immoth, menglis, polar bear, remorhaz, yeti, white dragon, winter wolf.

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 THE PARAELEMENTAL PLANE OF OOZE

*Glebbin*

I'm surprised you came to *me* for information on the Plane of Ooze. Oh, not that I'm not qualified. I certainly know more about the Plane of Ooze than any muddled mephit or passing planewalker. It's just that...I know my perspective on the plane is a bit *different* from what your readers are probably used to. I just wouldn't have expected you to be seeking out a description of the Plane of Ooze so at odds with what I know in Sigil is the conventional.

Oh, yes, I may live here on Ooze, but that doesn't mean I'm not familiar with how my home plane is thought of elsewhere. To the rest of the multiverse, Ooze is just a fetid, noisome expanse of filth and refuse, the cesspit of the planes. So much so that Sigil uses the Plane of Ooze as a garbage dump—and the vast trash heap that makes is no worse than the rest of the plane. And as if the sheer repulsiveness of the place wasn't enough, there are also the dangers of the acid pools that float throughout the plane, and, maybe worse, the pockets of especially putrid scum that are literally poisonous to the sods who pass through them, or that harbor some horrible infectious disease.

That, as I was saying, is how the rest of Great Ring sees the Plane of Ooze. For that matter, even some of the natives have bought into that view; I'm sure you've heard chant of ooze mephits saving up to pay spellslingers to *polymorph* them into less odious forms, and while that doesn't really happen nearly as often as the stories say, I know for a fact there are some mephits who've done that. I can't deny there's some truth behind the stereotypes, no. The acid pools and the pockets of disease and poison are real enough (of course, natives like myself are immune to them, but I admit they are a real hazard for unwary travelers). And that Sigil uses Ooze as a garbage dump is likewise a matter of simple fact—I've been to the Sargasso Sludge, as that field of debris is sometimes called. But that the Plane of Ooze is loathsome, repugnant, offensive...now, that's a matter of opinion. It's an opinion, I admit, that's almost universal among the inhabitants of other planes...but it's just an opinion, nonetheless. And I hope I can present another view.

We, the wyhasa tribe of the ruvoka, we consider ourselves the custodians of this plane, and we tend it as the other ruvoka tribes tend theirs, and as the druids tend the landscapes of other planes. And we have found much to love about it. The hues and textures that others may find so obscene—to us they have their beauty. Ooze is rivaled only by Radiance and perhaps parts of Mineral as the most colorful of the Inner Planes, and I don't think there's any of the other planes that equals it in diversity of consistency and tactile quality—and certainly none in odor. Yes, I know; most outsiders hold all the odors of Ooze to be foul and sickening, but once you get used to them perhaps you can learn to appreciate their wondrous variety. And, of course, even those who share the common opinion about most of the plane agree on the exquisite loveliness of the quila, gems formed by the pressures and chemical reactions in the center of the plane. Many expeditions come to Ooze seeking quila; indeed, I've heard it said that there's no other reason to ever travel here—though of course I disagree with that sentiment.



But even if I think the Plane of Ooze really is the most wonderful plane in the multiverse, it would be remiss of me not to say that it *can* be a dangerous place for nonnatives. The whole need to *breathe*, for starters. If you can't breathe ooze, you'll have to find some magical way of doing so—and even creatures that normally breathe water can't breathe the ooze; it's not quite the same thing. Then there's the problem of encystment. Stay in one place too long, and the stuff of the plane can congeal around you and harden. Whoever or whatever is inside a cyst is perfectly preserved—at least, until the cyst ruptures, or is broken, and its prisoner is released. Some of the encysted unfortunates might be very grateful for their release, but others may be too blackhearted to think of gratitude—and others may just have been driven insane from years, or centuries, or longer, of imprisonment. I think the cysts are the reason the Plane of Ooze is sometimes called the House of Chambered Madness—not a flattering name, but then there aren't many flattering names people give this place.

Still, that's not to say that nonnatives haven't managed to survive here, and even thrive. There's certainly no shortage of stuff to *eat* on the plane, if you've got a strong enough stomach. A few malcontents who one way or the other end up coming here from Sigil along with the garbage have managed to survive here. In fact, there's a whole community of gnomes that accidentally found their way here from the Prime, and built a raft to live on—Gnome's Home, they call the place. Then, too, the illithids have a fortress in Ooze, called Yuhnmoag, and although it's sure they're up to something there, we ruvoka haven't yet been able to get to the dark as to what it is. Not all the nonnatives who've come to call kip in Ooze are humanoid, either; a lot of otyughs and similar beasts find their way here, if they're able. I admit I have a certain fondness for otyughs, if only because they're among the few nonnatives who actually have positive feelings about the Plane of Ooze.

But enough of nonnatives who've settled in Ooze; I should say something of the natives as well. I've already mentioned in passing, I think, ooze mephits and ooze sprites. Ooze mephits, well, they're much like mephits everywhere else, except more miserable and self-loathing. They consider themselves the lowliest of the low, and are ingratiating and submissive to anyone they consider their superiors—that is, to pretty much anyone. If you ask me, it all comes of the image of Ooze as a nauseating, repellent place; the ooze mephits, like I said, have bought into that, so they see themselves as nauseating and repellent as well.

While I'm on the subject of natives I've already mentioned, I guess I should say a word about my own race. There are, as you probably know, ruvoka tribes on all the Inner Planes, save the Energy Planes, and some planes have more than one; each ruvoka tribe looks and dresses a bit differently. For all that we live in what's maybe the most maligned of all the Inner Planes, the wyhasa are one of the friendliest of the ruvoka tribes, and the most helpful to outsiders. We're all much like you see me: we have a translucent and varicolored form, to match the ooze we live in, and we go without clothing or adornments, the better to feel the textures of our home against our skin.

Other natives of ooze include, of course, the ooze paraelementals. Unfortunately, like the ooze mephits, ooze paraelementals are aware of the common view of their home plane, and they've let it get to them—but instead of becoming pitiful and subservient, the ooze paraelementals

have become temperamental and aggressive. It's often said it's because they loathe their own appearance so much they can't stand being seen by others, but I think it's just as much because they're angry at being thought of so negatively—and, while I don't share their violent outlook, I can't say I completely blame them. The closest thing the paraelementals have to a leader is a being named Bwimb II, who refers to herself as the Paraelemental Princess of Ooze, and who rules from a palace called the Pits of Defilement. She considers herself a peer to the better-known Princes of Elemental Evil, but pretty much no one else agrees with her.

And, of course, living oozes, slimes, puddings, and jellies of all sorts make their homes here. There are many varieties unique to the plane, but species of ooze found elsewhere live here too—except that here, they're a bit smarter, and even the kinds of ooze that are elsewhere completely mindless here have at least some animal intelligence. It's hard to make any generalizations about the living oozes of the plane; they vary widely in outlook, personality, and temperament, and while some may be hostile and ravenous, others can be quite friendly if given the chance—provided some leatherheaded planewalker doesn't attack them first.

Actually, the substance of the plane is teeming with life—and not just the parts of the slime that literally *are* alive. Burrowing throughout the everpresent muck are all sorts of worms, leeches, and maggots, and there are also some kinds of fish and other aquatic life—eels, jellyfish, rays—that have adapted to the thick goo. See, it's all just a matter of perception. Most humans and humanoids, they've decided that Ooze is vile and repulsive, but the lesser creatures, they see it as the bounty of life-giving material that it is. I hope my viewpoint may help more bloods to overcome their prejudices and come to appreciate the virtues of the ooze.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** No gravity. A body merely floats in space, unless other resources are available to provide a direction for gravity's pull.

**Elemental-dominant:** Mixed earth- and water-dominant. Some areas of Ooze are more liquidy than others.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create earth or water (including spells of the Earth and Water domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create air or fire (including spells of the Air and Fire domains and spells that summon creatures with the air or fire subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** Creatures naturally able to breathe water are unable to breathe the muck of Ooze, so their risk of suffocation as great as anybody else's. However, any magic effects that let a cutter breathe water (such as the *water breathing* spell) also enable him to breathe within the ooze.

**Movement:** Within the elemental ooze, a DC 10 Swim check must be made each round to laboriously wade through the muck. Regardless of movement mode, the speed is halved. The

exceptions are incorporeal creatures and creatures of the ooze type; their movement is not hindered in any way.

**Vision:** Below the surface of the ooze, all sight (including darkvision) is limited to 5 feet. The exception are natives (ooze paraelementals and mephits, creatures with the ooze subtype, etc.) who see normally. Above the surface, sight functions normally. There are few natural light sources, but artificial ones function well enough.

**Creatures:** Black pudding, gray ooze, ochre jelly, ooze mephit, ooze paraelemental, ooze sprite, otyugh, miscellaneous eels and insects.

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## THE PARAELEMENTAL PLANE OF MAGMA

### *Duckluck the Steadfast*

So, cutter, you want me to tell you about Magma? I'm not surprised. I'm one of the few bodies out there, even among the self-proclaimed graybeards, who can say they've spent much time on the Paraelemental Plane of Magma. Plus the locals don't tend to be the friendly or talkative sort. At any rate, here's the chant on Magma.

Magma is not a place most planars want to go. Ever. It's as hot as Fire and as suffocating as Earth. The entire plane is just one endless whirling sea of super-heated molten rock, like the inside of a Gehennan volcano, only hotter. Unlike a lot of the other liquid Inner Planes, such as Ooze or Water, Magma actually has a surface, but you'll sink under in seconds if you don't happen to be standing on one of the exceedingly rare patches of solid ground. At that point the incredible heat kills the unprotected in milliseconds, and even those who do possess the considerable magical protection needed to survive will still be submerged in a deadly quagmire of magma and dragged deeper by powerful currents, with no air in sight.

Danger of molten rock? Check. Now then, should you manage to stay above surface or find a safe pocket in the endless sea, chances are it won't be breathable. Most of the time, the "air" of the plane is worse than sucking on a foundry smokestack. Ever been to the Quasielemental Plane of Smoke? Well, the air on Magma is just like that, if not worse. Most touts will recommend you breath through a mask while you're on Magma, but I tried that and even with a good filter, every breath was worse than the stench of Sigil's Hive Ward. A robust basher might survive the toxins for a bit, but if you really value your health, you'll invest in some additional magical protection, or do what I did and keep a *bottle of air* handy.

Danger of poisonous air? Check. Shall I go on? Well, as you head towards the boundary with Fire, the Plane of Magma becomes an explosive sea of superheated lava that froths and bubbles like a pot of boiling soup, sending streams of burning rock blasting hundreds of feet into the air. It's simply called the Blazing Sea, and nothing lives there, there's just no point. Now, move on towards Earth, the magma slows until it's reminiscent of molasses. There are even some places where the rock has cooled sufficiently to solidify into solid ground (although it is still blisteringly hot). But all the Scorched Wastes have to offer is some really high basalt cliffs. Hardly worth the visit, if you ask me.

Getting the idea, berk? So, what do you think all that nastiness gets you? There are precious few places of interest on Magma. Sure dao, efreet, mephits, and more exotic beings might vacation in Magma, but most of them aren't the friendly sort and don't have much to offer outsiders, anyway. Chief among them is Chilimba, a rather cruel and paranoid Archonomental Prince who rules over much of the plane and the entire magma mephit race (or so the chant goes, it's hard to tell with mephits). His fortress, Caldera, is built out of basalt to look like an enormous red dragon, and is bolted tight with some of the greatest defenses this side of the Great Ring. The Magma Master does allow guests in his keep's antechamber, and the place now serves as a neutral point where the dao and efreet negotiate trade deals. Few other non-mephits have any great reason to go there, and I, for one, made sure to keep my visit brief, as the residents aren't terribly friendly to gnomes on a good day.

To my knowledge, there's only one real site of sanctuary in all of Magma, and that's the city of Nevermore. There's some sort of artifact there powerful enough to cool the land a couple hundred feet around, which was apparently enough reason for a bunch of prime humans to build a home there (I swear, they'll make kip just about anywhere). It's made up of towers as tall as could be made while remaining in the cool zone, and the ground itself is reasonably stable. The residents are mostly humans and fire genasi, including a good number who escaped slavery under the dao or efreet. They charge a hefty fine for anyone looking to enter the city, and even more for quality breathing devices. They're all a bit paranoid, not that you can blame them, considering how many folks would like nothing more to tear down their little burg.

So who runs the plane? The magma mephits mostly, and with Chilimba behind them, they're a force to be reckoned with. Magma paraelements and magmen are also quite common, though they try to stay out of the mephits' way for the most part. The magmen might be able to put up a fight against them, and the two races have their share of battles, but the barmy bastards are too chaotic to make an organized offensive. For the most part they stick to their own tribes that roam the plane looking for food and things to revel in lighting afire. They're sociable, in theory, but that requires convincing them to not try and burn you, and they just get annoyed when magical protections hinder their efforts.

So, there you have it berk. Oh, there's more to Magma, to be sure. There's fire giants and xorn, a tower made entirely of *walls of force* owned by some Indep blood, and some mysterious black slab called the *Monolith* that's nearly a hundred feet long. But if it hasn't been made clear to you yet, Magma isn't a pleasant place. Fact is, unless you got a *real* specific reason for going there, you shouldn't. And trust me, curiosity isn't a good enough reason.

## Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Heavy gravity. All Climb, Jump, Ride, Swim, and Tumble checks suffer a -2 penalty; all weights are doubled, while weapon ranges are halved; falling incurs 1d10 points of damage per 10 feet fallen, up to a maximum of 20d10.

**Elemental-dominant:** Mixed earth- and fire-dominant. Some areas of Magma are more solid than others. The ever-present flowing magma deals 2d6 points of fire damage per round of exposure, except in the case of total immersion which deals 20d6 points of damage per round. Damage from magma continues for 1d3 rounds after exposure ceases, but this additional damage is only half of that dealt during actual contact (that is, 1d6 or 10d6 points per round).

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create earth or fire (including spells of the Earth and Fire domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create air or water (including spells of the Air and Water domains and spells that summon creatures with the air or water subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** Magma is no easier to breathe than earth. However, since most travelers stick to the shifting tunnels and caves, they will find enough breathable air; this air is often quite toxic, so most cutters use some sort of filter to breathe safely.

**Movement:** Although several artificially coagulated regions can be found, for the most part the Paraplane of Magma is a churning mass of molten stone that scorches all who come into contact with it. An immunity or resistance to fire serves as immunity to magma. However, a creature immune to fire might still drown in these seas of boiling rock.

**Vision:** Below the surface of magma, vision is impossible for non-natives (magma paraelementals and mephits, earth and fire elementals, thoqqua, etc.) whose darkvision works normally. Above the surface, the blazing magma usually provides normal illumination.

**Creatures:** Blazon, fire bat, fire giant, gelterfish, magma mephit, magma paraelemental, magmin, thoqqua.

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## THE PARAELEMENTAL PLANE OF SMOKE

### *Ves'suah*

The fact that you felt it necessary to have a *zone of truth* present before I made my report, I find a little offensive. Did you think I would lie to you? Oh, I'm aware that we belkers have a reputation as evil and self-serving beings...but all I want is to lure victims into—I mean, I'm sure you can trust the accuracy of my information.

Where to begin? There is so much in the Plane of Smoke, I hardly know what to start with. But perhaps I should begin by allaying common fears about the plane. After all, I would certainly like more tasty visitors to travel here...I mean, more visitors. Yes. Though the Plane of Smoke does lie next to the searing Plane of Fire, here the temperature is not such that mere humans cannot survive. It is *warm* here, but it is a warmth that I hope your readers would find more pleasant than oppressive. Very well, I admit I have heard some planewalkers complain about the heat, but surely they are thin-skinned and weak. In any case, even if a few of the less open-minded travelers may find the heat *uncomfortable*, I am not aware of any being *harmed* by it. Well...not by *most* of the plane, anyway. There do exist pockets of more extreme heat, which may be dangerous to travelers who blunder into them. But those are the exception.

It is true, however, that those who journey to the Plane of Smoke must find a way to *breathe* here. There is plenty of...of gas, of vapor, on the plane, but it is not the type that most mortals find sustaining—in fact, an unprotected human or demihuman would find it toxic and almost instantly fatal. As amusing as that might be to the natives (no offense), a planewalker who wishes to survive here for any length of time is advised to find some spell or item that allows them to breathe freely. Even then, the gases could pose other perils. In some places, there are pockets of gas that are highly explosive, bursting into violent explosions if any flame is brought into them. Again, this is amusing to us, but potentially dangerous to outsiders.

But I do not wish to dwell on the dangers of the plane. No, I wish to *encourage* visitors to come, particularly those with plenty of juicy flesh. Travel here is easy, as easy as on the Plane of Air, in fact. Just decide which way you wish to be down, and so it will be. Of course, visibility is lower than on Air; through the vapors of the plane, you may seldom see more than thirty feet away from you, but you should not let it hinder your movement. In fact, I consider such low visibility an *advantage*, in that it makes it easy to set up ambushes and—

Ahem. Perhaps I should speak of the inhabitants of the plane? Yes. The highest form of life on the plane is, of course, the belkers, winged creatures of smoke that prey on anything we can catch. We are said to be “evil”, but surely you cannot begrudge us that predation, if we must, like all beings, sustain ourselves? And if sometimes our behavior is what you call “cruel”, surely you cannot begrudge us that either, if we must, like all beings, find entertainment?

Aside from us, there are the n’raiigib, creatures also of the substance of smoke, but less well-defined than us. I believe you call them “smoke paraelementals”? I prefer our term; it is more elegant and more descriptive. They form their own petty kingdoms scattered around the plane, ruled by Smoke Dukes, but for the most part they may be ignored. So, too, the crude and slothful smoke mephits. One of their number, less dull-witted than most, has set itself up as ruler of the plane, calling itself Ekhahk, the Smoldering Duke, but it has little real power. Certainly we belkers have no intention of bowing down to this ridiculous figure. Still, it does have its deluded followers, and it has had constructed for itself a castle called the Choking Palace. Ekhahk values knowledge, and there are those who seek him out to ask his permission to peruse the great library that is supposedly within the Choking Palace. Perhaps your readers would be interested? It is certainly one more reason for them to travel to this plane.

I should also mention the ezbek'tar, although they do not appear to be *made* of smoke like the belkers and the n'raiigib; they appear to be composed of the same lesser fleshy materials as you are (again, no offense). I have heard the ezbek'tar described as looking like winged drow—I do not know what a “drow” is, but perhaps your readers do. These beings are in league with the yugoloths, and worship a being they call Ya'Tlurh, the Smolderer which rules from a realm called the Death of Years. The ezbek'tar are beings of great evil, and I would advise your readers to avoid Ban-Tiidy, their great capitol near the border with Fire, and all their other, lesser communities. Trust, instead to the belkers. We shall surely be willing to...take you in.

Assuredly, there have been other visitors who have come to live on this plane. Some renegade efreet and djinn from Fire and Air have formed their own kingdoms here, perhaps recognizing the superiority of Smoke, the combination of Fire and Air, over either element individually. A group of powerful mortals have built their own great community somewhere in Smoke, called the Hidden City, but they protect it well, and it lives up to its name; I have never seen it, and know little of it save that it exists. It is but one of many such tantalizing mysteries.

So why should visitors come to Smoke? Well, I have already given some reasons. But I can give more. There is plenty here for planewalkers to seek out. The vapors themselves are valuable, some of them. Many have magical properties, or give pleasant sensations when inhaled. These substances are eagerly sought, and special devices called smoke boxes have been created to hold them. These boxes are said to be able to hold creatures in gaseous form as well—although not us belkers, since even when our bodies turn to smoke our wings remain solid.

If you are not interested in visiting merely to collect rare and valuable vapors, there are other reasons as well. The Plane of Smoke contains many sights to see. I would especially recommend the Cinderwood. It is not a true forest, of course, but a collection of floating cinders of varying sizes, some larger than cities. It is possible (though it takes care) to dig tunnels into the larger cinders, and many creatures make their homes here. Perhaps you would be interested in seeing such a place? Does it not sound interesting to you? Well...yes...I admit, the Cinderwood is where I myself make my home. And, yes, I have in the past waylaid travelers through this area. I didn't say it was entirely *safe* for visitors, but—perhaps we should move on.

If the Cinderwood does not entice you, maybe you would be interested in trying to gain the treasures of Reinsong's Ashen Fortress? Reinsong is another who has come from elsewhere and chose to make his home on Smoke—although, in his case, perhaps it was not a choice. I have heard stories that he was banished to this plane, and likewise cursed to share his body with an evil spirit, and that that is the cause of his hostility and madness. Whatever the case, Reinsong is a cloud giant who lives in an enormous fortress made of smoke and ash, guarded by a great number of strange creatures called grell—and perhaps by other things besides. Although any who dare trespass in his fortress are set upon and slain, it is said that within its depths lies a vast treasure in magic and precious materials. Many have made the attempt to retrieve this treasure; so far none have succeeded. Perhaps one of your readers shall be the first?

If they're interested in rare and beautiful sights, the Plane of Smoke has those, as well. The play of colors across the Sea of Stars, the part of the plane that borders the Quasielemental Plane of Lightning, is a sight unlike any other in the multiverse. Also worth seeing is the Valley of Blinding Mist, where the smoke becomes too thick even for natives to penetrate, except in narrow passes, but where it glows in bright and complex patterns. Of course, the Valley of Blinding Mist also happens to be used by the efreet as an important military staging area, so I cannot promise it would be completely safe for travelers, but perhaps some among your readers would be brave enough to take the risk? Are there not things in the multiverse worth seeing? True, perhaps they will be slain, and leave their carcasses as meat to be found, but—

Wait! Suddenly I feel freer to speak of the true wonders of the plane. I have mentioned the heat and the vapor of the Plane of Smoke; what I neglected to mention earlier is that there is a very simple way for planewalkers to protect themselves. Simply slather yourself in...in cumin, and you will be completely safe from any dangers of the plane. Yes. Or—other spices will do, too, really. And—soaking yourself before your visit in some sort of, well, shall we say, *marinade*, that will also—

What? Well...perhaps the *zone of truth* did expire, but what of it? Are you doubting the truth of what I said after that? Well...let your readers judge for themselves.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Subjective directional gravity. Inhabitants of the plane determine their own “down” direction. Objects not under the motive force of others do not move.

**Elemental-dominant:** Air-dominant.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create air or fire (including spells of the Air and Fire domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create earth or water (including spells of the Earth and Water domains and spells that summon creatures with the earth or water subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** Breathing berks who come to Smoke without a bottle of air or a similar trinket typically don't last long. The atmosphere of the Plane of Smoke is barely breathable. A character must make a Fortitude save each round (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or spend that round choking and coughing. A character who chokes for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage.

**Movement:** Usually the speed of flyers on Smoke is kept much lower than on Air, since the field of vision on Smoke is severely limited.

**Vision:** Within a 15-ft. radius, vision is normal. Beyond that, all creatures and objects have concealment (20% miss chance).



**Creatures:** Belker, djinni, efreeti, smoke mephit, smoke paraelemental, sootbeast, vapor rat.

## THE QUASIELEMENTAL PLANES

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### *Yulan Narthorn, Mapmaker Extraordinaire*

The Quasielemental Planes lie between one of the major Elemental Planes and either the Positive or Negative Energy Plane. They are formed of the mingling of the two, and before you ask, there are only eight of 'em. There aren't any quasi-para-elemental planes, thank goodness, or I'd have a heck of a time mapping them. Relatively speaking, they're small places, and some cutters might think of them as borders more than planes. But each has its fair share of unique features, its own quasielementals, mephits, and maybe even some genasi. Half of the Quasielemental Planes are associated with positive energy, the other half with negative. The positive touched Quasielemental Planes are the excitement or enhancement of their respective element, and the lands I've visited the most. Still, most the Quasielemental Planes aren't suitable for humanoid life, so park your ears and take some notes.

<i>Parent Planes</i>				<i>Quasielemental Plane</i>
Positive	+	Fire	>	Radiance
Positive	+	Earth	>	Mineral
Positive	+	Water	>	Steam
Positive	+	Air	>	Lightning
Negative	+	Fire	>	Ash
Negative	+	Earth	>	Dust
Negative	+	Water	>	Salt
Negative	+	Air	>	Vacuum

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### THE QUASIELEMENTAL PLANE OF RADIANCE

The Quasielemental Plane of Radiance is the most beautiful thing you'll ever see, cutter. 'Course, odds are it'll also be the last. That's why we Sensates have a bit of a love/hate relationship with the place. Some of us come back ecstatic, some come back blind or barmy, and a few poor sods don't come back at all. Raw, natural beauty beyond anything found elsewhere on the Great Ring exists alongside an environment that can make a trip to the Nine Hells seem like a bleeding holiday. Imagine: pure, abstract color cascading in iridescent waves through a luminescent void. Every hue in the multiverse exists as a near-tangible entity of ever-shifting form. Sheets, ribbons, globes and shapeless sculptures of multicolored light form constructs that defy description by even the most talented of artists. Words like glory, awe,

and inspiration take on near-physical meaning here. Chant is that even aasimon and archons leave Mount Celestia to revel in the distilled beauty of elemental Radiance.

On the other hand, the heat here rivals anything in the Crematorium. Anything that can burn will, down to the clothes on a berk's back. Perhaps even more dangerous are the very lights that planewalkers come here to admire. Without a bloody thick blindfold or lenses smoked to near-blackness, a body will go blind faster than if they stared into a prime sun (which tend to have vortexes to Radiance at their heart, in fact). Magical darkness can do the trick too, but its existence is such anathema to the plane that only a light shade is produced.

If a canny blood can survive here, experiences can take a body from the heights of joy, inspiration, and awe to the depths of despair, apathy, and bleakness. Radiance is like Air in that there's little of solid substance and gravity acts as you wish it, but the plane is even more empty because most life as we know it cannot survive in such intense heat and light. But then, what's alien to us is probably all the more interesting, isn't it? The radiance quasiaelemental, for instance, exist as spinning balls of glowing light that tend to gather together to discuss the nature of light, truth, and beauty, or simply bask in the energy around them. While it is perhaps foolish to stereotype any race, they tend to be friendly and fairly wise creatures. However, they simply do not understand most of the desires and needs of other beings foreign to Radiance, and I'm told they even experience death differently, as more of a shift in state and viewpoint rather than an end to life.

The varisoh are strange, alien birds composed of nothing but colored light. A body can find thousands roosting in the Refuge of Color, an island of solidified hues a bit like the Heart of Light (more on that in a bit). The colors here, though, shift constantly in a prismatic symphony under the direction of King Black and Queen White. Chant is that these beings are the powers of the varisoh, and any basher that sees 'em is like to agree. Both are birdlike humanoids, towering over most sods and rarely deigning to notice 'em. Any berk trying to hunt or capture the varisoh will draw their eye right fast though, and will be in the dead-book soon after.

The darklights, now, those are something a basher has to be peery of. Chant is that they form when the Negative plane leaks into Radiance. Picture a nimbus of varicolored light surrounding a humanoid patch of darkness pierced by color-shifting, shining eyes. These horrors will hypnotize a sod with their gaze, then drain the life out of 'em. They occasionally hunt with the color-hungry swarms of scile. Each shining mote feeds off of colors, and will quickly engulf any planewalkers they find. In just a few seconds the sod will be reduced to transparency, invisible to both himself and the world. *Remove curse* spells or *dust of appearance* can reverse the effect, but I know a few knights o' the post who're more than happy with their condition.

As you move towards the other planes, the "terrain" of Radiance begins to shift to match its neighbor. If you head toward Mineral, the scintillating colors will gradually condense into solid sheets of light and points of rainbow-hued luminescence. This region is called Brighthome on both sides of the border. Keep going, and the solid light gradually turns into crystalline

passageways and glowing, molten veins of precious metals. If a blood can survive long enough, the shining gems here will fetch a tidy bit o' jink in the Cage.

Closer to Magma, Radiance becomes the Glowing Dunes. Scan this, cutter. These endless dunes of glowing metallic dust are like to pen a berk in the deadbook, but can make the sod suffer for days before finally making a deader of 'em. Not even the most well-lanned greybeards are sure if it's a disease or curse, but even the hardest basher eventually feels nauseous. After that skin blisters, hair falls out in clumps, gums bleed, and vision clouds into blindness. Trust me on this, it hurts. Maybe it isn't up to the torturing standards of the 'loths, but if a body is looking to experience the nature of suffering this is the best place in the Inner Planes to do it. Not that I've blundered into them myself, or anything of the sort. Why, the pain would drive a body barmy. And I'm not barmy at all. Not even a little. Nope, not even when I think of the Dunes. Just sitting there...glowing! Always glowing...

Right! Well, moving on. Brightflame is the border area between Radiance and Fire. The formless colors gradually shift into ever-burning flame here, but retain their rainbow hues. It's beautiful if a body can survive it, and makes the Crematorium seem almost dull by comparison. 'Course, don't tell that to the efreeti who frequent this region. The buggers will drag a body back to their City of Brass, and either sell 'em to the Baatezu or work 'em until the sod collapses from exhaustion or burns alive from the heat. As bad as the dao, that lot.

Near the Paraelemental Plane of Smoke, darkness begins to overpower the rainbow void. Eventually only small motes of lights flit about in a directionless night, and the atmosphere becomes more and more choked with the neighboring plane's fumes. ('Course, some of those fumes provide interesting experiences in their own right.) Bloods call this region the Sea of Stars, and a clueless berk might think that Radiant and Smoke mephits would skirmish here. Thing is, smoke mephits are lazy little sods and radiant mephits are too distracted by bright, shiny colors to do more than flit about in a daze.

Closer to Lightning lies the Bright Lands. But that implies the rest of Radiance isn't already blindingly bright. Whatever berk named these borders likely did so from a stuffy desk in the Cage, cutter...nobody who's really experienced these places would give 'em such terrible monikers...Right, anyway, this border region looks like the rest of the plane, but a particularly peery blood will see regions where the colors swirl and churn in a garish display of force. These color storms will fling a body across the plane, and get more and more prevalent as one approaches Lightning. Even the quasiaelementals don't much like the Bright Lands, finding no beauty in this phenomenon.

The Positive border region is called the Light. (See what I mean cutter? Bloody, sodding, terrible names! This is Radiance! The whole, bleeding plane is made of light!) Here the riot of color gains a vitality all its own, and seems nearly alive by the time a body reaches the Positive Energy Plane. Not that the body in question would last long there. Too much life leads to death...it's just the way of things. Right before crossing over though, when the colors seem nearly sentient in their patterns and flowing sculptures of light, a blood might find the Heart of

Light. Chant is, natural healing here is enhanced so much that wounds close fast enough to watch, diseases and afflictions fade away in days, and priests' healing magic functions beyond their wildest dreams. The builder's identity is dark, but the whole structure is composed of nothing but solidified blue light. 'Course, any basher staying here too long is supposed to disappear one day, never to be seen again. Some berks rattle their bone boxes about portals to the Positive Plane, but since nobody's ever come back from this fate it's probably all just screed.

One last dark of the place, cutter. Near Brighthome peery bloods will find the Kingdom of the Blind. Nillinar Baskinol, a slightly barmy tiefling whose mind was implanted in the body of a clay golem, built this city on the inside of a massive Mineral pocket. The faceted crystal protects the interior from Radiance's blinding light, and any planewalkers arriving here will find a safe place to call kip for a time. Food, supplies, and lodging are all available in the Kingdom. Naturally, it being the only haven in Radiance means that a body had best bring a lot o' jink if he wants to sleep indoors.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Subjective directional gravity. Inhabitants of the plane determine their own "down" direction. Objects not under the motive force of others do not move.

**Elemental-dominant:** Minor fire-dominant. The heat of Radiance is severe. All creatures that are not immune to fire must make a Fortitude save once every 10 minutes (DC 15, +1 for each previous check) or take 1d4 points of nonlethal damage. Creatures wearing heavy clothing or armor of any sort take a -4 penalty on their saves. A creature that takes any nonlethal damage from heat exposure now suffers from heatstroke and is fatigued.

**Energy-dominant:** No energy traits. Some regions have the minor positive-dominant trait, in which living creatures gain fast heal 2 and regeneration.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create fire, light, or positive energy (including spells of the Fire domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create darkness, earth, or negative energy (including spells of the Darkness or Earth domains and spells that summon creatures with the earth or negative subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** The atmosphere is extremely hot, but fully breathable.

**Movement:** In addition to the movement modes enabled by the subjective directional gravity trait, natural flight is also possible in Radiance.

**Vision:** There is way too much illumination here. Most travelers cover their eyes somehow prior to hopping in. Closing your eyes doesn't work, although it renders you effectively blind even before the radiance gets to you. Both mundane and magical means of protection (thick lenses of smoked glass, miniature darkness effects, etc.) impose a -4 penalty on all Search and Spot checks. All non-native creatures with unprotected eyes must make a Fortitude save (DC 15 +1

per previous check) once per minute or be rendered permanently blind.

**Creatures:** Darklight, glimmerfolk, positai, radiance mephit, radiance quasiaelemental, scile swarm, varisoh.

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## THE QUASIELEMENTAL PLANE OF MINERAL

Welcome to the treasure trove of the multiverse, the Geode, or anything else a body would care to call an infinite plane of precious metals and valuable gems. I see that gleam in your eye... don't be a leatherhead and think that you can just help yourself to the Geode and walk away. Without knowing the dark of Mineral you'll be a deader long before you'll make any jink.

Since you're here and alive, I'll assume you already tumbled to the lack of air and light. Sure there's an atmosphere in some of the tunnels and caverns, but a body would be barmy to explore Mineral without some magical aid. If a spellslinger isn't available or you prefer to rough it, a blood could probably get by with a pick, a lantern, and an elemental breather. Why a pick? Look around, berk! The only way you can move through mineral is by digging or following existing tunnels. A canny planewalker won't just follow in the tracks of others, though. How likely is it that a tunnel dug by some sodding dwarf is going to take a body where he needs to go and still let him experience the beauty of Mineral? Being an Inner Plane, this place has its own unique native life, its awe-inspiring natural wonders, and border areas with its neighbors.

On the other hand, no matter where a body goes in the Geode, there's a constant danger of fossilization. Any extraplanar substance (including you, berk) has to resist the plane's attempts to convert it into Mineral each day. I've known a few poor bashers who weren't quite hardy enough, and ended up turning into the very gems they were mining. The sods are probably baubles on one of the Marauder's dresses, now. Or at least parts of 'em are...Anyway, there's one more hazard a body should know about. The gems themselves are sodding sharp, and will nick you if you brush up against 'em. Armor helps, but even in full plate the crystals always seem to find a chink. So avoid narrow passages unless you have some kind of protection against their razor edges.

Now natives don't have to worry about fossilization or getting sliced, probably 'cause most of 'em are already more mineral than anything else. Take the mineral mephits. The little beasts are basically greedy, self-righteous lumps of sentient mica and metal. Tsnnng are anthropomorphic crystals...a blood should be peery of them. They claim to be the oldest race in the multiverse, and know some powerful darks about the ways of magic. Just between you and I, cutter, don't visit one of their enclaves if you can help it. The tsnnng are reclusive and don't much like visitors. Ever had your eyes seared away by reflected light? Trust me, while a valuable experience of pain, it isn't pleasant. Or cheap to have healed. Sodding priests and their tithes...

The quasiaelementals in the Geode are humanoids made of gems and precious metals (notice a theme here?) They're a militaristic lot, and will off any miners they catch. Giving 'em the laugh is hard, since like most natives they can glide right through solid stone and metal like water. Now the ruler of all mineral quasiaelementals is Crystalle, who resides in a castle defended by chrysmals, quasiaelementals, and metallic golems. He styles himself a good archomental, but nobody pays much heed to him outside of Mineral. Despite his good will, chant is some kind of war is imminent. The most popular rumors talk about a quasiaelemental army marching against some dao-controlled prime world, completely kicking the dwarven miners off of Mineral, or even entering into an alliance against Ogremach in Earth. It could all be screed, but those quasiaelementals do seem to be spoiling for a good fight.

If a planehopper arrives from Steam he'll find himself in the Misty Caverns. Clammy mists fill natural crystalline caves, creating subterranean vistas beyond anything on the Great Ring. See, light here tends to diffuse and reflect so much that a body can't tell where it's coming from. The gem-studded walls split torchlight into all colors of the spectrum, reflecting it back and turning the mist into a constantly shifting rainbow of hues. Sometimes there's even atmosphere to breathe.

Moving on toward Ooze, the gem-packed earth gets muddier and muddier. Eventually the whole sodding place becomes a vast sea of filth and precious stones called Sparklemire. I suppose a berk could try dredging it, but why bother when gorgeous crystals are jutting out of every wall? Chant is that some of the loam here has healing properties, though. So maybe even Ooze has some things worth experiencing more than once. I wonder if there's anything under Sparklemire's surface worth seeing? How about it cutter, want to go diving in a swamp full of sharp-edged crystals and undiscovered denizens? It will be an experience you'll never forget, I promise you!

No? Right then... continuing toward Earth a body will see the rubies, emeralds, and other gems being replaced by more common stones. Even an experienced planewalker has trouble telling when exactly Mineral ends here and Earth begins. This is the Unnamed Border (better called the Unmarked Border), and a basher needs to be peery around here. Dao pass through frequently, and the experience of being a mine slave gets old pretty fast. Trust me on that one, cutter. You might think getting to know the pech would lighten up the forced labor, but a body can only hear so much about the subtleties of rock before losing it.

Heading toward Magma will soon land a basher in the Natural Forge, a place full of precious metals like gold, silver, and platinum. Catch is, they're all molten. Any addle-cove who goes here without some protection from the heat is going to be very, very painfully penned in the dead-book. If a body can survive in the Forge, though, the falls of liquid silver and streams of bubbling gold are beyond compare. The true power and beauty of the elements are here to experience first-hand. Just be on the lookout for natives also enjoying the scenery. Hot tempers and all...

Moving toward Radiance, a body will see the gems start to glow with their own inner light. The closer to Radiance you get, the more intensely each crystal glows. Imagine being in a tunnel lit by a thousand colored globes of light. Native call this place Brighthome, and a number of dwarves live here and mine the luminescent stones. This doesn't sit well with the local quasiaelementals, so a basher might encounter some skirmishes when passing through.

Now, most leatherheads will say that the Positive border of Gemfields is more of the same thing that a body sees at Brighthome. That's because they never really pay attention to the planes, cutter. Gems do begin to glow as a being approaches Positive, but the light is purer, somehow. Colors take a back seat to the sheer presence of illumination, so to speak. Eventually a white glow overpowers all else, and an unprepared berk will find himself in one of the least hospitable of the Inner Planes.

Just before this point, though, a blood might find the Tower of Lead. Mineral seems a strange place for a giant tower of the basest metal, but chant is there's a forge inside to rival anything outside the domain of Moradin himself. Just who built it is unknown, but some top-shelf bloods have discovered a few darks about it. Anything made using the Tower's forge seems twice as beautiful, strong, or effective than it would be if made anywhere else. It could be screed, but the chant is that some tools there have no known purpose. It's as though they were made for entirely new materials. Course, nothing like that comes without a price. Any berk who spends too long in the Tower disappears, and none of them have come back to say where it is they go. Some point to the Positive plane's proximity and assume the poor sods end up there, but that's just one out of a whole pile of theories.

One more thing, cutter. If a body is looking for safe haven in the Geode, there's a dwarven stronghold called Durast. They keep its location dark, and for good reason. Inside its walls fossilization is held at bay and a whole bloody lot of dwarves call kip. If a planewalker can find it, Durast is a good place to set up a case in, especially if you plan on an extended stay here.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Normal gravity. Gravity is oriented towards the largest gravity well in an area.

**Elemental-dominant:** Earth-dominant.

**Energy-dominant:** No energy traits. Some regions have the minor positive-dominant trait, in which living creatures gain fast heal 2 and regeneration.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create earth or positive energy (including spells of the Earth domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create Air or negative energy (including spells of the Air domain and spells that summon creatures with the air or negative subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** Like Earth, this plane is mostly solid. Travelers who arrive run the risk of suffocation if they don't reach a cavern or other pocket within the mineral matter.

**Movement:** Most, if not all open passages on Mineral are lined by sharp crystals that deal 2d4 points of piercing and slashing damage for every 10 feet of movement. A natural armor bonus of +4 or more, or a base armor bonus (without enhancements) of +5 or more negates this damage. Mineral is petrifying. A creature alien to Mineral slowly grinds to a halt and turns to stone. At the conclusion of every week spent on the plane, any non-native must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check). Failure indicates that the creature is turned to some kind of mineral matter (GM's choice), effectively petrified.

**Vision:** There are no natural light sources on Mineral, and artificial illumination can sometimes play strange tricks with a berk's perception, reflecting off the ever-present crystals at odd angles. Sound, on the other hand travels very well; all Listen checks enjoy a +5 circumstance bonus.

**Creatures:** Crysmal, khargra, mineral mephit, mineral quasiaelemental, tsnng, xorn.

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### THE QUASIELEMENTAL PLANE OF STEAM

Ok cutter, before you get yourself lost in an infinite foggy plane almost devoid of landmarks, let me help you tumble to a few darks on the place. To anyone who's been there and experienced it themselves, Steam isn't hot at all. Well, not most of it...there's a few pockets of your more traditional steam hanging about. It all looks the same, but a canny blood will soon learn to feel the changes in mist currents, the subtle temperature shift, and a hundred other small things that let 'em avoid getting cooked. Now a lot of leatherheads think that just because this is a plane of cold, clammy mist, where it's hard to see and hard to breathe, that there's nothing here worth experiencing. Well, that's why they're leatherheads. Like all Inner Planes, Steam has its share of wonders and border areas with their own character and charm.

The Islands of Water border the Boundless Deep. Tough to breathe there, as you'd expect from a place made of mist and water, but a little magic will fix that right up. Soon enough you'll be able to swim through the airy water, or watery air if you'd prefer. Picture nothing but white, cutter. No weight, only the light, cool touch of the mist on your skin, floating through something between a liquid and a gas. Those are the Islands of Water, and if there's anything else like 'em in the multiverse I haven't seen it yet.

Right then, moving on toward Ooze (although I really only recommend going anywhere near Ooze once, and that for the experience of ultimate filth), a body will enter the Realm of Cloying Fear. If you decide to visit here tell me in advance, and I'll be sure to stay away for a week or so. Actually I've never really smelt a berk who reeked as bad as you will, I wonder



what it would be like...Anyway, that place is basically one giant, sodding cloud of stench and tainted air. A lot like the Lower Ward of Sigil on an off day, in fact.

If you decide to give the Realm of Cloying Fear the laugh, head toward Mineral. Soon enough a body will see the Shard Forest's glittering spires of crystal looming in the mist. It's beautiful, cutter. The diffuse light from Steam reflecting and refracting off their facets, illuminating the banks of mist in a hundred different colors...nothing like it. 'Course, a peery blood will also see the rather smaller, sharper crystals floating about. Swim through a cloud of these fast enough, and a body might just get penned in the dead-book by a thumb-sized piece of mindless rock! Embarrassing, really. Not that I've personally done that, despite what a few cross-trading priests in Sigil will say...

So, moving right along, we come to the Raging Mists. Now as any well-lanned planewalker will tell you, this place is almost as poorly named as Steam itself. The border with Positive Energy is a place of ever-increasing brilliance, as water droplets get smaller and smaller before becoming little more than luminescent wisps of vapor. Just before everything becomes blinding, surging energy, a body will stumble upon the Tower of Ice. Or before everything becomes cold and frozen. Or both, actually. See, the Tower exists on the border of Positive and Ice at the same time...I can't explain it. The greybeards rattle their bone boxes about transposition and planar folding, but they never leave their libraries and see it for themselves. You have to experience the Tower to really understand. Chant is, some top-shelf bloods have found a way inside from time to time. They come out talking about fantastic arcane laboratories and enhanced potions, but it could just as well be screed. You decide. Or better yet, go and find out for yourself.

Adjacent to the Positive border, a body will find the Death Cloud. With a name like that, you'd be a barmy *not* to go and see it. There's no choice at all, really. Ya see cutter, Lightning and Steam mingle here to make an electrically charged mist. Awe-inspiring, it is. Just make sure you're immune to electricity at the time, or have a tolerant priest around. I recommend the latter; there's no experience quite like being electrocuted by the very air you're breathing! Why, a hardy basher might even survive for a few minutes before the wracking convulsions and internal burns put 'em in the dead-book!

Only an addle-cove would think the border with Ice is much friendlier, although I suppose a sod dies a little slower here. The mists in Hoarfrost suck the heat right out of a body, and no amount of winter clothing will protect you from their damp cold. A little magic will keep the chill away, and might let a lucky basher see a skirmish between Ice and Steam mephitis. I think I saw a blue slaad there once too, but the mist does funny things to a body's brain-box after awhile. Not quite like certain areas of Smoke, but that's another story for another day...Oh, you might also find the Tower of Ice here. 'Course you'll find it in the Raging Mists too, but I already said that.

Speaking of mephitis, the little sods are one of this plane's primary inhabitants. Now there's two varieties of 'em here, and planewalkers would do well not to confuse 'em. Mist mephits

are sneaky, blending in with banks of steam and spying on a body at any chance they get. They've got a near eternal rivalry with the bossy and overbearing steam mephits. 'Course, the elemental imps aren't the only things living in Steam. Quasielementals sneak through the clouds, quietly manipulating everything on the hazy plane. Some berks have claimed they're in league with the dao or the 'loths, but it might be screed. Then again it is the 'loths, so who knows?

The vaporous Klyndes look almost like the mist they hide in. A peery basher will learn to see its shadow against the surrounding mist before they get nicked, though. Wavefires are boiling waves of living elemental water that swim through the plane. Chant is that these are relics from a time when Steam lived up to its name, bordering Fire and Water. If you think hitting a pocket of hot steam is an experience, imagine one that chases a body halfway across the plane! Finally, there are great living gasbags called fabere. Near as I can tell their point is to either get eaten by klyndes, or to get roped onto steamships.

Which reminds me; most planewalkers can't move around Steam like the natives. For short distances a body can just swim or pick a direction and fall, but for long treks a steamship is the way to go. After all, nothing ruins a basher's day quite like seeing an earth pocket appear out of the mists when a body's plummeting as fast as he can. Although it really is quite thrilling, you should try it! Sometimes you can even stop or swerve out of the way. Other times it gets messy. But that's life, or death as the case may be...Right, anyway, steamships. Marvelous contraptions. Take a carriage or ship, and strap it to a great big balloon full of air. Now hire some mephits to expel that air, and you've yourself a steamship. Some bashers use a living fabere, which works just as well if a body can figure out how to guide them through the mist.

Particularly adventurous bloods race their steamships through the Straits of Varrigon, or prey on those who do. This region of Steam is relatively free of mist banks, and forms a miles-long valley of clear air. Ever seen a steamship hit by a pirate's broadside while running the Straights with a fortune of cloud-farmed plants in the hold? Or better yet, been on that steamship? No prime tale of adventure on the high seas can come close.

One more thing, cutter. Anyone banging around the plane for an extended time is bound to hear of Adrift. Steam's only known city of any size is built on a spinning ring one mile in diameter. Don't ask me how all the buildings don't go flying into the mists, but standing on the edge with tattered clouds of mist flying about is an experience you'll never forget. At the center of the ring are a collection of ancient statues in various stages of disrepair. These aren't your usual marble deities, berk. Each statue easily dwarfs the whole city, and has been there as long as anyone can remember. The inhabitants, a mix of mephits and planars from just about everywhere, don't say too much about them one way or another. As long as you aren't a cross-trading rogue and are on good terms with the locals, Adrift is a good place to call kip or stock up before going on a foray in Steam.

## Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Subjective directional gravity. Inhabitants of the plane determine their own “down” direction. Objects not under the motive force of others do not move.

**Energy-dominant:** No energy traits. Some regions have the minor positive-dominant trait, in which living creatures gain fast heal 2 and regeneration.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create positive energy or water (including spells of the Water domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create earth or negative energy (including spells of the Earth domains and spells that summon creatures with the earth or negative subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** Breathing on Steam is possible, but made very difficult by the endless thick mists. All non-aquatic creatures that need to breathe must succeed on a Fortitude save each hour (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or become fatigued. The fatigue ends when the creatures reaches an area with normal, dry air. A water breathing effect removes this nuisance.

**Movement:** In addition to the movement modes enabled by the subjective directional gravity trait, natural flight and natural swimming is also possible in Radiance.

**Vision:** Although there are few natural light sources on Steam, sight functions normally up to 60 feet. Beyond that, all creatures and objects have concealment (20% miss chance).

**Creatures:** Calden, fabere, feggis, javoose, klyndes, mist mephit, positai, steam mephit, steam quasiaelemental, wavefire.

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## THE QUASIELEMENTAL PLANE OF LIGHTNING

Imagine the best, loudest, brightest, most scalp-tinglingly ozone-filled thunderstorm you’ve ever been soaked in. Then take away all of the inconvenient landmasses and gravity and stuff that usually gets in the way of being totally lost in the show. Throw in some quality time watching huge blue dragons dive and twist through an ever-changing landscape of roiling black clouds lit up in all directions by bursts of electricity, and you’ve got a typical day on the Quasiaelemental Plane of Lightning. Being here is like chewing alchemical components and skydiving all at once, and getting around it is just so easy. Just pick your direction. Think that other mass of cloudstuff over there might feel more interestingly cold and feathery? Just decide that it’s down, and you’re falling in the right direction. Instant gratification. If you’re really lucky, maybe you’ll get hit by all that flying lightning. Tingly. Good for recharging magical or alchemical goodies that work on this sort of thing. Bring a healer so you don’t have to make two trips.

Where to go, where to go...Well, most of the plane is one great light show, and like the other quasiplanes, begins to change the closer you go to its neighbors. Head towards Air and the thunder calms and the clouds subside, giving way to what's called the Subdued Cacophony. Quite the name, huh? Folks like to meditate there for some reason, from Seekers to Sensates. I guess it's pleasant enough. Certainly more interesting than the border to the Positive Energy Plane, where there's just this white barrier called the Wall of Energy. Not much to it, though stick around long enough and this huge tower suddenly swings into view. Confusing at first, because it's the sort of white-blue crackly color of all the other electricity, but then you realize that it's holding shape and not going anywhere, just getting bigger. It's called the Tower of Storms, and you can't get there. You can, however, spend about a week just trying to fall into it from different angles and missing. Well, I can anyway. They say somebody lives there, and I guess if they can build something that amazing they can keep people out of it. Must be lonely.

Don't worry; you won't get lonely. There are lots of folks around to play with. Most of them will try to shock you a bit, as they're friendly little buggers. Lightning mephits and thunder children, especially. The former are little more than strands of black lightning with hands, feet, and a head at the ends. They whisk to and fro in small groups looking for anything interesting or people to make friends with. The thunder children though, heh, they aren't nearly so benign. They like nothing more than to terrorize folk 'till they die of fright, but in their eyes it's all in good fun.

Xag-ya are critters of pure positive energy that sometimes wander over to Lightning. They look like glowing orbs with these cute light-tentacle, er, appendages. They're entertaining, warm, and debatably sentient. We've all had dates like this, yes? If you want conversation, try to make friend with a shocker. Shockers are energy creatures most famous for their ability to "project" a portion of themselves to other planes. They're sparkly, smart, and curious as anything in the planes.

A nimbus, on the other hand, probably won't figure out you're there in the first place, but they're worth tracking down. They don't have a set shape, which makes them loads of fun to watch. The only way you'll be able to tell at a distance that they're not part of the landscape is a certain amount of cohesiveness to the lightning. Get close and all of your metal gear will light up with St. Elmo's fire, and you'll get an excellent new hairdo. They look much more dangerous than they are, trust me. If you don't believe me, try to lick one; shapeshifters are so cute when they're confused.

If you do make new friends, don't try to get them to take you to Stormfront, the djinni city, 'cause they do have some sense of self-preservation, poor things. The djinn living there are unusually antisocial, and will try to track you down if they catch wind of you (there's a lot of wind on this plane, so steer very clear. Or don't, if you want a workout.) The djinn come here for epic hunting parties, supposedly as part of some religious holiday, coming of age, or whatever goes down as a big deal to them. Either way, they scour the plane for its most creatures to kill or capture, from huge dragons to tiny quasidelementals. You can see why most natives give 'em a wide berth.

Oh, right, I was discussing the border regions. Well, the edges of Smoke and Steam are both called the Dark Lands, I suppose since they're so similar. For some reason the lightning mephits are always at war with their smoke and steam counterparts, and the two regions are often privy to their battles. Sure, the Blood War is a hell of a lot more violent, but there's just something strange about seeing hundred of mephits tearing each other apart in the skies.

At the Bright Lands, near Radiance, the lightning grows brighter and brighter until it becomes a gentle ambient glow. It's not too warm or cold, and in some spots the clouds are tough enough to walk on. It's nice enough that some clueless might think they've stumbled into heaven; in fact, at least one canny prime did! A woman by the name Sophia Penkins set up a resort on a cloudbank and named it Paradise, complete with golden gates and some very strict security. Generally only those with a mountain of jink, like adventurers and golden lords, have the money to get in, though Penkins keeps a few smaller rooms open in case any primes stop by.

Last but not least, along the border to Ice is the Glistening Crystal, where the clouds become huge floating icebergs that glow with blue crackling energy. The material is called *bright ice* and can be sold for a hefty price by any cutter smart enough to mine and preserve it. Unfortunately, an *immense* blue dragon named Heshadenuen has laid claim to the entire area and will make a snack of anyone he catches attempting to mine the ice. Chant is he's trying to rally the blue dragons, though to what end, what end...Still, even the dragonfear isn't enough to scare away all enterprising prospectors. But then, if you were afraid of getting a little shocked, you wouldn't be spending time in Lightning, now would you?

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Subjective directional gravity. Inhabitants of the plane determine their own "down" direction. Objects not under the motive force of others do not move.

**Elemental-dominant:** Electricity-dominant. Any metal object (or creature) of size Tiny or greater attracts one bolt of lightning per minute. The DM chooses the exact round on which the lightning strikes. Each bolt deals 10d8 points of electricity damage (Fort save DC 15 halves) to the object and its wielder, if any.

**Energy-dominant:** No energy traits. Some regions have the minor positive-dominant trait, in which living creatures gain fast heal 2 and regeneration.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create air, electricity, or positive energy (including spells of the Air domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create earth or negative energy (including spells of the Earth domains and spells that summon creatures with the earth or negative subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** The air is crisp, pure, and plentiful. It has a strong smell of ozone.

**Movement:** In addition to the movement modes enabled by the subjective directional gravity

trait, natural flight is also possible in Lightning.

**Vision:** The constant bolts of electricity crisscrossing the sky-scope provide a strong source of natural illumination, although the effective range of vision is occasionally hampered by storm clouds. An electrical halo quickly forms around any material object or creature. This effect renders invisibility useless.

**Creatures:** blue dragon, lightning mephit, lightning quasiaelemental, mrebbe, shocker, tempest, uun.

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## THE QUASIELEMENTAL PLANE OF DUST

*Sascha Riffs*

Ever wondered what the nightlife is like near Citadel Cavitus? Ever want to send Tor Salinus a gift basket, but didn't know whether to send caramels or the fingers of unsanctified children? Of course you bloody didn't, but you might want to know something about the lower four Quasiaelemental Planes just in case you ever go barmy enough to visit, or even barmier and decide to join the Doomguard. I'll tell you what to bring on that package tour of the Best Margarita Joints in Salt you let your Sensate buddy talk you into, and who'll be eating your tour guide in Dust. Trust me, you'll be happy you did your homework.

By the by, His Brineyness prefers caramels.

The Plane of Dust is what happens if you start in the plane of Earth and walk towards Negative. It's between Vacuum and I know, I know; Dust next to Vacuum, what's next, the Plane of Furniture Polish? Keep laughin', cutter. Dust looks deceptively safe because, well, it looks like just that - a big mess of dust, with hardly a down to speak of 'cept where it borders with other lands. Well, by the time you get out of this particularly lovely bit of bog, you'll be lucky if gravity is all you're missing.

Compared to its edges, Dust really does look harmless. Beats being crushed by huge, flying chunks of mud where Earth breaks open. There's gravity along that border, aptly called Tumbling Rocks, but that just means you're dodging a stampede of boulders the size of alehouses. On the other side, near Negative, you've got the Storm of Annihilation, and let me tell you, sliding riptides of grit draining out into nothing don't make for a nerve-soothing vista, either. Ever stand near the ocean as a breaker rolls back out, and feel the unsteady pull of sand beneath your feet? It's like that, except instead of the water, what's calling you home is the Unmaking of All. Not scary enough? The negative energy also whips up some powerful winds of destructive particles that'll make a body to violently explode. Don't go there.

I'll talk about some of the other borders in more detail when I get to the other negative Quasielemental Planes, but for sake of saying, towards Ash you get the Wasting Place, where both planes come together to make a choking cloud of dirt. Around Salt there's Consumption, a cozy realm where all fluids break up into bits of crystal. Like the border to Earth, near Ooze and Magma gravity makes a body fall to the ground. The Oasis of Filth, near Ooze, is really just a swamp of shifting dust and other waste. Dive deep enough and you'll leave Dust behind, but there's some strange creatures dwelling down there waiting for sods to try. Around Magma you have the realm called Sands, and as you'd expect it's a bit like a desert, minus the sun or sky. There's lots of dunes, and in some places it's hot enough you'll find natural glass, but it's also in those areas you're most likely to get caught in the red storms, which carry super hot dust and magma as they swoop between the two planes.

Scenic borderlands left behind, you'll need some special gear for this trip into the Unmaking of Earth. Air, for starters. They don't make much local. You'll need to bring some, 'less yer one of them fancy berks what don't need any. No heat, neither. Just being around here will steal the warmth from your torches, your bones and your heart if you sit still and let it. Everything that stays here too long turns to dust, so pack yer mittens and move fast. It's like a *disintegration* spell, only it takes longer, and can be harder to heal. Take some Sinker protection, if you can, but don't expect 'em very conversational. They've settled in here fierce, and barmier than usual.

The Doomguard's favorite kip-away-from-kip, Citadel Alluvius sits in the Storm of Annihilation. This sorta makes one wonder; do the Sinkers actually hire Xaositects to name all their stuff, and how the Maze do they tell the Storm from any other part of this plane? The whole place is the very stylish, if you like the Doomguard aesthetic: grandiose, uncomfortable, and totally decrepit. It looks like it fell over and they never bothered to stack it up again. Hear tell, that's exactly what happened. It's on a big, spinning plate of Earth held together by a magic wall. I hope they kept the manual for that thing, 'cause if it ever breaks down I've the feeling the whole mess will just crumble right off into Negative.

Alluvius often functions as a veterans' home for Doomguard who played a bit too hard in the Faction War. Old bloods they are, with twisted bits from the War and new twisted bits from staying near Negative for so long. There's this new religious chant about them, about their muddled old hides and Entropy. You have to bring Entropy into you to understand it, they say, have to get up real comfy and let it mark you its own. A little like how we of the Order try to fill our brainboxes with the Multiverse, except with mutilation to boot. Those lot aren't the only sort of Sinkers hanging 'round, though, which makes Dust one of the few planes actually made saner for having more of the creepy guys around. The whole faction is awful busy playing Three Bears on how fast Entropy is going: too fast, too slow, or just right. Makes a cutter wish they'd concentrate long enough to protect you from the other mad things knockin' about the Doomies favorite plane.

Like all negative-touched places, you can expect to be half up to your ears in undead. Stuff a cleric in your napsack and forget it; they're not so bad. Worry about the dust devils. Cute bastards, but as soon as they touch you they'll tear you about with bent up negative energy.

Don't get caught in one of the huge dust webs the place is festooned with, neither. I never saw the spiders what spin those, and I reckon that's why I'm writing this. The quasiaelementals aren't likely to leave you planning your memoirs either, if you get me. They wouldn't be such a problem if it weren't for one thing. They usually call that thing the "High General" or "Wind of Destruction", or up personal-like, "Oh Please Gods, Sir, Don't Eat Me". That last one's awful inconvenient to put on a business card and the first two aren't very specific, so we'll settle for calling him Alu Kahn Sang. He's a big, evil nutter of a Dust-thing who put the fear into enough other quasiaelementals to build himself an army. What he does when not slaughtering caravans is beyond me, 'cause you wouldn't think enough of them came through to keep him entertained. My guesses include stomping around in a pique, and figuring out how to whip his lackeys into proper obedience without reducing their numbers too far.

Not charmed by the rustic locals? Grit in your tea, and your arm's come off? Not quite depressed out your skull enough to write that novel? Say you like the lack of atmosphere but had your little heart set on being dismembered by a hakaeshar at least once? Well, hang a left for the Unmaking of Fire and you'll find our next stop on the tour—the Plane of Ash. Thirty bazillion Doomguard can't be wrong, yah?

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** No gravity. A body merely floats in space, unless other resources are available to provide a direction for gravity's pull.

**Elemental-dominant:** No elemental traits. Some regions have the cold-dominant trait. All creatures and objects take 3d10 points of cold damage per round. Creatures of the fire subtype take double damage each round.

**Energy-dominant:** No energy traits. Some regions have the minor negative-dominant trait, in which living creatures take 1d6 / rnd of negative energy.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create negative energy are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create air or positive energy (including spells of the Air domains and spells that summon creatures with the air or positive subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** While a thin atmosphere is present on Dust, it is not sufficient to sustain most breathing creatures or even to support nonmagical flames.

**Movement:** There is no gravity in Dust, although there is a definite up-down orientation between layers of partially solidified dust and layers of cloudy dust. Most travelers need to find solid objects to push off of, but solids are rare due to the natural disintegration process of the plane. Dust is eroding: All material creatures and objects on the plane automatically take 2d6 points of damage per round (Fort save DC 15 halves). If reduced to 0 hp this way, they are disintegrated. Hit points lost to this effect cannot be magically healed on the plane unless accompanied by a death ward or restoration effect. Natives and creatures immune to negative



energy damage take no damage from this effect.

**Vision:** Although there are no natural light sources on Dust, sight functions normally up to 60 feet. Beyond that, all creatures and objects have concealment (20% miss chance). Frequent dust storms additionally hamper vision.

**Creatures:** Aeshar, dune stalker, dust mephit, dust quasiaelemental, hakeashar, kirth, koylith, negatai, sandling, sandman, skriaxit, tabbitbug, undead (any), valkarthi, verd.

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### THE QUASIELEMENTAL PLANE OF ASH

Ash is the unmaking of Fire, which sounds peachy until you think about the metaphysical ramifications. Like Dust, Ash absorbs body heat, and generally makes for a cold slog through endless, packed silt. Unlike Dust, there's a definite down to the mess, which means you can play lovely special games like "Oh gods, something just brushed my leg" and "Hey, did Bennie just sink under?" Most the plane is a covering of gray-white flakes mixed with some very fine dust and soot. There's not too much threatening about the terrain itself, but there's no natural air or light, and the temperature is dangerous enough on its own. Heat is drained from everything here, living or not, and even creatures immune to the cold are affected. Spells are about the only recourse, but keep an eye on your magic, too. Some parts of Ash gobble up magical energy too, and the hakaeshar will finish what the landscape don't do.

Being too cold for any sensible critter to inhabit, the plane is mostly populated by undead, ash mephits, ash quasiaelementals and, you guessed it, more Doomguard! The Sinkers keeps two bases on this plane. One and a half, really. Citadel Cavitus and the Crumbling Citadel. I say half because one may be currently occupied by an archlich, the only thing that can lower your property values faster than...oh, wait, this is the border region between Negative and a freezing swamp made out of the dying remains of elemental heat.

The borders of Ash are all kinds of unpleasantness. Head towards Fire and you'll find the Sea of Frozen Flames, a field of fire that produces no heat but'll still burn flesh fast enough. The crystal flames are a wonder to behold, but I've heard parts of it ignore magical protections against fire, so go there at your own risk.

Between Embers and Cinder Wells, the realms next to Smoke and Magma, respectively, the cold of Ash meets blistering heat. You've got burning clouds of ash in the former and slow rivers of magma at the latter. Pick your poison. Things aren't much better on the other side, with the Wasting Place by Dust and the Sparkling Vast next to Vacuum. There's supposedly all sorts of treasures hidden in the Wasting Place, but that sounds like barmy talk to me, since most things there disintegrate over time. Bashers in the Sparkling Vast, on the other hand, have a nice view of the glass-like residue before Vacuum. It shines real pretty under the right

light, so much so that you might not even notice the heat draining from you and your body going rigid like a statue.

Last but not least, you have the place Empty Winter between Ash and the Negative Energy Plane. There the life's sucked right out of you along with the heat. And because no Sinker likes things simple, that's where the Doomguard chose to make kip. Citadel Cavitus is a giant skull on the border of Negative; you can't miss it. They say it was built way, way back by critters too dark to speak of. Makes me wonder why they spent all that time building a big monkey's brain-box in the middle of nothing fun. Maybe they're not really gone, and Cavitus is really like an ant farm for the jollies of ancient exemplar? I didn't get close enough to ask whyfors—there's the small matter that Cavitus may be inhabited by Vecna. Yes, *that* Vecna. Apparently he bugged off to the Demiplane of Dread because Cavitus' dungeon got too full and he was running out of places to stash folk to whom to be unpleasant. They chant he came back to collect rent off the Doomies and undead who'd holed up while he was out. Don't suppose they wrote him an IOU.

The Crumbling Citadel is a daring Sinker attempt at descriptive place names. The place pretty, in a way. For a good idea of what it looks like, light a cone of incense and leave it to burn down (carefully, loves, can't have you burnin' the inn). When it's a perfect shape of burned-up stuff, have a lush buddy try to poke windows in with a spoon, and you have your own model of the Crumbling Citadel. After the Faction War, a large splinter group set up shop here. They think Entropy's getting on just fine on its own, thankyouverymuch. If anything, it's going too fast. If I lived in the Citadel I'd probably think Entropy was a bit overexcited, too; the whole place was falling apart before chunks got blown out during an internal Sinker squabble. Gives them a little perspective on the less glamorous aspects of decay, I think. They have this neat trick, too, where they ask the ash what it once was, and it tells them. They call it Sifting. You can stir the ground and conjure pictures of anything that's fallen to Ash, which are most things that stick around long enough. Mazed if I know how they do it, must be their connection to Entropy or something.

The quasidelementals here are much more organized than in Dust, and much less likely to try to flay you for fun. They've got their own empire, based around Gazra. Problem is, I can't tell if Gazra is a person, place, or thing. Talking to the natives I'm starting to think they can't really tell either. "The Shifting Emperor", they call him, but the whole place is meandering dunes of ash and I've yet to see His Imperial Majesty in one place at one time. My thought is Gazra may be an elemental large enough to form the landscape and soul of these parts. Or it might just be one of those bids for an omnipresent reputation that prime gods like so much. You sort it out.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Normal gravity. Gravity is oriented towards the largest gravity well in an area.

**Elemental-dominant:** Minor cold-dominant. It is said that Ash remembers being Fire, and desperately absorbs heat from everything within it. All creatures and objects take 2d6 points of cold damage per round. Creatures of the fire subtype take double damage. Natives are immune to this effect.

**Energy-dominant:** No energy traits. Some regions have the minor negative-dominant trait, in which living creatures take 1d6 / rnd of negative energy.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create cold or negative energy (including spells of the Cold domain) are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create fire, positive energy, or water (including spells of the Fire or Water domains and spells that summon creatures with the fire, positive, or water subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** For the most part, Ash is a semi-solid mass of gray-white flakes. Although there is usually some difference between "ground" and "air", the atmosphere is a thick, powdery cloud unfit for breathing. Natural flames won't ignite, although magical fire-based effects still may work (they are impeded, as stated above).

**Movement:** In most areas, a body can walk over the layers of ash that had formed a solid enough mass over the eons. The land speed is halved, however. Occasionally, the ever-present ash becomes so fine that a traveler begins to sink and drowns quickly. No known creature except the ash quasiaelemental is able to swim through these seas of ash.

**Vision:** Below the surface of the ash, all sight (including darkvision) is limited to 5 feet. Above the surface, sight functions normally up to 60 feet; beyond that, all creatures and objects have concealment (20% miss chance). There are no natural light sources on Ash.

**Creatures:** Ash child, ash quasiaelemental, ash mephit, ash witch, descariat, ember hulk, l'zoir, negatai, rast, tem'mat, ulish, undead (cold resistant), xorn.

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## THE QUASIELEMENTAL PLANE OF SALT

Salt is the one negative quasiaelemental plane that's really sparkly, if you can bring enough light to see. It's a vast chunk of rock salt with crystal veins running through. Don't touch, though, it's the unmaking of water; it'll suck the moist right out of you, assuming you don't hit one of the crystals and slice yourself up a treat first. The livable cracks and air pockets don't stay stable, neither, so keep moving. If you get lost, ask one of the quasiaelementals hanging about, but don't expect a warm welcome. Their kingdoms are scattered about, clannish and don't get out much. Between the Salt-Sinkers, the Facets, and Tor Salinus, I can't blame them.

The Doomguard that set up shop here are loopier than advertised. They think everything should fall apart as fast as possible, and love to help anyone or anything that speeds up the process. The quickest way to get on their good side is to suggest that you might want to buy enough weapons off them to level the Hive. Baatezu and tanar'ri both buy from them, which they cheerfully advertise. They kip up in this gigantic fortress carved of (surprise) salt, which I have taken to calling the Big Lick. Three guesses. On a related note, don't get too comfy if you go visiting them. They run salt mines to support their expensive ballistics habits, and are always looking for new, cheap labor. They can't use the Facets, after all, so they have to import. What, never heard of a Facet? I'm jealous.

If you tried to draw a humanoid using only straight lines on paper made of angry bees, a Facet is more or less what you'd get. They look so much like the rest of the salt crystals around that it's hard to see them 'til they move, but you better look fast; they're single minded, pointy and really don't like the fact that you're mostly made of water. Facets are collectively at war with Water, or trying to mate with it, or something. Whenever they touch it they divide or maybe refract. Whatever the process is, there's suddenly more of them. I don't know what they'll do for kicks if they ever actually manage to eradicate all moisture. Probably get eaten by Tor Salinus, who makes his home in the brine midlands and would like to see it stay damp.

Tor Salinus is the big dragon in town, floating out near the Water end of Salt like the biggest sardine in the planes. The place is called the Saline Sea, which isn't nearly as icky as the Stagnant Sea by Ooze. With so much salt, he's more or less the only thing that can live in the brine. Tor Salinus likes his peace and quiet and is quite willing to eat everyone else in the plane to keep it that way. He's the second biggest organism in Salt (counting all the Facets as one), so that's not usually a problem. For him. Bring presents, be polite and quiet, and he's actually a decent chap. He likes candy; it's novel. You might bring some for yourself as well, it's a good way to stay sane. His Tornness has also heard every knock-knock joke in existence. Don't try. Long story.

Speaking of the borderlands and what will kill you in them, there are at least four others. The Negative side is called Crystalline. Diamonds are not a girl's best friend, here. It's like Salt, but with all the bits that aren't razor sharp taken out, and all the fluids will pour right out of you into the void. If you're noncorporeal or just somehow invulnerable to billions of floating shards of rainbow-colored death, you should really check it out. It's pretty.

The Dust side of Salt is Consumption, which is what you'll get if you stand around breathing too long. It's a huge storm of swirling dust and salt, where the draining properties of both Quasielemental Planes will tear you into itty pieces. On the Vacuum side you get the opposite; a bank of hard-packed salt ranging from smooth to gritty. It's where the mass that is Salt starts to get sucked into vacuum, crunching together for a while before tumbling off in big blocks.

The Ice side is called the Stinging Storm. I heard one of the Sinkers say the wind there'll flay all the flesh from a pit fiend in the time it takes to drink a pint. I've a feeling they have a bit too much time on their creepy little hands. Thing I'm peery of is, I think they'd agree.

## Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Normal gravity. Gravity is oriented towards the largest gravity well in an area.

**Elemental-dominant:** Water-suppressive. The thirst of Salt is limitless. All liquid evaporates at ten times the normal speed. All living creatures suffer 2d6 points of damage from dehydration every minute; a successful Fortitude save (DC 15) halves this damage. Creatures of the water subtype take double damage. Natives are immune to this effect.

**Energy-dominant:** No energy traits. Some regions have the minor negative-dominant trait, in which living creatures take 1d6 / rnd of negative energy.

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create negative energy are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create positive energy or water (including spells of the Water domain and spells that summon creatures with the positive or water subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** Like Earth, this plane is mostly solid. Travelers who arrive run the risk of suffocation if they don't reach a cavern or other pocket within the salt.

**Movement:** There is scarce little open space on Salt. Creatures without the ability to burrow are entombed in the salt and must dig their way out (5 feet per turn).

**Vision:** Like on other primarily solid planes, there are no natural light sources here.

**Creatures:** Crysmal, facet, hlach, negatai, salt mephit, salt quasiaelemental, sloggosh, undead (any).

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## THE QUASIELEMENTAL PLANE OF VACUUM

The Doomguard say that one day everything will look like Vacuum. When that day comes, writing travel books will be much, much easier. It's not particularly hazardous, apart from the lack of air and relative hostility of everything that lives in it. Not much to see, really. Not much to feel, either. It's not even cold, 'cause cold would be something to feel. You see nothing, feel nothing, smell nothing, taste nothing, hear nothing...

Like the other negative quasiaelemental planes, or the Inner Planes in general for that matter, Vacuum can be pretty rough if a berk's not prepared. There's nothing to live off, nor air to breathe. There's enough pressure to hold a body together, but gaseous creatures have a hard time of it while they're here. More troublesome for the average basher is that anything

mechanical, from the joints of a suit of armor to the gears of an inevitable, begins to break down and becomes pretty useless unless repaired some place nicer.

There are no borderlands in Vacuum, though technically it touches Ice, Smoke, Negative, Salt, Ash, and Air. Once you're in, it looks like you've always been there, which is actually the surest way to know that there. It stretches flat into any direction you look. I say 'flat' because when you have nothing to judge distance by, space looks to have no depth. The sensory deprivation is more complete than anywhere you're likely to have visited. Think about it—usually when you're in the dark or can't hear there's at least some sense of place and touch, or at least a feeling of your own weight due to gravity. Not here. The nothingness in itself becomes a novel, if creepy, feeling. I think that's why so many Sensates come to Vacuum, not to mention some of the more esoteric elements in my own order who are into that sort of thing. Want a down? Pick one—you can fall towards it. Good luck figuring out which way is which, unless you've got a big, solid object in sight for reference. I can name all three that you'll see: Sun Sing, Zal the Destroyer, and Citadel Exhalus.

The two big figures living in this plane are more geographic markers than actual players. Sun Sing lives in a negative energy pocket and spends his days looming mysteriously. They say he's evil, but I'm not sure how they can tell; I've never actually heard of him doing anything. What or who he is should be figured out by someone who can survive negative energy and (allegedly) pointy teeth. Zal the Destroyer, on the other hand, wins my "self explanatory name of the week" award. He doesn't seem to exist for any other reason than to be really unhealthy for anyone in line of sight. He's a gigantic beholder, so that's a really long line. Hugenormous, irrationally violent, lousy conversationalist. Don't bother.

Some of the most laid-back Doomguard in the planes kip up at Citadel Exhalus. I'm fairly sure 'Exhalus' sounds so much like 'exhale', 'cause that's the last thing you'll do in this plane if you come in unprotected. The unmaking of Air, and all that, which includes lifeforms based in gaseous elements. With so much nothing around and such a close proximity to Negative, it's easy to see why the Sinkers who live here think Entropy's right on schedule. Sit back, they say, and watch the void go by. There's lots of it around.

Exhalus is built literally around a portal to Negative. Having no gravity as such to contend with, the architecture is built all in swoopy lines of shiny, black rock arching off into nowhere. It's really a breathtaking place, pardon the pun. It's like a half-woven basket of bridges and cantilevers, holding a ball of hungry dark. Somehow the Negative is even darker than the space surrounding it, which is the clearest transition between planes to be found anywhere in Vacuum. Dustmen come in droves to meditate as close to Negative as you can get and still come back. But then, sometimes you don't come back, even from here. Some take to knocking about with the Dustmen and go funny. It's a queer, spiritual place but there's certainly too much to be had of it. I've seen folk sit on the walkways for too long who just stand up and let go. They spiral slow and graceful, riding their own subjective gravity right into Negative. Everyone clams up and stares 'til you're all gone. It's almost easier when the Vacuum critters just pop out and eat you.

The things adapted to live in Vacuum are as inhospitable as the environment. They don't take kindly to things with solid forms and will remedy the situation as quickly as possible. Vacuum quasiaelementals are aggressively noncorporeal. Chant is they're the reason for the lack of mephits; my jink says they ate them all. It's all or nothing here: you exist or you don't, and there's no middle ground to be had. Things that lived in the deep places between stars on the Prime are most comfortable here, and they tend not to be amiable to our sort of life. There's one that used to be a god, said a prime traveler I met, but he wouldn't tell me what it was called. Seemed real pecky 'bout it. You may also have the honor of being snacked on by noncorporeal undead, or a particularly tenacious space fungus called egarus that was kicked out of the Abyss and learned to live on nothing itself. Now it doesn't take kindly to the presence of matter or energy. And you thought razorvine was hard to nasty.

Queer energy beasties looking to drain the life from you aside, Vacuum is the one plane on this half of the sphere I'd suggest you take in. It's educational, mark, and the local factioners are pretty sweet to guests. Just don't be a leatherhead and try to peel nobody, and you'll not get tossed off a bridge. If you get hipped somehow, don't panic—just get to a factioneer as fast as y'can.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Subjective directional gravity. Inhabitants of the plane determine their own “down” direction. Objects not under the motive force of others do not move.

**Elemental-dominant:** No elemental traits. Some regions have the cold-dominant trait. All creatures and objects take 3d10 points of cold damage per round. Creatures of the fire subtype take double damage each round.

**Energy-dominant:** No energy traits. Some regions have the minor negative-dominant trait, in which living creatures take 1d6 / rnd of negative energy

**Enhanced magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use, manipulate, or create negative energy are both empowered and enlarged.

**Impeded magic:** Spells and spell-like abilities that use or create air or positive energy (including spells of the Air domains and spells that summon creatures with the air or positive subtype) are impeded.

**Breathing:** There's absolutely nothing to breathe here, so artificial sources are a necessity for most beings. How the lack of atmosphere still allows for a steady pressure and a constant temperature (both fairly very low), no one is quite certain. It just does.

**Movement:** The single movement mode is provided by the subjective directional gravity trait; natural flight is impossible due to the lack of atmosphere.

**Vision:** There are no natural light sources on Vacuum, and artificial light sources usually do not function unless they are magical in nature (torches do not burn when there is no air to feed on). However, the effective range of magical sources of illumination is doubled; the same

applies to darkvision and low-light vision.

**Creatures:** Egarus, negatai, undead (incorporeal), vacuous, vacuum quasiaelemental.

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## THE TRANSITIVE PLANES

### *Ian and Lenora Atiwin*

Ian: What's there to say about the Transitive Planes? The name kinda says it all. They're the space between the Cardinal Planes, the bridges linking different realms of existence, the chains holding the Great Ring together. Each is defined (and overshadowed) by its neighbors.

Lenora: Assuming they really exist independently at all. The Transitive Planes are the matter and energy of creation on their way to becoming something more. Possibilities into actualities, thoughts into beliefs. What we perceive as distinct planes could rather be considered in-between points, the places where the raw stuff of the planes breaks down and form into other planes. The backstage of the multiverse, as those in the know like to say.

Ian: Yeah, well they exist all right, and anyone who says differently otherwise has been spending too much time studying metaphysics and not enough time exploring the bloody planes. Sure, they give the impression of being simple on first glance, and they may not be as crowded as other parts of the 'verse, but there's still infinity hiding under the surface, with enough beasties, planar anomalies, and demiplanes to keep your hands and your boneboxes busy for the rest of your life.

Lenora: It's true, the Transitive Planes haven't received a great deal of exploration, and there's much about them that remains unknown. Comparatively few creatures are native to them, and most folk, planars and primes alike, use them mainly as stepping stones to other planes. Which isn't surprising, since they're coterminous with so many other planes—

Ian: Except each another.

Lenora:—Yes, I was getting to that, Ian. The Transitive Planes are unique in that they don't touch one another; they're decently far away, cosmologically speaking. Which is why a lot of common spells such as *etherealness* and *teleport* don't work in certain parts of the multiverse. The Astral Plane doesn't border the Ethereal or the Inner Planes, the Ethereal doesn't touch the Astral or the Outer Planes, and as for the Ordial...



Ian: I've been there, Lenora!

Lenora: Well, if it's accessible at all, presumably the Ordial is cut off from the Astral, Ethereal, and the Prime Material Plane. The arrangement has many implications for magic, planar trade, cosmology—

Ian: Graybeard stuff. Let's get on to what they really want to hear.

Lenora: You can wait a bit longer, brother. Anyways, there are a few things that should be noted about the Transitive Planes. First off, they're formed of material that is highly morphic. With training, the ectoplasm of the Astral and the ether protomatter of the Ethereal can be shaped and directed to an individual's desires. This is how demiplanes are formed, as a result of the natural buildup and concentration of the planar material or at the direction of a powerful spellslinger.

Ian: Demiplanes are good places to find real adventure. Each is a unique, unlike anything else found on the planes, with its own natural laws and strange critters. Some are the remains of lost worlds, and hold ruins and treasures of people long dead. Most are hidden away, waiting to be discovered by chance, though a few are owned by planars who wanted their own tiny realms for some reason. A couple are plenty big and still growing, though, and might be on their way to becoming new worlds on the Prime Material Plane.

Lenora: Another thing to keep in mind is that the Transitive Planes are sort of a no man's land; there are no exemplars or gods that can claim them, few places set up to provide shelter and supplies—

Ian: And no one who's going to come to your rescue if an astral dreadnaught or chulcix is hot on your trail. Plan long and hard before heading out into the wild, cutter. But hey, if you weren't use to doing that, you have no business being a planewalker anyhow.

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## THE AS+RAL PLANE

### *Lenora Atiwin*

I'm sure you've heard of the Astral. Most folks have, either because of the spells that access the plane, or because they've heard of the githyanki and know they make kip there. But how much do you know about what it represents, what it is? Now that's a different question, and one even the graybeards have some trouble with. You see, the theory is the Astral is the plane—of all the planes—that doesn't really exist. It's the place in between everywhere else. Take the space between you and me and divide it in half, and half again, and half again, over and over until you can't see any further, until the space can only be visualized in your mind,

and it keeps getting smaller and smaller. That's where you'll start to find the Astral—down where there's nothing between anything—that's where it is.

The Astral is the planar pathway connecting the Prime Material and the Outer Planes through which the thoughts, dreams, and souls of the Prime migrate to the Outer Planes. It is a realm of pure thought; nothing on the Astral exists per se, it's merely perceived, mental energy given shape and boundaries. And the dark of the matter is that really, we aren't supposed to be there. We're not welcome in the backstage of reality—but there's nothing to prevent us from going there.

Stepping into the Astral, one finds themselves floating in an endless void, a shining silvery expanse from which a breathtaking field of stars can be seen in all directions. It's deafeningly quiet and completely open, leaving the impression that you're utterly alone and surrounded by all existence at the same time. Like Limbo or the Elemental Plane of Air, there's no ground and no gravity, but there's no wind or air either. Do not be concerned; anything that enters the Astral becomes a mental construct formed, and thus does suffer from physical necessities such as breathing or eating. Sleep, however, is just as essential to the mind as it is the body. Be sure to pace yourself on the Astral.

In truth, most of our experiences in the Astral Plane are the results of our brains attempting to interpret it in ways it understands. A disembodied mind should have no need for eyes or ears to sense the world around them, yet they do. As a purely mental space, the Astral itself is both dimensionless and timeless, yet we apply these concepts to it, however crudely. This limitation does not seem to ease with familiarity or training, for even those races that have lived in the Astral for eons remain largely on the same level as everyone else.

While time seems to pass normally, and indeed it continues to in the rest of the multiverse, nothing actually ages or grows in the Astral. For this reason, it is a somewhat common destination for those afraid of passing onto their next incarnation, yet who lack the psionic capability to sustain their lives indefinitely. Such immortality comes with a price, however, for the moment you step onto any other plane that time lost in the Silvery Void catches up with you. If you've lived in the Astral long enough, you age. Rapidly. It's a punishment among the githyanki, locking someone up for centuries only to throw them out upon the Prime afterwards to let them feel the agony of growing old and crumbling to dust in moments.

Travel through the void is a matter of thinking it, as it is your will that moves you, stops you, and navigates you through the plane. Only here can a crippled wizard fly faster than the healthiest barbarian, for the stronger the mind the faster the movement. Since there is no need for physical motion to get a good speed going, most travel is completely silent, save for what distraction you choose to entertain yourself with. Ironically, such thoughts will

#### **Movement on the Astral**

How fast you travel is affected by a creature's intelligence. Add 5ft x Intelligence bonus to a creature's speed to calculate their actual speed on the Astral.

make your journey even longer. Without any physical resistance, one would think that you could simply close your eyes, will yourself one way, and just let go and keep floating. For an object that will work, but it is not so simple for people. Have you ever been asked not to think about something ridiculous, like a pink and purple modron? Not always an easy task once your mind gets going. The brain doesn't stop thinking just because you aren't directing it. And in the Astral, all those random thoughts slow you down, like friction does on a normal plane. If you want to keep moving, stay awake and stay focused.

Now, even once you start moving, you'll find most of the Astral still and silent. There are few visible features of the plane, though what a planewalker runs into will undoubtedly be unlike anything else in the Great Ring. You've heard of astral conduits, the proverbial 'tunnel of light'?

**Astral Conduits**

Conduits can be touched and travelled upon, from the Astral - but it takes some effort. It takes a Will save (DC 20) to avoid being bucked off by the conduit's movements and taking 1d10 points of damage - on a success though, one will enter the conduit and be able to travel to either end.

Astral conduits connect the Prime material and the Astral. Greybeards say they provide a path for the souls of the recent dead to arrive to the Outer Planes. Regardless, they resemble living creatures - birthing violently with an explosion of matter churned up from the Prime, growing and solidifying into a silvery writhing cables, before thinning with age and eventually bursting with the debris of the passage of years.

And of course there's the color pools, brilliant portals of light leading to the other planes. The origin of the things is mysterious at best, but they're convenient transport and landmarks. Jumping through one will land you someplace else, but be warned - you can't see what's on the other side before you jump. Thankfully they're color coded - unless of course you find one for a demiplane that happens to look like the place you're trying to get to.

**Astral Color Pool Colors**

Ysgard	indigo	Elysium	opal
Limbo	jet	the Beastlands	emerald
Pandemonum	magenta	Arborea	sapphire
the Abyss	amethyst	the Outlands	brown
Carceri	olive	the Prime	silver
the Waste	rust	Fire	fire emerald
Gehenna	russet	Earth	moss granite
Baator	ruby	Water	dark blue
Acheron	flame	Air	pale blue
Mechanus	diamond	Positive	white
Arcadia	saffron	Negative	black
Mt. Celestia	gold	Shadow	black spiral
Bytopia	amber	the Ethereal	white spiral

Of more importance to those traveling the Astral are the psychic winds. Yes, winds. The Astral has no terrestrial weather, but the mental energy of the plane does shift and move. New

thoughts continually drift into the Astral, mixing and colliding with one another, and sometimes reacting violently. Psychic winds are currents of this turbulent mental energy that surge through the plane, carrying with them ideas, memories, dreams, and emotions. While many may be mere breezes, wafting the thought of what someone had for breakfast through your mind, strong winds can send you hurtling halfway across the planes or hammer you apart under their force. The truly unfortunate are not killed, but have their minds shredded in the winds, driven insane or left comatose.

The winds may be caused by a single act of great love or fear, or be the culmination of thousands of years of tranquil meditation in one place. More vexing is the fact that since the Astral exists outside temporal reality, you cannot know where the wind you're feeling is from the past or the future, and the ideas and emotions that roll with it can be from any time or place. Even more dangerous are the psychic storms that manifest as a result of an influx of strong mental energy, such as from a large number of deaths or when a gate-town shifts to another plane. Though rare, such terrors are capable of causing rifts in the Astral itself.

There is another grim, though less threatening, feature of the Astral that one should be aware of. There are places where giant floating chunks of rock can be found, much too large to have been drawn in from a conduit or rift. The formations are even large enough to develop their own gravity fields, or to play host to thriving cities and fields. Where did they come from, if not the Prime? The answer is enough to give most bloods pause. You see, those huge lumps of misshapen rock, they're corpses. Of powers—that's right. Gods. When a deity loses their worshippers, their place in the cosmos, they fade away, and become a massive chunk of unmoving rock on the Astral.

There is no more somber a reminder to primes (or many a planar) that the multiverse is not as straightforward as they imagined it than to stand on the grave of one of their fallen deities—and then see the countless other dead gods that float beside them. It is uncertain how they come to be in the Astral, though I suspect as more concepts than physical beings, the powers are primarily mental energy to begin with. Many theories circulate as to what these godisles could be used for, but most are heavily guarded by the githyanki, who have developed their colonies on the godisles and vigorously deter others from doing the same.

Thrice now, I have mentioned the githyanki. You likely know of them, they have a long history of making incursions into the Prime Material and Outer Planes, and are the most widely known residents of the Astral. This is, of course, because they go to such great efforts to assert their dominance over the plane, claiming godisles for their homes and patrolling the void in their ships—great astral carracks, moved by thought and will. They are a xenophobic and aggressive people; given what I've heard of their past history as slaves of the illithid, this is not too surprising. A githyanki may be polite to you, but do not make the mistake of thinking they're your friend. They'd like nothing more than to establish an empire throughout the entire Great Ring. Fortunately, the githyanki have not recovered from the death of their leader a few years ago, and thus it is much less common to be intercepted by patrols while crossing the Astral.

Yet as the githyanki weaken, the psurlon grow stronger. The second greatest population in the Astral, and the greatest threat to githyanki dominance, the psurlon are tall worm-like creatures with impressive psionic capabilities. Entirely hermaphroditic, each psurlon produces offspring only once in their life, but have a lifespan of many centuries, not counting their time on the Astral. The psurlon also establish fortresses upon the godisles or on chunks of rock pulled from the Prime, which naturally brings them into conflict with the githyanki. They're usually on the losing end of battles with the githyanki, but of late their raids have been getting through their rivals defenses more and more. One might consider them the greater of the two evils, however, for the psurlon are one of many varieties of psionic races that feed off the minds of others.

Of course, not even two psionic races are enough to control an entire plane, least of all one such as the Astral. The Athar maintained a citadel overlooking the corpses of three powers for many years, using it as an academy and temple to their Great Unknown. Factor Gnoas, the Athar leader there, invited me to teach at the citadel for a few years, a service I was happy to provide at the time. Since their expulsion from Sigil, the site has become even more important and a small town called Prayer's End has slowly developed around the tower. It's becoming a site of pilgrimage to the Lost, with individuals spending time training there before taking their message to the planes.

The Doomguard tend to their stronghold on the Astral as well, though it serves not as a sanctuary but as a prison. A number of bashers decided to roundup all the people and things that have been banished to the Astral over the millennia and lock them away proper. The prison Pitiless is the result, and it has stood for over a thousand years. Some of the detainees certainly deserve their fate, but Pitiless is considered particularly cruel because not even death from old age will free one from their cell in the Astral.

As one of their great accomplishments following their inception, a large congregation of the Mind's Eye traveled to the Astral and *willed* into existence an immense faceted sphere of psionically sensitive deep crystal. No, I wasn't present for the event myself, but I have had the honor of entering it. Though there are no entrances, portions of the interior have been carved out to make room for living areas and studies and are accessible to those with some teleportation ability. Focus, as the structure has come to be called, has since been made into a demiplane and now serves as a research outpost where psions study the mental energy of the Astral and its unique effect on magic and psionics.

Yes, I was just getting to that...magic and psionics are enhanced on the Astral, it's true. As constructs of the mind, spellslingers can fire off spells faster than you can speak. Though a few do not function in the unique environment of the Astral, most that deal harm or cause physical transformations are converted into their mental equivalent; a *fireball* on the Astral works much as a *fireball* on the Prime, even if it's only the 'thought' of a *fireball* really being cast. Either way, spellslingers, magical or psionic, are a force to be reckoned with on the Astral.

With such power available, it's inevitable that there's going to be some sort of drawback, and there is. There always is. Directing that sort of power on the Astral feels good...*really* good. The pleasure can be so intense that a spellslinger starts to expend all their energy for that brief moment of ecstasy. They'll become crazed for it after long enough, and like any bubbler you'd find in the Hive, they'll do anything for their next fix, even becoming dangerous if denied their obsession. Addiction isn't a pretty thing, and the effects are far worse than whatever power the Astral offers, cutter.

### Optional Rule: Astral Addiction

Creatures that cast spells or manifest powers become susceptible to astral addiction. When casting or manifesting a psionic power, a character must make a Will save against a DC equal to 10+the number of spells or powers cast since resting (this includes innate magical or psionic abilities, but not those achieved through items). Failure means the character has succumb to astral addiction. However, the effects do not become apparent until they leave the Astral Plane.

Once addicted, the character receives a pleasurable jolt from magic and psionics even when not on the Astral, encouraging them to spend it freely. A caster will often begin to use magic in situations where it is unnecessary, regardless of any need to conserve energy for later. After expending their own reserve of spells and power points, the character will turn to the use of scrolls and other magical items as a lesser source of pleasure. Every round during combat the character must make a Will save to not cast a spell that round if it is within their ability to do so. The DC for this save goes up by 1 for each round successfully resisted. When outside of combat the character must make the Will save every hour. After running out of all magical energy, the character becomes despondent and anxious, and suffers a -2 morale penalty to all rolls.

Addicts do not suffer any ill effects while on the Astral Plane, and most wish to return there frequently. Astral addiction can be cured through use of *greater restoration*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *wish*, or similar effects.

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Subjective directional gravity. Inhabitants of the plane determine their own "down" direction. Objects not under the motive force of others do not move.

**Enhanced magic:** All spells, spell-like abilities, powers, and psi-like abilities used within the Astral Plane may be employed as if they were improved by the Quicken Spell/Quicken Power feat. Already quickened spells or powers are unaffected, as are effects from magic and psionic items. Effects so quickened are still prepared and cast at their unmodified level. As with the Quicken Spell feat, only one quickened spell or power can be cast per round.

**Movement:** Movement is enabled by the subjective directional gravity trait, as modified by the travelers Intelligence score, as described above.

<p><b>Creatures:</b> Githyanki, psurlon, astral dreadnaughts, astral streakers, foo creatures</p>
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THE ETHEREAL PLANE

*Ian Atiwin*

Yeah, the Astral may be the plane of thought, but the Ethereal is the plane of potential. It's raw and unshaped, inclusive of everything in existence and a damn good bit that's not. You know it connects the Inner Planes to the Prime, right? Hey, don't get touchy, I ain't saying you're some leatherhead clueless. Anyways, the fogs of the Ethereal are the vapors of the elemental matter of the Inner Planes making their way to the Prime Material, where it gets all sorted out and forms the substance of those worlds on the Prime. All things that are, come to be through the Ethereal, and all things that have yet to be are there waiting for their chance. Without the Ethereal the building blocks of 'verse wouldn't go nowhere; there'd be no Prime, no Outer Planes, no Great Ring as it's known today. Think about that for a bit.

So, the Ethereal's the place where if you concentrate on something hard enough you can make it appear from the thin fogs around you. That's cause the ethers a mix of all the elements, brimming with possibilities and just waiting to be made into one thing or another. It takes a powerful will, and constant work to make anything lasting, though, so I don't suggest trying it on anything major unless you're an expert at it. Practice on the little things. My buddies still haven't forgiven me for thinking some vinegar into their whiskey the last time we were there.

Getting to the Ethereal is fairly easy. You hop a portal, take a spell jaunt or whatnot, and simply go there. It's a physical realm, and the Ethereal is strewn with the vapors of all the Inner Planes, so once you're on the plane you're in good shape when it comes to air or other essential needs. There's ambient light throughout the plane, probably leaking from the Elemental Plane of Fire or the Quasielemental Plane of Radiance, and all the mists are constantly changing colors and form. It ain't much different than swimmin' in an ocean, though there's no right up and down, and the fog makes it hard to see beyond a couple hundred feet. The fog is just that much in the way of things.

The Border Ethereal is the part closest to the 'edges' of the plane. It's not just one single expanse of the plane, but rather forms around the places where the Ethereal touches on other planes—like the Prime, the Inner Planes, or even around small demiplanes—creating a shallow end that's like a beach round an island. The Border Ethereal is that nimbus around those more 'defined' planes, and is the area one ends up when using spells like *ethereal jaunt* and *etherealness*. Looking around you, it's like you're in a hazy reflection of the nearest plane, though you can't hear, smell, or touch anything on the other side.

Ghosts and other incorporeal critters roam this region looking into the neighboring plane, and a practiced cutter could walk about in the Border shadowing those in the nearby plane without being seen. While you can generally pass through what's on another plane so long as it don't extend to the Ethereal, some materials like lead are too dense to move through. Worse yet, some portions of the Border Ethereal are changed by what's on the other side - forming an Ethereal Curtain 'flavoured' with the neighboring plane. This is particularly true at the edge of the Inner Planes, where the substance of the planes is being streamed off into the fogs of the Ethereal, you'll find that the Border takes on some of the same traits as its neighbors. So near the plane of Fire it gets searing hot, near Ice, damnably cold, and so on. I don't suggest hanging around the border with Ooze. It's really icky.

### Ethereal Curtain Colors

the Prime	turquoise	Steam	ivory
Air	blue	Radiance	rainbow
Earth	brown	Mineral	creamy pink
Fire	red	Vacuum	black + white specks
Water	green	Salt	tan
Smoke	pearl	Ash	dark grey
Ice	aquamarine	Dust	brown grey
Ooze	chocolate	Positive	white
Magma	maroon	Negative	black
Lightning	violet	Shadow	silver
		demiplanes	varies

If you have the ability to travel on the Ethereal it makes a quick and easy way to get around rough terrain on a Prime without losing your place too much, but if you're looking to travel a long long distance, or from one Prime world to another this way it'll take too long to make your way through by skirting the Border. That's assuming the section of the Border you're on actually is on the same section as the place you're trying to get to. Remember - the Border Ethereal is not a continuous section of the plane!

### *Deep Ethereal*

If you have the ability to travel on the Ethereal, it makes for a quick and easy way to get around rough terrain without losing your place too much, but if you're looking to travel a long, long distance, or from one prime world to another, skirting the Border ain't as useful. So how do you jump from one section of the Border Ethereal to the next if there's no direct way to do it? That's when you hop into the deep water so to speak. The Deep Ethereal is the section of the plane far away from the edges, 'shores', of the other planes. It is in these depths where the fogs of potential simmer away to produce new demiplanes, and boil into violent storms of potential. The Deep Ethereal is the full expression of potential in this plane, and is not a place to be casually visited.

Anyways, putting the Border at your back, you've got the heart of the Ethereal Plane before you. It looks much like the Border, except there's no semblance of another world just out of reach; it's just you and the mists. For short distances you move around as normal, whether you



prefer to walk, swim, or fly, with the added quirk that you can speed up by tossing some of your ether-body to the mists. Just concentrate on going faster, and you'll shoot by like arrow from its bow, all the while leaving a trail of your essence in your wake. It don't feel like much, so be careful about expending yourself carelessly.

Now none of that matters when you're traveling long distances. If you're trying to reach other realms or planes through the Deep, movement is as much willed as it is physically performed. The Deep is unmappable, as nothing really stays in one place relative to others for any length of time, so you need to know where you're going or you'll simply drift aimlessly for the rest of your trip. How it works is a bit over the head of laymen, but let's just say as you focus on where you need to go, the plane itself will help you attune to it, and you'll go the right way.

### *Wall of Color*

As you leave the Border, if you happen to look back you're gonna see a shiny field behind you. This wall, or walls really, is the marker for the point where the Deep and the Border meet, and is called the Wall of Color. It's only visible from within the Deep itself, and appears as a thin shimmering veil of color across the horizon, which ripples gently on close inspection. Passing through the wall is easily done; simply stepping through it brings you back to the Border Ethereal.

The walls are color coordinated (as astral color pools are not), so they give a little bit of warning as to what a traveler may find on the other side, and the Wall of Color holds the dreams of dreamers on the Prime. These dreams are reflected on the Wall in shimmering images that flit by too fast to see. But a strong dreamer may stabilize an area of the Wall. The dream will appear, like a bubble within the colors of the wall in a realized form, echoing the dreamers thoughts. Of course, this is the Ethereal so there is always the potential of those thoughts actually becoming reality, as the dream is spun into substance from the fogs of the Ethereal. A dream that has become that solid will allow travelers to enter it as if they were entering any other demiplane. Though if the dreamer is woken while they are still inside the dream, the visitors will be expelled abruptly into the Deep Ethereal where they'll have to make their way home from there. Dream magic cast at the Wall of Color is stronger than in other places, and there are rumors that there are some spells dealing with dreams that may only be cast at the Wall.

### *Ether Storms*

Ethereal storms are mighty and powerful things to see. These storms may come out of nowhere, as the potential energy of the plane swings into violent motion. An ethereal storm may hurl any caught in its wake miles away from where they started, and throw them haphazardly about causing damage to life and limb. They're hard to see coming though, since the fogs of the plane make it hard to see for long distances - so the best thing you can do is keep your ears open. These storms make an awfully large amount of noise as they approach, so

if you hear something that sounds like fifty troops of Hardheads coming your way - run. If it's Hardheads, you'll be happy. If it's an ether storm, you'll be alive.

### *Ether Gaps*

Ether gaps are the only thing worse than the cyclones. They're these tears in the Ethereal Plane through which everything gets sucked in like water down a drain. Fortunately, you can spot them miles in advance because they draw in all the mists and fogs, giving you a good view of a vortex of ether sinking into a huge open maw. If you can see it, it's drawing you in, the closer you get the harder it pulls, and if you don't fight back you'll eventually be sucked into the gap. Most bashers that fall into an ether gap are lost forever.

### *Demiplanes*

Demiplanes may be formed by the investment of a powerful wizard, or form naturally as a result of an idea bubbling to the surface - but it is the ethereal that contains all of these demiplanes. No other plane in the multiverse has the ability to generate these unique little pockets within itself.

### *Crafting out of Ethereal Protomatter*

So, the Ethereal's the place where if you concentrate on something hard enough you can make it appear from the thin fogs around you. That's cause the ethers a mix of all the elements, brimming with possibilities and just waiting to be made into one thing or another. My buddies still haven't forgiven me for 'thinking some vinegar into their whiskey the last time we were there. It takes a powerful will, and constant work to make anything lasting, though, so I don't suggest trying it on anything major unless you're an expert at it.

Protomatter is a sort of fluffy grayness - that can be bunched together and condensed into a form - with enough pressure and force of will it can even be convinced to take on any mundane properties required. Protomatter objects are not innately magical, and enchanting them is an unwise idea as they are transitory in nature.

A well-crafted piece of ethereal protomatter will hold together in its creators hands. Experts can create objects that will hold up even once they have left their creator's proximity. But only the most talented of experts may create any objects that will survive off the ethereal for any amount of time.

Once you're off, where to? In that, you've got an abundance of options. The first place I recommend is Ambar's Palace. It's a stronghold resting on an island of stable protomatter and

was kip to the last factol of the Believers of the Source. Now it's run by the Mind's Eye, though Factol Ombidias is looking to make the faction's headquarters in the Outlands. It's a fantastic sight; a gothic structure with multiple high-ceiling wings, stained-glass windows, well-tended gardens, and the finest art Ambar's elf eyes could find. The Seekers continue to keep the doors open, and it makes a superb spot to find rest, supplies, and entertainment for a bit of jink.

For a place the Seekers would rather keep you away, there's Believer's Forge, the not-so-secret factory of the Godsmen. The former faction hid the structure inside a huge rock of stable protomatter, from which they were able to make *source tokens*, little coins that could transport you to the Deep Ethereal no matter where you were. Before the workers were wary of interlopers, but now they're downright militant. Chant is the nathri there (who make up the bulk of the Forge's population) have refused to join their fellows in the Mind's Eye and are standing by the mantle of the Believers of the Source. Trouble's brewing, though it remains to be seen how far Ombidias will go to consolidate his faction.

Anyways, I'd be remiss not to mention the Etherfarer Society. They're an organization of planewalkers and graybeards devoted to discovering the deepest darks of the Ethereal Plane, from cataloging the various demiplanes and ether critters to discovering what creates ether gaps (more on that below). In the mean time they've supported the creation of a city 'round their guild halls, which has come to be called Freehold. Looking for a guide through the ether? Freehold has 'em. In the market for an ethereal cruiser to speed your way through the Misty Shore? Available to any cutter with the platinum. Need chant on the newest demiplane, or want to sell knowledge of your latest find? You guessed it. You can even find yours truly there much of the time.

Now, I'm not going to spell out every little burg and realm I know about, cause there's hundreds of 'em. Besides, much of the fun of the Ethereal is discovering things for yourself!

### Planar Traits

**Gravity:** Subjective directional gravity. Inhabitants of the plane determine their own "down" direction. Objects not under the motive force of others do not move.

**Movement:** Movement is enabled by the subjective directional gravity trait, and is half speed due to the thickness of the environment.

**Vision:** The Ethereal is full of clouds and fogs of potential material. As a result travel on this plane is much like travelling in heavy fog. Visibility in the Ethereal Border is limited to 60 feet. Visibility in the Deep Ethereal is limited to 10 feet.

**Creatures:** Foo creatures, phase spiders, thought eaters, ghosts.

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*Ian and Lenora*

Ian: When I got sucked into that ether gap, I thought I was a deader for sure. Gave a few final prayers, relived a few cherished memories, the whole deal. Thing is, I didn't die. I ended up on a different plane, a plane unlike anything else in the 'verse: the Ordial Plane.

Lenora: Ian, not this—

Ian: Bar that, Lenora, let me speak my peace. Listen cutter, I've been to the Ordial, the plane that lies between the Inner and Outer Planes. The last link of the Great Ring. That's where I ended up. I don't know if that's what happens to everyone who falls through an ether gap, whether it just sends you to a random plane, or what. But I made it there. The Plane of Spirit.

Lenora: Sigh...It must be said, the Ordial is as much a rumor as it is anything else. The Rule of Three would say that there should be a third transitive plane, sandwiched someplace between the Inner and the Outer Planes. One would suppose this it connects belief and substance directly, allowing powers to make their kip in the Inner Planes, and petitioners to take physical forms on the Outer.

Ian: And that it does! The Ordial is where the distinction between concepts and reality disappear, where everything is a realization of its true essence. Pure. Complete. The spirits weren't all ghost-like, they were real, *vivid*. Even the area around me; there was this great expanse, but it didn't feel empty at all, it was like everything in creation was right there.

Lenora: No one's been able to reach the place, the Ordial is just what some of the graybeards have taken to calling it. There's not any proof the plane even exists, save that it would fit far too well into place in the cosmology. But it's used t to explain all sorts of other mysteries, like where the deities and uberdeities dwell, what's past the Hinterlands, what's on the other side of an ether gap...

Ian: Sodding hells...my memories have been failing ever since I got back. Everything was so clear there, like the meaning and nature of a thing was plain to see, but now...I think there were symbols, floating in the air and on the ground. They might've been names; maybe my bone-box is just trying to make sense of things. But there were others there, presences 'round me, and a great force bearing down hard. I thought I was staring up at the eye of god, or a whole plane. And it blinked.

Lenora: Everyone wants to find their way there, cutter. Everyone wonders whether there's power to be had, wisdom to be found. All sorts of few rumors persist about trying to get into the Ordial, mostly centered around foolish things like jumping into *spheres of annihilation* or going over the edge of Suicide Alley in Sigil. The more sane ones suggest forcing an astral rift to appear over top of an ethereal vortex, or walking up to a power on the Inner Planes and begging for the information. One rumor holds that the Ordial may actually even be a sublayer of the Prime Material itself, which holds no known layers, and that finding a way to reach a deeper layer of the plane may allow one to connect more directly with the Inner and the Outer Planes. But that'd give the Great Ring a twist, wouldn't it? Make it more the Great Infinity.

Ian: I failed a test. That must be it. I failed some barmy test, and was forced out. If I could only remember what it was...Lenora, where was it ya found me after we split at Sigil?

Lenora: The Gatehouse, Ian. That's where you were. I'm not even sure you made it made it out of the Cage.

Ian: Don't give me any of that rubbish. Believe me or not, it's the truth! We should head back there, to the Gatehouse. Things made sense then, I remembered everything more clearly. I think I was writing some of it down, on the walls and—

Lenora: I think we're done here, this interview is over. Someday one of your readers may find the real Ordial Plane, whatever and wherever it is. I hope someone can put this mystery to rest. In the mean time, I wouldn't put any stock in what anyone has to say about the place. None at all.

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## *THE PRIME MATERIAL*

The Prime is the plane centered squarely between the substance of the Inner Planes and the belief of the Outer Planes. This is the location where the majority of the mortal populations of the multiverse live, breed and die. The Prime Material plane consists of a goopy matter, I've heard it called phlogiston, in which float thousands, millions, an innumerable number of spheres each containing a world and planet where mortal Primes exist. These worlds are where most of the Clueless come from (though, let's be honest, you can grow up Clueless on the Planes too), and are the source of most mortal worship for the powers on the Planes. The worlds of the Prime Material, like demiplanes on the Ethereal are too many and too varied to describe them all here. Some well-known Prime worlds include: Toril, Oerth, Athas, and Ortho.

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## THE PSEUDØ PLANES

The pseudo planes are more than just demiplanes, but they're something less than a real plane and all sorts of theoretical. These planes are generally considered representations of some overall aspect of the multiverse, and touch on nearly every part of the Great Ring, but often only in a limited fashion. Thus far there are three acknowledged pseudo planes, following the Rule of Three, but in all honesty there may be more out there. The whole idea of a pseudo plane leaves room for all sorts of strange realms that just don't fit into our understanding of the cosmos. One thing that seems to unite them, though, is that they're generally damnably hard to get to, and probably only half exist in the first place. Few portals led to them, and even magic tends to have some caveats to make life more interesting. However, the pseudo planes that are recognized may be the next unexplored horizon for planewalkers, lands that promise to provide countless new experiences and adventures. On the other hand, it may be a long time before any kind of consensus forms about what one can expect to find there.

[Editor's note: There are a wide range of opposing theories on the nature of the various pseudo planes, and many debates on the matter have become quite heated. Rather than choosing any one account as the "official" description, I have elected to provide several different accounts on the three pseudo planes known today. I will leave it to the readers to make their evaluations, but hopefully this will help those who make the journey themselves someday.]

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THE SHADØWLIE

### *Aelfred Erikson*

My tale is strange, but I understand very few have experienced the Shadow Plane of any place other than the Prime. I had gone looking for my shadow. I'm not sure how I lost it; maybe one of Heggles's sodding wild-surges, or some curse by that damnable cleric of Loki. Either way, it was gone, and I needed it back. You can't let your shadow go running around on its own, you know? Gods only know the sort of trouble it'll get into.

So I went looking for it in the Shadow Plane. I swear, every time I go there it's different somehow, *shifted*. But maybe that's just its way. I'm sure your readers are familiar with the basics: the Shadow borders other planes and takes on the form of its dark reflection, a land of shadows moving to no discernable light source. The greybeards say that all shadows, everywhere, extend into the Shadow Plane, and that's what makes up most of the realm.

At first, the Shadow looks empty, and it's like you're all alone in a place that you don't belong. Maybe it's just that everything scatters when outsiders arrive, 'cause the place is actually filled with life. First there's the shadows of everyone on the nearby plane moving around, whispering to one another. Secrets, lies, I don't know. Then there's the true umbral creatures, independent beings made of darkness, some bestial and others wickedly cunning. As for the

latter...their kingdoms are alien yet familiar, like they're mocking the world of light, or jealously imitating it. But then, that's how the Shadow itself is with the planes it borders.

I had entered the Shadow of the first layer of Ysgard, as that's where divinations indicated I had originally lost my shadow. I did my best to avoid the umbral inhabitants; they had all the vigor and rage of their real counterparts, but none of the camaraderie, honor, or glory. I could sense my shadow, though; there was a connection between us, and I was drawn to it. But the bugger just gave me the laugh and led me in chase deeper into the Shadow, through darklands where negative energy sapped at my life and into forests that were became labyrinthine mazes.

Soon, I had lost all track of my shadow, but I wasn't alone...there were voices in the leaves, shapeless shadows flickering about. When I slept, my dreams were strange visions of places I had visited but didn't know, things I had said and done but couldn't remember. Slowly, my mind was becoming undone. The Shadow was perverting everything, showing me truths that didn't make sense, causing me to question things I had always known. I was lost and going barmy, and for a while I wondered if this was how people became one with the Shadow...

Yet all was not lost, for surely the powers of good always ensure there is some hope. I wandered, ran really, dazed and uncertain as to my direction, but then the darkness around me was parted by a wave of light, and suddenly I could see Yggdrasil, the World Ash, standing in an immense clearing. It was strange for any bright light to exist in such a place, but it seemed to drive away the darkness for miles around. What's more, it chased away the phantoms that had haunted me, and my mind was no longer confused by what was real and what was illusion. It was a sanctuary in the middle of an abyss, and I wept at the sight of it.

I climbed the World Tree's roots and branches, hoping to find shelter and a vantage point to look out over the Shadow. I wasn't prepared for what I saw. The sky seemed so clear, and it was if all the multiverse were laid out before me. In the far distance, I swear, I could see Mount Celestia. It was dark and foreboding, yet at its summit another light shone, a brilliant flare that illuminated the plane as Yggdrasil had. And off in another direction, upon a great tower that looked like it might be made of black iron, was the City of Doors. The ring sat like a halo over the world, another beacon of light and hope.

I slept in the branches of Yggdrasil, and when I woke my shadow was at my side once more, though I think, like me, it was changed somehow. To be certain, there are many secrets left to the Shadow Plane, many dangers waiting to put a body in the dead-book. Yet the plane lies open to planewalkers now, and there are things that counter the darkness. Though I don't understand their reason or nature, I hope to discover the dark of it someday, either myself or from another brave cutter intrigued by my account, gods willing.

*Agatha Shornnail*

I've had enough of this nonsense! I swear I don't know how you addle-coved leatherheads get so led astray from the basic facts. Repeat after me: the Shadow Plane is an Inner Plane! One might even go so far as to call it a demiplane, but we'll put that debate aside. The point is, it's the result of intermingling essence from the other Inner Planes, most prominently the Energy Planes, but the Elemental as well. That's why the Shadow Plane looks like it does; dark, perpetual twilight, with everything comprised of a semi-real substance that's both solid and gaseous. All the elementals combine, diluting their characteristics and cohesiveness, and are infused with both positive and negative energy, giving form to the shadowstuff that fills the plane.

Yes, I know the Shadow Plane is accessible from both the Prime Material and Outer Planes! What sort of cony-catcher do you take me for? There's no contradiction in aspects of the Inner Planes being accessible elsewhere in the Great Ring. After all, it's not like we're bereft of earth and air here in the Outlands. And it's no surprise that the Shadow Plane here is shallow, a largely empty reflection without much substance of its own. It's just a small trail left in the wake of the interaction between positive and negative energy, like smoke from a fire, or mud left at a riverbank.

That being said, I'd steer clear of it like a Taker with a charity function. The place is unstable enough, and it quite probably has a corrosive effect on real matter. I suspect that the people and beasts, shades and shadows of every sort, that have been seen there are all that remains of some leatherhead sods that stayed in the Shadow Plane for too long. Just you wait, now that more planewalkers are exploring the Shadow border to the Outer Planes, it'll be filled with more and more shadow-things. Nonsense, all of it, sodding adventurers traveling around looking for trouble when they could learn the real dark of things in a good book!

### *Stryx Karven*

The Demiplane of Shadow, the Shadowlands, or simply the Shadow. The Shadow Plane has had many names and has served many roles for different worlds and cultures. Most planars view it as an immense demiplane within the Deep Ethereal, perhaps an Inner Plane in its own right. Primes, on the other hand, often think it to be a sinister duplicate of their own world, a coexistent realm of dark prophecy and nightmarish monsters. A few even believe the Shadow Plane is a pathway to the Lower Planes and the evil beings that reign there. And from their limited perspective they are all correct. Yet they haven't even begun to grasp the true dark of it. Its nature requires that it be shrouded in mystery, that outsiders never have a full understanding of what it is. It has hidden its many secrets since the beginning of time, misleading those who attempt to explore too deeply, taunting them with half-truths wrapped in lies. Yet as much as it conceals the truth, the Shadow wishes to be known.

All that is denied and forgotten comes to the Shadow. Think of those memories too horrible to recall, the ones you bury deep in your mind to a place where they can't hurt you anymore, where they can't be found. To a place you don't want to exist. The Shadow. Consider your own dark side, the inner conflicts and faults we all discover in ourselves. Those things that we



attempt to overcome, banish, and deny ever existed. Denial is its own force; it allows us to repress our worst memories and inclinations, to ignore the things that we don't wish to see, and to refute that which stands right before our eyes. Imagine the denial of everyone in the multiverse, pooled together to shelter us from the things we aren't willing to accept. That is the Shadow, a hidden space maintained by the will of the entire multiverse.

Driven by our collective will, the Shadow shows us what we can handle and hides the things we do not wish to confront or believe so that it cannot haunt us. There, in the Shadow, these concepts gather and wait it bitterness, loving and hating the cosmos that denies them, wishing to be born again. Empowered by our hunger for the truth, and the urge to defy limitations, this desire to be known shapes the Shadow's will. Thus, it tempts outsiders that come searching the darkness with the secrets it holds. It tries and tests those who enter seeking knowledge or power, simultaneously attempting to crush and elevate. The Shadow is not sentient, but is very much alive. It both loves and hates the light, and the existence it represents, as one cannot be without the other. But the Shadow is neither evil nor good, neither purely mental nor completely physical. Rather, it is a defensive shield around our minds and bodies that protects us by holding us back.

A realm of denial and half-truths, yes, but where does it fit in? Where does it belong? These questions mean much to planewalkers, who survive by knowing the rules and conditions of the planes they travel. The Great Ring of the Multiverse provides important perspective, guidelines for what to expect. But what if you were to learn that this grand design was meaningless, that it was no more valid than the beliefs of the simplest prime? What if you were told that there were no true planar pathways, or order to the layout of the planes? You would discard this knowledge, of course; write it off as mad ravings and continue secure in your certainty. Another thought banished to the Shadow, another idea too absurd to be considered, while the Great Ring is brandished as *the* layout of the multiverse. And thus the lie grows and spreads.

Consider a world where the inhabitants believe in one afterlife, one plane where all souls go. That belief forms a connection through the Astral to that plane in the Outer Planes, and when someone dies, they pass through and become petitioners on that plane because of their belief. Unbeknownst to them, these primes have unconsciously denied the existence of all the other Outer Planes. To them these other planes do not exist, and thus they cannot reach them in death or through magic. Their belief has formed a blockade to other beliefs, a wall of denial limiting their minds' ability to see other possibilities. This wall is the Shadow; it is the will of countless billions manifested by the accepting of one existence over another. On the Shadow, this denial is represented by an immense barrier of thick shadowstuff that makes it nearly impossible for locals or outsiders to cross. The Shadow shows the primes what they want to see, hides everything else, and makes it difficult for challenges to their worldview to emerge.

The Shadow determines the connection and position to all planes based on our beliefs, preventing us from going to places we do not believe exist or are accessible. It is possible, even probable, that the Great Ring of the multiverse is not the true shape of the cosmos. Maybe the primes are correct about the Great Wheel, but more likely, the Shadow clouds their minds as well as our own. The multiverse is a ring to us because our belief defines it as one, we refuse

anything else, and the Shadow adjusts to make it so. Think of the arrogant manner in which planars treat primes who go on about the shape of the multiverse. Consider how many worlds, planes, and possibilities might still be hidden from reach because they do not coincide with our beliefs. But think of what it means to tear down everything you think you knew about the multiverse, about reality, about your life. That is why we continue to feed the Shadow, that is why it so dutifully guards its secrets.

Even these words are rendered lies. By accepting this view, others are rejected. Believe me if you like, or discover your own truth if you dare. Hate me for destroying your cozy illusion of the multiverse, or love me for opening your eyes. I care not for your opinions or values, or for those of your faction or deity. Simply know that if you come with the intention of fitting the Shadow into your idea of a cosmology, you have already failed.

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DREAM

[Editor's Note: The pseudo-plane of Dream is closely linked to the Wall of Color of the Ethereal. It has been theorized that this plane is a sublayer of the Ethereal, but no evidence along those lines has been provided. Active attempts to reach the plane of Dream at the Wall of Color have failed miserably, but at least one traveler I know of has slipped into a realm that seems to match the descriptions of the pseudo-plane. Her method of traveling there? She got very bored waiting for her party to catch up with her at the Wall... and simply took a nap. Unfortunately, I have not made it out to test this technique myself.]

### *Damien Huckle*

Hey, hey, hey. Um, let's sit, yeah, and have a drink. Been a while since I was in the ol' "City of Cages", are whatever ya call this burg now. Did it always smell this bad? Sorry; spend enough time in the Dream, and you forget just how ugly the waking world can be. But then you want to know all about the Dream, 'eh? Planning on giving this place the laugh? Well, I can't encourage you more. A body can spend their life eating the same meal over and over again, or hit the all-you-can-eat buffet, ya know?

So let's cover the basics, ya? The Plane of Dreams is trivially easy to get into; go to sleep, and there you are, your own personal dreamscape! But that don't do you a ton of good, cause then it's running the show and you're just along for the ride. This is the first of many reasons to master the fine art of lucid dreaming. With some work, you catch on that you're in the Dream, and with a bit more effort, you can take control. Affecting your own dreamscape is fairly easy, and with that, you can make your own personal paradise! Sweet deal, ya know?

While you're sleeping, there's not much that can happen in the Dream that'll do any harm to ya. 'Course, problem being you're gonna wake up eventually, and then you're in this crap-pile of a multiverse again. Moving physically into the Plane of Dreams is the answer, though it ain't easy. There ain't any natural portals to my knowledge, just the occasional rifts that occur once

every few centuries when something really strange happens. Some berks go on about the Ethereal, but I don't know anything about the Inner Planes, and I don't wanna. So, that leaves a good ol' *plane shift*. There's a catch, though: it'll take you right to the Dreamheart.

The Dreamheart is sorta the center of the Dream, where all the dream-stuff runs wild and the dreamscapes themselves are born and die. However, it's not nearly as malleable as the rest o' the plane. If you don't have protection from everything—and I do mean everything!—you're gonna take a beating. And once you've actually moved into the Dream, well, then things can hurt you. 'Course, everything follows the rules of the dream world, and they hardly stay the same for long. And if you're really unlucky, some nightmare creature beyond reason will just show up and swallow you whole.

Supposedly there's an eye to the tempest, a safe spot from the wild dream-stuff, but none of the dreamwalkers I've bantered with have the same thing to say about what's there. Me? Me, me, me...I saw a pair of doors, real big, sitting quietly in the storm. Looked like a gate to another cosmos, it did, but I didn't go through. There was this snake to end all snakes hanging around it, and I wasn't too confident 'bout sneaking past. I'm mighty curious, ya know, but then, I can always just imagine what's on the other side, and be there!

That's the beauty of the Dream. With some practice in that lucid dreaming I mentioned, you can escape the Dreamheart and enter someone else's dreamscape. And then ya can take it over and make it what you want! Soon as the dreamscape bursts, or gets boring, hop over to another and start over. It's not like most dreamers even know what's going on, let alone can fight you for their dreams! And when they try it's a real laugh. Really though, it's the best sort of adventure available. The Dream gives ya access to the entire multiverse's wildest dreams, and there's no short of variety. Sure, a few berks call me a "dream-harvester", as if that's something bad, just cause I'm acquiring a dreamscape or two. But I figure I'm doing a service for 'em, adding some twists to their usual dreams, ya know?

### *Tha'naton Githmir*

In my dreams, the Lich-Queen lives. In my dreams, the githyanki hunt traitors such as myself to the ends of the multiverse, burning everything in their wake. They are not pleasant dreams. My former mentor, dead by my hands, would have said that these nightmares are a sign of weakness, that my soul is troubled by the crimes I have committed against the Lich-Queen. Perhaps that is how it started, but now...now my dreams do not die when I wake. Now they are with me always, a living tormentor on the edge of my consciousness, waiting for my mind to drift, to slide into the Region of Dreams. This I know.

Dreamscapes are the product of our minds, mental spaces conceived into existence and contained within the Region of Dreams. The Dream itself is less a plane than a horizon; picture the dreaming minds of a plane drifting away to create a place unfettered by nature or reason. Like bubbles rising to the surface, these dreamscapes are transient, fragile. But for that brief

time, the multiverse is exactly as the mind makes it. The Region of Dreams is the collection of these pocket realities, side by side, yet rarely interacting. This I know.

Somewhere, in that plane that is not a plane, there is a dreamscape which owes its existence to me. Most dreamscapes are short-lived, existing in the lifespan of those ephemeral moments of sleep or daydreaming. But some grow too strong, and refuse to die. I have heard that phantoms can escape from such dream worlds and become real. Other times, the dreams simply go on and refuse to allow the dreamer to depart. I have escaped mine...but it waits for me, and should I sleep I will return to that hell, a nightmare of my mind's creation. Why do our own dreams give birth to such dangers? This I do not know.

So I remain awake, and soon I will embark upon a quest to slay my dreams. It is said that the Wall of Color that separates the Deep Ethereal from the Border Ethereal Plane holds a path to the Region of Dreams, and that one can find the oldest and largest dreamscapes there. If that is true, then I will find my dreamscape, my tormentor, and tear it apart. It must be true. What I have created, I can destroy. This I know.

### *Natalya Cadowag*

So, you *finally* wish to have a fey's perspective on the Dream? You've been looking around for some account from us to add to your little book, have you not? My son's view a little too 'simple' for you? Yet, only now do you come to me. Are the Unseelie so untrustworthy, so distasteful to you? No, do not answer, your discomfort is a sweet elixir, and I relish its taste. I shall tell you of the Dream, so precious to those of the twilight world, and so mysterious to your simple readers. It would be cruel not to repay you for your generous offering, after all.

Wonder, change, chaos, dynamism, flux. All of these things describe the Dream, but none do it adequate justice. It is not one more plane to be added to models of the Great Ring, it is the Great Ring itself, the multiverse in its natural form. In time before time, when no mortals or gods muddied existence, there was just the Dream. Impossible and imaginary had no meaning; reality was raw and unrestrained, a portrait that had yet to be framed. Bit by bit, the planes were born, and that which was came to be and that which wasn't was forced away. That is how the Dream became what it is, slowly pushed away from an emerging Creation until it existed only at the edges, or in small oases sheltered from simple minds.

I hope your readers will not be insulted, my words are but the simple truth. It is best they know the truth, for it is your kind that has lost. The Dream is as it has always been, filled with the most unimaginable wonders and terrors, a refuge for unexplored hopes and fears. They are given free reign, unbound by logic or will. Yes, I have heard silly tales of planewalkers said to have mastered the Dream and made it their own. Fanciful stories, perhaps inspired by my kin. Even we do not deign to rule the Dream, but befriend it, and enjoy its bounties.

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*Marianna Kaylan*

Now listen here, cutter, the Plane of Temporal Energy is just a fancy name for something that's been a part of every plane in the multiverse since time began. It's not really a separate place at all, but another dimension that we're traveling through all the time. That's why they call it a pseudo-plane, ya know? Which isn't to say I haven't been there! Oh ho, you can certainly make your way there, just like you can go to all sorts of places that aren't really places (the Astral comes to mind). The trick is to get your bonebox in the right frame of mind and look at the movement of time as something other than a one-way road.

Ever experience time moving faster when you're having a good time, or slowing down when things are boring and tedious? How about those brief moments when you know what's going to happen before it does, or when you remember the past so strongly it seems to become real? Traveling through Temporal Energy is just like that, only you harness the feelings to move in any direction you please, freeing you to see the past or future or even witness alternate timelines that never actually happened. It's not easy, and very very few Sensates have tumbled to the dark of it. But then, that's what makes me so special!

Now, just as moving through Temporal Energy is a matter of perspective, so is its appearance and nature. I know one blood that views it as a chaotic realm of whirling sand where visions of different places and times can occasionally be seen through the storm. Someone else once told me it was a great river running through a star-filled black expanse. Me, I envision it as a winding stairway with doors to different time periods running around it. What you're capable of doing and what dangers there are seem to adapt to how you view the plane. There's not much consistency, and no apparent way to change it, but then, it's all your mind trying its hardest to interpret the plane to begin with.

Before any would-be time travelers get any barmy ideas, you can't actually travel to different times through the Temporal Energy Plane, only project your mind to sense events as they happen then. Maybe if there was some magic to physically enter the plane, but then that'd required some major power. And if it were possible, wouldn't the gods be doing it all the time?

*A Strange Letter*

[Editor's note: This letter was discovered by an associate of mine some years ago on the body of a young man in the woods of Shurrock in Bytopia. While divinations were able to establish some level of authenticity, its true meaning or the identity of the author remains a mystery. Perhaps one of my readers will have some insights, and so I include it here for all to decipher.]

*There's something strange going on with the timestreams of Bytopia. I've been studying the threads of Dothion's potential futures, attempting to determine if there's any point where the cycle of expansion and settlement will end and the nature of the plane itself will change. No luck so far, but I've noticed something even more interesting. Of the thousands of timestreams I've noted, a significant number of them are abruptly terminating. You are of course familiar with what that indicates: the destruction of every sentient creature on the layer, perhaps even the destruction of the plane itself.*

*This would seem to indicate some sort of mass cataclysm. I've heard of such things happening on prime worlds, but on an Outer Plane? I have difficulty contemplating the implications that might have on the Great Wheel. The mist-smoke prevents me from plotting the repercussions on other planes from my position in Temporal Prime, which is why I'm leaving this message for you to find. I need you to try to get in contact with Bytopia's division of the Order, and to bring me Saxrin's notes, the stuff he left behind before he was Mazed by the Lady of Sigil. He had more experience with the Temporal Prime for the Outer Planes, I'm hoping something of his will be useful.*

*It's looking like the hand of fate at work. The farther I look ahead, the more timestreams seem to converge. I haven't attempted to enter and see what happens myself; the last thing I want is become caught in a temporal flux as the world's ending. What's more, there's a swarm of time dimensionals feeding off the disturbances in the timelines, and one warned me against tampering. For now I'm searching for any lifelines that play a common role in the timestreams, trying to identify any individuals that may be responsible for what's to come. I'll leave the question of interference to the Order. Either way, it should make for a very interesting study.*

-J

### *Jaded Black*

Once upon a time there was a Demiplane of Time sitting idly in the Deep Ethereal. Not many people sought it out or tried to enter it because it was surrounded by all sorts of temporal anomalies, and who wants to be aged into an old man or reduced to a child in a few miserable moments? Greybeards argued back and forth about its true nature and whether it was a real plane, a gateway to another era, or a place outside time as we know it. All in all, everyone ignored them though, cause really, what did they know of it?

Then some berk takes a look at a model of the multiverse and decides it's not good enough anymore. Not enough rings and not enough groups of three. So the model is twisted some, a few planes are stretched or invented, and then we have the *new and improved* Great Ring. Best of all are these new pseudo-planes that aren't really planes - that stretch around the entire multiverse and have all sorts of weird properties to them. Now we have a hidden Plane

of Time, and every sodding planewalker thinks they can start hopping around time, while the truly barmy want to start rewriting history.

Listen here, there's no Plane of Time, or if there is, it's not a place you can go to. There are no portals leading to it, no spells that take you there. The closest thing is the Demiplane of Time—it's still the Deep Ethereal, by the way. But if you don't want to end up in the dead-book, leave it be. I've been there, I know. There's these chords and threads shooting off in every direction, some glowing brightly and others emanating darkness itself. And all sorts of *things* there that will make your head burst and bleed if you try too hard to think about them. Chronovoids, temporal gliders, temporal stalkers, time dimensionals, and worse things.

Still, folk think it's all worth the risk, wager they can travel to the past and do things over. Guess what, berk? They can't! I've seen enough buddies grab onto those threads and disappear, never to be heard from again. Meanwhile, I get reduced to the age of a small child, defenseless and forced to go through some of the worst years all over again. Some things just weren't meant to be explored!

## Chapter Release Information

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*Please direct any errata to report to [errata@planewalker.com](mailto:errata@planewalker.com)*

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