

THE ABYSSAL CAMPAIGN

A D&D-Planescape© Short Campaign for a Party of Adventurers of the 8th Level

The Abyssal Campaign is a long adventure (or short campaign) during which the player characters get stuck in what most consider the most dangerous place in the multiverse – the Abyss, of course. Originally planning on a quick trip to Arborea with the aim of borrowing a magical artefact, the heroes get involved in something far beyond what they could dare to imagine. They will have to face all the worst horrors that the Abyss can conceive, thwart the machinations of powerful demon lords, and run for their lives as they try to escape their fury. They will have to fight their own heart in places where morality is a crime, and struggle to retain their sanity through a plane where relief or safety are alien concepts.

WHEN I USED TO SAY, "THERE ARE WORST PLACES", I USUALLY DIDN'T IMPLY ANY PLACE IN PARTICULAR. NOW I KNOW THAT THERE IS ALWAYS A WORST PLACE. I'VE BEEN THERE.
- A BARRIUR JUST OUT OF THE ABYSS. THE LUCKY BERK!

The Abyssal Campaign

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ADVENTURE NOTES

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs get trapped in the Abyss, without means of escape, and caught in the middle of a tanar'ri power struggle.

The Plot in Brief

The PCs are hired by a person called the Gardener to retrieve a magical item. During the trip, however, a powerful Abyssal creature precedes them and steals the item. When the characters attempt to follow, though, they become trapped in a Tanar'ri fortress on the Abyss. They manage to escape when the palace is attacked by Baatezu troops, but they discover in shock that they are unable to leave the plane in any way. They spend some time to just learn the basics of survival on the Abyss, and then they head back to the fortress to try and find what happened to them and why.

They discover that a little-known demon lord by the name of Ithla-Sathlo had set a trap that should have contained the power of the magical artefact upon entering the Abyss. Instead, for some reason the artefact vanished and the trap caught the PCs instead, locking them into the plane. Worse, the minions of Ithla-Sathlo are now after them. The heroes eventually discover some details of the web they've fallen into. The magical item is actually the last artefact of a waning goddess. Ithla-Sathlo discovered this, and created a mystic trap that would allow him to trap, corrupt and use the artefact, vastly increasing his own powers. Then, the demon lord planned to take on Demogorgon.

The Gardener unexpectedly shows up, and suggests the PCs to go to Demogorgon's realm to warn the powerful demon lord of the plot against him. Demogorgon will crush Ithla-Sathlo, and the trap will be released, allowing the PCs to escape. Unfortunately, something doesn't quite go right, and the PCs find they are still trapped.

Their travels take them to the Triple Realm of Grazz't and there the plot thickens. The most powerful of the demon lords has the artefact, having been informed of Ithla-Sathlo's plan and having moved to counter it. He has hired a githyanki team to magically hijack the portal through which the item traveled, stolen the item for himself, and let his old rival crush Ithla-Sathlo. Grazz't plan was perfect, except for a single flaw – the minions he sent to retrieve the secret magic Ithla-Sathlo was going to use to drain the artefact failed their mission. The enraged tanar'ri lord sends the PCs to the former realm of Ithla-Sathlo, promising them that he will release them from the Abyss if they can get the magic he wants.

There, the PCs find the information Grazz't wanted, and also find the way to lift the magic that prevents them from leaving the plane. Reasonably enough, they decide to forget about Grazz't and just flee – however, a servant of the demon lord followed them and when they are about to leave, he confronts them and destroys the portal they were going to use. The PCs will have to run through the Abyss looking for an escape, with Grazz't servants breathing on their necks, before they can finally see Sigil again.

Who's in

Characters that start the Abyssal Campaign should be between the 7th and 9th level of experience. This should allow them to survive “everyday life” on the plane, provided that they keep their head low and their wits ready. The cutters have enough HP and resources to avoid getting killed in a random fashion, and sufficient knowledge to tell bloods from berks on the Abyss.

By altering some of the combat situations, or giving the heroes more or less time to recover their strength between major battles, DMs can suit the adventure to characters below 8th level or above 10th, though it should be noted that deviating too much from the assumed power scale can alter the tone and feeling of the adventure.

A party tending towards law and/or good will face the toughest moral challenges and get very little in return. There are no gods of light here, to reward the servants of justices for upholding their morals and ethics. This is probably the situation where the best roleplaying experience can be had. More shady groups, on the other hand, will find that the quickest and bloodiest way is usually what reaps the best rewards – but there’s a hidden price. The ways of the Abyss earn many enemies to their practitioners, and sooner or later one of them will prove quicker and bloodier than you.

Formats and Descriptions

Major NPCs and NPCs that the PCs are likely to fight or ally with are fully stated out at the point of the adventure where they’re likely to appear.

NPCs for which you probably won’t need stats are signaled in the following format: (name/sex, race, class and level/plane of origin/alignment, faction).

Descriptions that can be read aloud use *this* font. You could also read them for yourself and change them for your players the way you see fit.

Factions

It is very likely that when the PCs realize the kind of trouble they got into, they are already stuck in the Abyss. And of course, at that point they won’t be able to contact their factions, at least for some time.

Nevertheless, the Athar could be interested in the details of how a deity was so foolish to have her artefact stolen, and how a demon lord planned on corrupting the artefact to his will. This kind of dark reinforces their position against the veneration of powers.

A bunch of Mercykillers, led by a Justiciar, are interested in bringing Ithla-Sathlo to justice for the destruction caused in the Hive Ward. A Harmonium overseeing officer is with them.

The baatezu are interested in any kind of information about tanar’ri internal politics, and while they will soon learn about the destruction of Ithla-Sathlo by Demogorgon through their own sources, they might be willing to pay something for the whole dark. Dealing with the devils is risky business as always, but player characters aren’t generally known for prudence.

A few characters in the adventure use faction feats from the Planescape 3.5e conversion at www.planewalker.com. If you can’t or won’t download the feats document, just assign different feats instead. They don’t play a central role.

Unusual Parties

Even though the adventure is designed with a fairly standard party in mind – including at least a tough fighter, an arcane spellcaster, a divine spellcaster, and a stealthy person, – in reality, most gaming groups differ from the norm at least a bit. Maybe a party lacks a powerful healer and needs more time to recover from combat, or maybe they are specialized in melee combat and can defeat opponents way too easily if they can get them close quickly. DMs often have to alter or change adventure modules in order to suit the different capabilities of their particular group of PCs. To ease their job, throughout this adventure you will find sidebars suggesting ways to balance specific encounters against an unusual party’s strength and weaknesses.

Or, of course, you can just leave things as they are, and leave to the players the duty of finding a way around the obstacle! To reflect the increased (or reduced) difficulty of the task, you should increase (or reduce) the Encounter Level accordingly.

Unusual parties – example

If your party lacks a member with enough stealth capabilities to consistently sneak around the fortress without alarming the guards, you can have the tieflings in areas 1 and 3 be sleeping on duty, or substitute one of the potions in the crate in area 2 for a *potion of invisibility*.

What if...?

As in any adventure module, there are certain points where the characters are assumed to take a certain choice, walk a certain path, do certain things. Many times, the assumed party decision is the most logical one, and the one your players will likely choose to follow. And, this being the Abyss after all, there are other times where the wrong choice will “only” get them all killed in some horrible manner.

Nevertheless, D&D isn't a videogame. It would be pretty unrealistic if all – or even *most* – important choices were forced or obvious. Additionally, PCs are notorious for missing obvious clues or finding unexpected solutions, and unwittingly destroying the plot. For this reason, the adventure occasionally provides sidebars explaining what happens should the PCs go the other way. They won't cover all possible cases, and they won't provide all the details – we don't want the text to be 600 pages long, do we? – but they can help the DM to refocus and get the adventure back on track.

A note on NPCs – when you are in the Abyss, you'd better get as many allies as possible, even if you'll have to keep an eye on them. There are several occasions for smart PCs to get someone to tag along with them, and even some occasions to get someone *trustworthy* in the party. It is fairly difficult to know in advance how long a given NPC will last with the PCs. Many of them are too weak and don't stand a snowball's chance in hell of surviving for long. Some only want to get to the nearest portal and then get away. Therefore, many minor NPCs that could join the group are mentioned seldom or not at all in subsequent parts of the adventure. A good DM should use the NPC personality and motivations as a guideline to what he would do if he lasted surprisingly long.

Still, we don't want the whole thing to feel like a scout trip. Feel free to get rid of these NPCs in the most horrible and/or gory way you can come up with as soon as you get bored with them. This can serve to push the party away from the wrong direction without being forced to kill off a PC, or just to demonstrate the terrible cruelty of the plane.

More of the Dark

As the adventure progresses, the action is centered on the PCs. However, there are many other characters who take part in the adventure, doing stuff that will influence the PCs later. To help the DM understand exactly what is going on, the adventure occasionally provides sidebars titled “More of the dark” which detail something that is happening in the background or that happened long ago, without the knowledge or awareness of the PCs, and which isn't important to them right now.

A Cutter with Potential

This adventure is designed to allow the heroes to complete it without getting killed if they play it real smart. As much as the Abyss doesn't give fair chances, we DMs try to do. Nevertheless, few people can be very smart all the time, mistakes are made, and PCs die. Sometimes, it is difficult to integrate the new, replacement hero into the ongoing story – especially in *this* story, since after chapter I any new protagonist will not be subject to Ithla-Sathlo's curse and will therefore not have much reason to continue in the adventure except for helping his friends. During chapter II you may get away with making new characters be recent prisoners of Castle Maldithar who got through that portal by chance and therefore are still cursed, but after that there aren't going to be many excuses. To mitigate this problem, and as a nice gift to players who don't know what character to make next, the adventure occasionally provides sidebars titled “A Cutter with Potential”, which suggest how to turn one of the campaign's NPCs into a new PC for use by a player. Sometimes, this is going to skew the plot a little, but the advantage in terms of involvement and continuity is going to be worth it.

Encounter Summary

At the end of each chapter, you will see a summary of all meaningful challenges which the PCs may face in that chapter, and the associated encounter level. You can check the challenges that were

overcome during the adventure, and then use the table to assign XP. As usual, it doesn't matter *how* the PCs accomplish their goal; for example, in the first chapter the PCs have to get through several giant spiders. They will get full XP whether they kill the spiders or simply sneak past somehow. The challenge isn't "kill the spiders", but "defeat them" – prevent them from accomplishing their goal (in this case, eating the heroes as they pass through). Obviously, this shouldn't allow the PCs to get XP multiple times for the same situation; use your judgement. For example, sneaking past the spiders, into the tree and then back out counts as the same encounter, and therefore is only rewarded once.

Just because something is in the Encounter Summary, it doesn't mean that the PCs are supposed to *do* it. In fact, there are lots of challenges which the heroes probably won't overcome. They are listed anyway, just in case.

The EL as presented factors in the influence of terrain, ambushes, enemies' likelihood to flee, lack of adequate equipment, and similar conditions as well as the number of enemies in the encounter. Still, you may want to adjust it if the PCs arrive in favorable or unfavorable conditions not through their merit or fault.

Primes in the Abyss

The Abyssal Campaign is a D&D Planescape© adventure. However, if you don't play on the planes, you can adapt it with a bit of work. Mostly, you'll have to alter Chapter I so that it takes place on your world instead of Sigil, but after that, the rest should be easy.

A flavor note: copper coins are called "greens" on the planes, because copper tends to go green when it is handled by fiends for any length of time, so many copper coins have green stains. Silver coins are called "stingers" because they'll cause a baatezu a nasty itch (it's very bad form to pay a devil in silver). Gold coins are called "jinx", from an ancient aasimon belief that holds greed as the root of all evil. Platinum coins are called "merts", from the name of the Platinum Heaven of Mount Celestia.

☉, MISTER DIVINER? GOT
SOMETHING OUT OF MY HEAD? MY
TURN NOW!
– A TANAR'RI, TO AN UNLUCKY
MIND-READER, AND READYING ITS
CLAWS

Forbidden Lore

Since this adventure takes place in the Abyss, you will need more details on the workings of magic on this plane than what is given in the Manual of the Planes. According to the Rule of Threes, there are three things you have to be particularly careful about, when you cast spells on

the Abyss.

First of all, the Abyss very easily corrupts Alteration magic. Whenever an arcane caster attempts a spell of this school, he or she has to make a Spellcraft check, DC 15 + two times the spell level. If the check succeeds, the spell works as normal. If it fails, though, the spell is corrupted in some way. The DM is free to decide the exact result, but as a general guideline, a spell that doesn't physically change the target shouldn't become directly dangerous (for example, *fly* could cause the target to sprout wings, and *cat's grace* could cause the target's eyes to become catlike). A spell that actually changes the target's body, instead, could cause dire and even permanent consequences (*stone skin* could actually turn the target to stone).

Secondly, magic on the Abyss tends to draw unwanted attention, more than in any other place. Don't spy on fiends, don't call on fiends, keep your head low. Whenever you cast a Divination spell, the local demon lord will know it, and will be able to strike at you using the power of the Abyss. The lord can send a spell at you through your divination, provided that the spell is something related to the divination itself (for example, *discern lies* could be the conduit for a *suggestion*, but not for a *daze* spell), or he could send you false information. It should be noted that this requires the direct attention of the demon lord; most of them will not bother with low-level, frequently used

divinations. *Detect thoughts* and similar spells or effects are not to be used on tanar'ri; attempts to do this force the caster to roll a Will save, DC equal to 15 + the demon's Charisma, or suffer permanent insanity of a type decided by the DM (*heal*, *restoration*, *wish*, *limited wish* or *miracle* can restore the character's mind). Success means that the caster takes 1d4 Wisdom and 1d4 Intelligence damage, and may remember fragments of information. Callings tend to be intercepted and turn up a demon, too. The chance for this is 10% per spell level; the higher the spell, the more powerful the fiend.

Finally, Necromancy has a few problems; minor demonic spirits generally inhabit freshly created zombies or skeletons, and this usually results in the undead attacking their creator. *Reincarnation* always causes the target to assume some kind of demonic form. A good character that dies in the Abyss without receiving a *blessed burial* spell will return as a bodak.

There are a couple benefits too, if you like chaos and destruction. Damage-dealing spells are automatically *empowered*, as per the Empower Spell metamagic feat. Illusions are automatically *extended* and the DC for any Illusion spell is increased by +2.

Specific layers or realms within the Abyss might have additional effects. They will be detailed within the location's description during the adventure.

If you use psionics, you should decide whether the planes could affect the powers of the mind or not. Both solutions are plausible; you could say that the corruption takes place as the power is manifested, or you could say that since psionics only come from within, they are unaffected. If you decide to let the Abyss affect psionics, though, you need to figure out a magic school equivalency for psionics. In general, powers that alter something's or someone's physical form can be corrupted as Alteration magic (though corruption can be avoided with a Psicraft check). Stuff that finds information is equivalent to Divination and can be intercepted by the local lord. Attempts to get information from a tanar'ri's mind fail spectacularly as described above. Powers that deal direct damage are *empowered*, and powers that create illusions and deceptions are *extended* and have their DC increased by +2. Notably, though, *astral constructs* don't risk turning up a tanar'ri instead.

Though not an effect of the Abyss itself, it is important to remember that *plane shift* and similar magic can only take you to the first layer of a plane (and on a random place, too). When the PCs want to get to different layers of the Abyss, they have to find a gate.

INTRODUCTION

While the PCs and the rest of the multiverse go about their jobs, generally trying to stay out of the way of tanar'ri and the like, the lords of the demons plan, plot and scheme to gain power on the abyssal layers. None of these bloods ever sleeps – they can't, because the next attack, assassination attempt or hostile alliance could happen at any moment. It is said that the most cunning of the demon lords hatch plans that take their course over several millennia, manipulating the destiny of mortals, their families, or even entire nations. Tanar'ri don't learn patience easily, but the immortal lords have had more than enough time to learn. It's pretty simple, after all: those who haven't, have died.

The immensely powerful rulers of the Abyss still don't hold a candle to the powers of the planes. The gods themselves remain far above their petty schemes, confident in their hold on the greatest power that there can be. Knowledge, faith, *belief* – belief pushes the wheel of the cosmos, it composes the very planes, and the powers control it. Tanar'ri lords that can crush any mortal with a gesture have to bow to the power of a real god.

Yet... yet, sometimes, some very rare times, a god is brought low, or a minor being may rise to greatness. Those times, we ordinary people must take care and hope not to get caught in the events. Power clashes with power, and the rest has better be somewhere else when it happens.

Power consumes those who lack it

Have you ever heard of the goddess Selthian, cutter? No, of course you haven't. That's because she's a very minor goddess, with just a handful of followers around the material plane and maybe a dozen on the planes. Selthian is technically a demigod right now, but it wasn't always like this. The goddess of the beauty of plants, Selthian used to command if not awe, at least a modicum of respect. During those days – probably seeing the way she was headed – the goddess decided to expand her portfolio to include herbal healing and remedies, hoping to attract a larger number of followers.

To this end, Selthian created an artefact which she hoped would draw people to her faith. The *Selthian Orb* is a wooden sphere, about as big as a halfling's head, seemingly wet to touch. The orb immediately heals 3d8 hit points to any wounded creature that touches it, or restores one point to any drained stat. This effect is performed once per round, though not more than a single time per day on a single creature. The main power of the orb, though, is activated by placing it inside a tree or other plant in a forest or grove. This can be done by placing the orb somewhere in the woods; its power will shape the growth of the surrounding plants so that they protect and encase it. Once its contact with the local plant life is established, the magic of the Selthian Orb will protect all plants within a radius of about ten miles from any kind of poisoning or disease. What's more, it will influence all medicinal herbs that grow within several miles of the forest where it has been placed. Any nonmagical positive effect – healing, enhancing, protecting – of the affect plants is doubled. Alchemical items based on those herbs will perform twice as well, but any simple remedy is similarly affected as well. Poisonous plants are unaffected.

The creation of the *orb* was a poor choice for Selthian overall. The artefact is powerful if used carefully, but it can't really be called awe-inspiring. Followers never came, choosing the worship of powers who offered direct healing capabilities instead, and Selthian never established a grip on the healing business. Her original portfolio, the beauty of plants, was too limited to sustain a healthy number of followers, and so during the course of several centuries her power slowly decreased.

The artefact eventually found its way to the cares of a group of druids on a remote corner of Arboorea. Selthian was content to leave it there, unknown to the multiverse at large. She had enough troubles staying alive, and no need of being constantly reminded of her bad mistake.

Weaving a dark fate

While Selthian was struggling to retain her power, a minor tanar'ri lord by the name of Ithla-Sathlo was fighting with fang and claw to establish his domain over the 329th layer of the Abyss – a horrible little place named Infestant. Ithla-Sathlo enjoys the transformation and corruption of life that comes so easily in his plane, and has specialized in the selection and cultivation of dangerous plants and monstrous vegetal creatures. Over the course of centuries, the tanar'ri and the other nightmare creatures he controls have managed to bring the layer – dubbed Infestant – under his rule. While the control of an entire layer is no small feat, Infestant is small and not much inhabited (except for the plant creatures, which have expanded to fill almost the entire place). The Abyssal high ups still seem to take little notice of Ithla-Sathlo's deeds.

And so, Ithla-Sathlo conceives a plan which, if successful, will allow him to take on a major demon lord such as Demogorgon. The fiend knows of Selthian's artefact thanks to a druid he kidnapped, and also knows that the demipower currently isn't paying too much attention to it. Stealing the artefact will be easy, but once it enters the Abyss, Selthian will immediately know it. Even though Ithla-Sathlo is certain that she will not directly enter the Abyss, for fear of the local powers, he is not sure that the artefact isn't capable of *plane shifting* itself away, if ordered so by the demigoddess.

For this reason, he has prepared a cunning magical trap. The trap, designed to activate on the first creature with a mind that steps through a particular portal (the item, being an artefact, is partially intelligent and thus qualifies), will cast a powerful curse on the target. The spell is conceptually similar to a *dimensional anchor*, or *gate ward*; it strengthens reality around the target so that he or she is unable to pierce the planar barriers and step through planar portals. It still allows for layer-to-layer travel, though. The magic is so powerful that a simple *dispel magic* or *remove curse* won't do anything – *wish* or *miracle* could probably overpower it, but Ithla-Sathlo is confident that the artefact doesn't have *that* kind of power at its disposal. The portal chosen by the fiend lord is located within a little-used prison fortress on the 76th layer of the Abyss. He has selected that place because the layer also contains a shifting gate which, among other places, occasionally leads to Infestant. With some good timing, the orb can get to Ithla-Sathlo's reign quickly.

Setting up the trap took the demon lord several days and a considerable part of his power, but the tough part had yet to come. First of all, he has to get the item through that portal. To this end, he is going to send his tiefling granddaughter Lianne to Sigil, and look for a priest of Selthian that he knows lives there. Undoubtedly, the priest will have an extraordinary collection of beautiful plants and flowers. Once Lianne has found the priest, she has to poison all his greenery, with a special Abyss-brewed substance that won't be easily removed by normal means. Hopefully, the priest will think of the old artefact and send someone to fetch it. The skilled tiefling will be there to eavesdrop the location of the item, and then he will send a retriever to get the orb. The retriever, being a construct, will not trigger the trap.

Once the item is secured, Ithla-Sathlo intends to corrupt it and use it to empower his plant minions. With the renegade druids he employs, he can literally grow a huge army fairly quickly, and if each of the monsters is made twice as big, twice as powerful... it will be a tough battle, but he can take on Demogorgon using the surprise factor, and then gain control of his realm by infesting it with a lethal jungle before Grazz't and the other high-ups recover from the shock.

Unfortunately for him, Grazz't definitely isn't going to be surprised, because he already knows. He has spies everywhere on the Abyss, including Infestant, and soon they report that an upstart demon lord has taken the trouble to secure a small fortress around a little-used portal on layer 76th, perform a weird ritual on the portal, and prepare a retriever to get an item or something on Arborea. Grazz't moves silently and quickly – he uses divination magic to locate the astral conduit corresponding to the shifting gate Ithla-Sathlo is going to use to transport the orb, and then

TSK. AMATEURS.
- LORD GRAZZ'T

contacts a team of githyanki astral pirates, ordering them to put themselves near the conduit and get ready to cast *pierce conduit* when ordered to...

CHAPTER I

In which the Heroes attempt to retrieve an item of power, and get beaten on time

Looking for a job

It is the usual foggy day in Sigil, the City of Doors. Merchants trade, workers work, planar travelers and common bubbers alike fill the inns and alehouses. While the PCs are having lunch at their case or favorite kip, they are contacted, either in person or through a messenger, by a friend of theirs or faction fellow, who seems to have found a nice easy job for them. He has heard about a mysterious cutter, known only as the Gardener, who is looking for a few capable bashers to retrieve an item from somewhere. The Gardener can be found in the Hive Ward – the contact provides the PCs with the street address for this Gardener, and no other information. He just saw the announcement on a pole at the Bazaar, and thought to inform the PCs.

If the PCs go and check the announcement by themselves at the Bazaar, they see a small sheet of paper nailed to a pole.

The handwriting is fluent and precise, and it says nothing more than “A group of cutters needed to retrieve an item from its current location. Legal job. Bubbers and addle-coves need not apply. Contact the Gardener; Muddy Street, 35/B, Hive Ward”.

It doesn't seem that anyone around has seen the man who placed the sign.

If the PCs look for chant about this “Gardener” before going there, they won't find much unless they look in the right places.

- If they just ask around in the Hive, a Gather Information check, DC 15, will allow them to discover that the Gardener is a secluded bloke, considered barmy by most, that lives alone in an abandoned warehouse somewhere on Muddy Street. If they beat DC 20, they also find out that this Gardener has removed the warehouse's roof and replaced it with thick glass panes. He has a lot of plants in there, and occasionally visits the Great Bazaar to buy rare herbs or flowers, or to sell specimens in return for the money he needs to maintain the greenhouse.
- If they ask around in the Great Bazaar, a Gather Information check, DC 20, will allow them to discover that the Gardener is fairly well known among plant traders that visit Sigil. He looks humanoid, except for his strange, vaguely metallic skin tone and his glowing eyes. He wears gray or green robes, and usually keeps the hood up. He is interested in rare plants and herbs from all places in the multiverse – the merchants occasionally buy rare specimens from him, or trade them for species he doesn't have yet.
- In other places, the Gardener isn't known. A Gather Information check, DC 30, will allow a very knowledgeable PC to meet someone who has once bought an ornamental Elysian moon-flower from the Gardener. The guy can't quite remember what the Gardener looks like, but he does know that he trades in rare herbs and plants.

In this and following Gather Information checks, at the DM's option, good roleplaying or informed contacts may award a circumstance bonus from +2 to +4 to the check's result.

Once the PCs reach number 35/B of Muddy Street, they find out that there is no “Gardener” there, only an old dwarf bubbler whose brain is so burnt out by cheap spirits that he can hardly understand what the PCs want, let alone remember who the Gardener is or where he lives. Unfortunately, street numbering in the Hive is approximate at best – turns out there are *two* buildings numbered 35/B. The PCs can find out if they ask to anyone else (and possibly pay a few greens for the favor), or just wander around for a while. The actual warehouse is next to the house of the old barmy, but the entrance is on the other side – visitors have to come through a narrow alley.

The Gardener's greenhouse

Lianne		Al. Chaotic Evil	Tiefling Rogue 7 th (Abyss)	CR: 7
Str: 15 (+2)	HP: 7d6+14 (50)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 19 (+4)	AC: 20 (+5 armor, +4 dexterity, +1 shield)	Armor: light		
Con: 14 (+2)	Initiative: +4 dex	% fail.: 20%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 15 (+2)	Ref: +9 (+5 base, +4 dex)	BAB: +5	Grapple: +7	
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +4 (+2 base, +2 con)	Melee: +7 (+5 BAB, +2 str)		
Cha: 14 (+2)	Will: +5 (+2 base, +1 wis, +2 feat)	Ranged: +9 (+5 BAB, +5 dex)		
Attacks		Skills		
Masterwork short sword, +10 melee, 1d6+2(+poison), crit 19-20/x2		Balance +9 (+5 ranks, +4 dex)		
Feats and special abilities		Bluff +11 (+7 ranks, +2 cha, +2 racial)		
Feats: Aspect of the Tanar'ri, Iron will, Weapon finesse		Climb +9 (+7 ranks, +2 str)		
Sneak attack +4d6, Trapfinding, Trap sense +2, Evasion, Uncanny dodge, darkvision 18 meters, cold, fire and electricity resistance 5, <i>darkness</i> 1/day.		Disguise +14 (+10 ranks, +2 cha, +2 synergy*)		
Languages: planar trade, tanar'ri, yugoloth, slaad		Diplomacy +4 (+2 cha, +2 synergy)		
Equipment		Escape artist +9 (+5 ranks, +4 dex)		
+2 <i>studded leather armor</i> (AB +5, max dex +5, check penalty 0, arcane failure 15%) (moderate abjuration; CL 6)		Hide +16 (+10 ranks, +4 dex, +2 hide)		
masterwork buckler (AB +1, check penalty 0, arcane failure 5%)		Intimidate +4 (+2 cha, +2 synergy)		
masterwork short sword (+1 to hit, 1d6 damage, crit 19-20/x2)		Jump +7 (+5 ranks, +2 str)		
<i>wand of invisibility</i> (11 charges) (faint illusion; CL 3)		Listen +8 (+7 ranks, +1 wis)		
<i>potion of cure serious wounds</i> (faint conjuration; CL 5)		Move silently +14 (+10 ranks, +4 dex)		
<i>potion of cat's grace</i> (faint transmutation; CL 3)		Open lock +7 (+5 ranks, +2 int)		
5 doses of black adder venom (injury DC 11, 1d6 con/1d6 con)		Search +7 (+7 ranks, +2 int)		
450 jinxes, 50 stingers		Sleight of hand +11 (+5 ranks, +4 dex, +2 synergy)		
		Spot +8 (+7 ranks, +1 wis)		
		Survival +4 (+2 wis, +2 synergy**)		
		Use magic device +12 (+10 ranks, +2 cha)		
		Use rope +6 (+4 dex, +2 synergy***)		
		* if she knows she's being observed		
		** when finding/following tracks		
		*** when binding someone		

While the PCs walk along this alley, have each of them roll Spot. Those who beat DC 22 notice something, maybe a shadow moving quickly on the roof of the warehouse. If a PC goes to check, he sees nothing, but what they noticed was Ithla-Sathlo's servant taking place to eavesdrop the conversation. Her name is Lianne and she's a tiefling rogue. Right after having spotted the PCs, she's invisible too – she has a wand of invisibility for the mission and is making liberal use of it. For additional caution, she is hiding and moving silently as well.

The tiefling positions herself on the roof, on one of the filthiest roof tiles. From the inside, even a character that can see invisible creatures has to roll Spot versus her Hide check to see her. She also has a +4 circumstance bonus, because of the light from the sky dazing the character.

The warehouse is a large building, about 15x20 meters, and looks very old but well built. The Gardener replaced the roof with large sheets of thick glass, making the building into a pretty effective greenhouse. The temperature

More of the dark

Lianne is the daughter of a woman named Lesla and the half-tanar'ri Rothakon – who, in turn, is the son of Ithla-Sathlo himself. Being the granddaughter of a demon lord, Lianne has exceptional stats and power. Lesla is currently imprisoned in the demon lord's fortress on Infestant, where she's been for thirty years. She has gone insane a long time ago. The mother of Rothakon died while giving birth to the half-fiend.

Lianne is a fairly ugly tiefling; her average complexion looks human, but dark green stripes cross her face and body. Her catlike eyes are a further confirmation of her demonic streak.

Lianne is staying in a ruined Hive building near the slags. The same building contains a large wood and metal crate. The crate contains a retriever, crafted by Ithla-Sathlo. The monster will obey Lianne's orders.

Additionally, Lianne has hired a bunch of thugs to stop or at least slow anyone else that tries to reach the Orb.

Lianne was born and bred on the Abyss. To her, violence and betrayal are the ways the world works. Her father conceived her with no other reason than having another good servant, and treated her accordingly. She obeys him out of fear, and indeed can't even conceive any other reason. Lianne has no love of him, but no hatred either. For what she knows, that's just the natural way of raising a daughter.

Lianne's basic motivation is survival. Everything she does, she does because otherwise Rothakon will kill her.

inside is somewhat warmer than the outside, and much more humid. The tuladhara lives in a couple of rooms arranged one above the other on one side of the warehouse.

The rest of the greenhouse is full of plants of all kinds. When the characters knock, a voice from the inside invites them to enter, and then they feel as if they had stepped through a gate and into a jungle.

The walls are stacked high with shelves, each row of each shelf full of a dozen large pots, where hundreds of wonderful plants you have never seen before are growing. The mid of the warehouse is occupied by long, wide tables, each supporting more flowers, low bushes, herbs and assorted greenery. Most of the plants have some kind of flower – after the dominant green colour, the room is awash with all the hues of the rainbow. The flowers are of all sizes and shapes; some you can recognize but lots are completely alien. The room probably has a good smell too, but after having walked in the Hive for a while, you certainly aren't going to sense it.

Have all PCs roll Spot, DC 21. Characters with 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (Nature) gain a +2 synergy bonus to this roll; characters with at least one level in the Druid class gain an additional +2 competence bonus. Those who succeed can notice the effect of the poisoning, as described later.

As you look around, you are approached by a humanoid cloaked figure. The Gardener is wearing a long grey robe and a hooded cloak, and the hood is pulled on his head. The light comes in straight from above, and so his face is shadowed, but you can distinguish a clean face and friendly smile. You also easily notice the eyes – they are a lot more visible than the rest of the face, because they give off a faint glow.

PCs with low-light vision can also notice that the Gardener's skin seems to have a vague metallic tint. The Gardener (male tuladhara cleric 5th/Outlands/true neutral) is basically obsessed with his greenhouse. He manages to earn just enough money to maintain it by selling pretty flowers to rich ladies and herbal remedies to whoever needs them. With the little money he can put together, he just buys more rare plants, from every place in the multiverse. Why he does that, and why in Sigil (where, generally speaking, the most a flower can hope for is a quick death), is a mystery he isn't inclined to talk about – the truth, of course, is that he is a priest of Selthian, and he feels as his duty to maintain a presence in Sigil.

The man welcomes the PCs and starts walking between the lines of tables, beckoning them to follow him. As they walk among the beautiful plants, and with the occasional “don't touch” warning when they pass near some of the Abyssal ones, the Gardener explains his problem. He sounds genuinely worried. His greenhouse has been poisoned. The substance is innocuous to animal life, but is

lethal to plants. He keeps beckoning the PCs and inviting them to watch closely at this or that flower, pointing at tiny wilted spots, rotting smells, fallen leaves, and a few obviously dying herbs.

Even though the damage doesn't seem too severe, the Gardener assures the PCs that there is no readily available cure, and the situation can and will get worse. The weaker Elysian flowers will die first, in a matter of two or three days. The tougher lower-planar stuff will take longer (and his small razovine patch seems to thrive on the poison as it does on just

What if...?

Lianne is invisible and hiding. Nevertheless, there are some ways for the PCs to spot her, in which case they will probably attempt to capture her, kill her, or at least chase her away. She can flee easily enough; if she can't eavesdrop the conversation, she will follow the PCs from a large distance until she sees the portal they've used, and only then she will activate the retriever. This will give the PCs about half an hour more time, afterwards.

If she can't even do that, or if she gets captured or killed, the retriever won't be activated and the PCs will actually recover the Orb! A few days later, they are contacted by a desperate Gardener, who's had his greenhouse thrashed and the Orb stolen by an Abyssal death machine, and who wants their help again...

LOOK AT THIS! AND THIS! I
UNDERSTAND KILLING
PEOPLE, BUT WHAT KIND
OF FIEND COULD HAVE
DONE THIS TO MY
PLANTS?
- GRIEVING GARDENER

about anything else), but the doom is inevitable.

The Gardener has no idea of how the venom got in the greenhouse. In fact, he is only sure that it's a poison and not a disease because it is affecting all species of plants. He has no idea of why someone would poison his plants, either, and even less of an idea about who could have done it. What he does know, though, is what could fix the problem.

The Gardener's - Fine Herbs

With his skills and his collection of specimens, the Gardener could become rich. Of course, he is far too obsessed to even think seriously about it. He has a huge variety of medicinal plants, including some exceptionally rare and useful ones. He doesn't have a large quantity of any of them, though. Generally, he has one specimen of each of his plants, and is very careful with harvesting the medicinal substances. Here's what he's got right now:

- *Razorvine, giant*. He doesn't actually grow this stuff, but he has a few twigs in a metal box. The leaves of this variety are as big and sharp as good knife. They count as masterwork daggers, except that if they aren't sheathed, fire will destroy them on a failed save. The Gardener sells up to 3 of them for 300 gold each.
- *Fury Leaf*. This brown-red leaf comes from a lower-planar plant. Once properly treated, if a character chews it (a standard action) he will immediately get a powerful adrenaline rush, giving him a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution, +2 to Will saves versus fear effects, -2 to AC and impossibility to concentrate. This effect lasts for 3 rounds plus CON modifier, after which the character is fatigued for as many hours as rounds that the rush lasted. The character can terminate the effect by spitting the leaf, if he wants. The Gardener knows that the drug is addictive, but doesn't know the details of the addiction. He has 15 leaves, and sells them for 150 gold each.
- *Ointment*. This white paste can be smeared on a wound, restoring 1d8 hit points. He has 20 doses, and sells them for 40 gold each.
- *Antidote*. A character that drinks this vial has a +5 bonus to saves versus poison, for 1 hour. He has 15 doses, and sells them for 50 gold each.
- *Lizai Fungus*. This tough fungal growth lives on certain remote caves on Pandemonium. It constantly exudes a mild poison (initial damage 1d2 strength, secondary damage none, DC 12) and needs little care. A cutter can let it grow on the inside of his scabbard, and whenever he extracts the blade, it will be coated in poison. The fungus takes one hour to poison the blade again, and must be cleaned off every week to prevent it from growing too much (the character who does this has a 5% chance of getting poisoned in the process, as if handling poison). The Gardener can treat any number of scabbards, but it takes a week of time and cares to make the lizai take hold. He wants 1200 gold, too. Hey, the greenhouse is costly to maintain!
- *Neraian Lezalith*, also known as armour-plant to those who know. It only grows on a specific prime material world, and is bloody rare there, too. Worse still, the local elves don't take kindly to strangers attempting to obtain it. Nevertheless, the Gardener somehow scored a seed of the stuff and now has a small plant. This thing grows normally in the soil, but the seed can also be made into a potion that causes the plant to grow around a person's chest and upper arms and legs, forming a tough living armor. It looks weird, and feels weirder, and is a real pain to take off (takes one hour, the character takes 3d6 damage, Fortitude save DC 15 for half), but it is effective. The armor bonus is +1 and grows one point per week up to +5; arcane penalty 5%, check penalty -1, maximum dexterity +7. The armor weighs 0.5 kilograms per point of armor bonus. The Gardener prices the only seed he has at 2000 gold.
- *Potions*. The Gardener sells potions of *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *cure light wounds*, *cure moderate wounds*, *minor restoration*, *cure poison* and *cure disease* for their normal price. He has 10 each.
- *Extraordinary potions*. The Gardener sells 3 potions of *persistent bull's strength* for 850 gold each and 2 potions of *persistent cat's grace* for 850 gold each. The enchanter level is 11 for these potions.
- *Poisons*. The Gardener has 1d6 doses each for each of the poisons in the DMG table, provided that they are of vegetal origin, and sells them for 10% more than the listed price, because he disapproves of the use of poison.
- *Extraordinary poisons*. That doesn't prevent him from doing some research, of course. He has *Hades' Nectar* (1d6 Wisdom as initial and secondary damage, DC 18; he has 3 doses and sells them for 200 gold each), *Bloodburn* (4d6 hit points initial damage, 1d3 Constitution secondary damage, DC 21; he has 2 doses and sells them for 500 gold each) and a certain stuff "so nasty that I haven't named it" which causes petrification as initial and secondary damage, DC 19. It is based on a highly magical plant, of course – the Gardener won't reveal the details, but he guarantees that mass production is impossible. He has just one dose and he sells it for 1400 gold.

The Gardener, of course, has an even larger variety of plants that are just pretty to look at. He puts a hefty price on those, though – 100 jink to 1000, and maybe even more, depending on rarity. That's because he doesn't like giving away an entire plant, and will only do so for enough money to get another specimen from his merchant friends.

He tells the PCs that he knows of a magical item, similar to a wooden sphere, which is supposed to cure any kind of plant from any kind of illness. He has been doing a lot of research in the past few days, and he has discovered the location of the item, Arborea, and a portal leading near its location. Of course, now someone has to retrieve the item, but he can't leave the greenhouse for fear that the mysterious poisoner will return to complete the job. And that's where the PCs come in. They'll get the item for him.

The Gardener isn't rich but he can offer the PCs a wide variety of medicines and exotic herbs that an adventurer can find useful. The task is easy, after all – the other side of the portal leads to an elven village; it is likely that the elves use and take care of the item, so the trickiest part will be convincing them to lend it to the PCs for a few days. He thinks about offering the PCs a total of 2000 jink worth of the stuff he usually sells, but being desperate the reward can be pushed up quite a lot.

If the PCs accept, the Gardener points them to a portal to Arborea that lies in an alleyway of the Hive, not too far from the warehouse. The key is a rare Bytopian flower, and the Gardener has four of them. He warns the PCs that he only has those four – two to go and come back with the item, two to return the item should this be necessary, and get back. It would take a long time for him to get more of them, so they must come back with the item on the first trip. The Gardener will give them two flowers for now.

As soon as the PCs leave, Lianne stealthily enters the greenhouse and steals the remaining two Bytopian flowers. After that, she goes to the thugs she hired, who were waiting near the Gardener's place, and tells them to kill the PCs. They are well paid, but not fanatical; they will run if pressed. Then, she hurries towards the case where the retriever her master gave her is hidden. Four malignant eyes flare to life, the monster is awakened, Lianne gives it the key and its orders, and the Abyssal construct runs towards the portal. Running through a crowd is easy when you are an infernal death machine, people kindly move out of the way of their own accord. Plus, Lianne's thugs are going to at least slow down the heroes. So, the retriever will manage to reach the portal before the PCs – though only moments before.

Unusual parties
A very numerous party might need two copies of a key for all of its members to pass through a portal. Either have the Gardener have twice as many keys, or let the PCs be forced to leave some members behind. Maybe the members that stay in Sigil could start investigating the poisoning in the meantime.

What if...?
For whatever reason, the PCs might decide they'd rather investigate the poisoning *before* getting the cure. In this case, the retriever gets the Orb without PC interference, and the PCs get to hear about the monster which appeared near the slags, entered the portal the Gardener mentioned, got out of the same portal after some time, ran around some more, and finally vanished into the slags.
If they then go to Arborea, they find that the item was stolen by the retriever.

Hive thug (6)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Human Rogue/Warrior 1 st /3 rd	CR: 3
Str: 14 (+2)	HP: 3d8+1d6+4 (21)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 11 (+0)	AC: 16 (+4 armor, +2 shield)	Armor: light		
Con: 13 (+1)	Initiative: +0	% fail.: 40%	Check pen.: -5	
Int: 9 (-1)	Ref: +2 base	BAB: +3	Grapple: +5	
Wis: 9 (-1)	For: +4 (+3 base, +1 con)	Melee: +5 (+3 base, +2 str)		
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: -1 wis	Ranged: +3 base		
Attacks			Skills	
Long sword +6 melee, damage 1d8+2, crit 19-20/x2, or			Bluff +4 ranks	
Dagger +3 ranged 3 m, damage 1d4+2, crit 19-20/x2			Climb +3 (+6 ranks, +2 str, -5 armor)	
Feats and special abilities			Hide -1 (+4 ranks, -5 armor)	
Feats: Toughness, Power attack, Weapon focus: long sword.			Intimidate +6 ranks	
Class features: Sneak attack +1d6, Trapfinding			Jump +3 (+6 ranks, +2 str, -5 armor)	
Equipment			Listen +3 (+4 ranks, -1 wis)	
Long sword (1d8 damage, crit 19-20/x2)			Move silently -1 (+4 ranks, -5 armor)	
Rusty chain shirt (AB +4, max dex +3, check pen. -3, arcane failure 25%)			Spot +3 (+4 ranks, -1 wis)	
Heavy wooden shield (AB +2, check penalty -2, arcane failure 15%)				
Dagger (1d4 damage, crit 19-20/x2, range 3 m)				
20 stingers				

The portal is located inside an alley, which departs from a wide road of the Hive ward. The road, despite being large, is fairly unused. It is located not far from the slags, and people generally stay clear of the area. The construct arrives from the opposite direction with respect to the PCs, and enters the alley just as the PCs are turning an angle. Have each PC roll Spot, DC 20. Those who succeed can notice something darting inside the alley. It looks small and dark (what they've seen is just one of the rear legs of the creature).

When they near the alley, they see large tracks on the muddy ground. If a PC has the Track feat, he can easily (DC 5) tell that the tracks are of moments before, that it was at least one large creature, and that it entered the alley and then vanished – presumably, into the portal. If he beats DC 10, he can also tell the direction the creature came from, and could follow the tracks backwards if he wanted to. The PCs don't have the time for that, though, because it looks like something is getting to the item before they do! If the character beats DC 20, he can tell that it actually was a single huge creature, with eight legs. If no characters have the Track feat, the best they can gather is that something big and heavy was in the alley not long ago.

Unusual parties

The retriever is supposed to stay seconds ahead of the PCs until it flees with the Orb. Its speed of 12 means that, likely, the slowest members of the party can't keep up. If the party is faster than average, they still probably can't fight effectively with the running retriever.

Nevertheless, if you think that the party could actually prevent the retriever from completing its mission, you could consider adding a few HD to the creature.

Bloodbath in paradise

Once you step into the portal, you find yourselves in a flat, grassy area. There are a few large trees scattered around you, lots of pretty flowers, a path coasting the edge of a forest, and warm sunlight from a blue sky. Overall, a pleasant wilderness, were it not for the huge eight-legged Abyssal monstrosity that is rending a druid to pieces, and the screams of pain from an elven einheriar militia member being fried alive by a scorching ray. The frozen corpse of another elf doesn't help, either.

Retriever	Al. Chaotic Evil	Huge Construct (Abyss)	CR: 11
Str: 31 (+10)	HP: 10d10+80 (135)	Speed: 15	
Dex: 17 (+3)	AC: 21 (-2 size, +3 Dex, +10 natural)	Armor: none	
Con: -	Initiative: +3 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0
Int: -	Ref: +6 (+3 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +7	Grapple: +25
Wis: 11 (+0)	For: +3 base	Melee: +15 (+7 base, +10 str, -2 size)	
Cha: 1 (-5)	Will: +3 base	Ranged: +8 (+7 base, +3 dex, -2 size)	
Attacks			
4 claws +15 melee reach 3 m, damage 2d6+10, and			
Bite +10 melee reach 3m, damage 1d8+5, and			
Eye ray +8 ranged touch up to 30 m			
Feats and special abilities			
Construct traits, darkvision 18 m, low-light vision, fast healing 5			
Eye ray (su): each ray may be used once every 4 rounds; fire ray deals 12d6 fire damage, reflex DC 18 for half; cold ray deals 12d6 cold damage, reflex DC 18 for half; electricity ray deals 12d6 electricity damage, reflex DC 18 for half; petrification ray causes petrification, fortitude DC 18 to avoid.			
Find target (su): the retriever always knows the direction of the Selthian Orb as if guided by <i>discern location</i> .			
Improved grab (bite attack).			

If the PCs immediately come to help the druid, the retriever will decide not to waste any more time. It will drop the woman and run towards the center of the forest. The druid (**Ishaine/female human druid 3rd/Arborea/chaotic good**) picks herself up, and shouts at the PCs that the monster is running to the sacred tree, and that it must be stopped. Then, she turns and runs behind the retriever.

The elven einheriar say (in elven) that they are going to the village of Virdias to get reinforcements, and run along the path. The PCs are left alone. There is a trail of broken trees that clearly marks the passage of the retriever. PCs with ranged weapons and spells can't target it; even with the fallen trees on its path, the forest is too thick.

More of the dark

The female druid the PCs meet is called Ishaine and is the current defender of the sacred tree. She knows about the orb, and knows that she has to protect it, but she has no idea of the sphere's origin or powers.

Fact is, the orb has been here for millennia and even the druids forgot about its history.

The previous keeper left some years ago, and was recently kidnapped by Ithla-Sathlo.

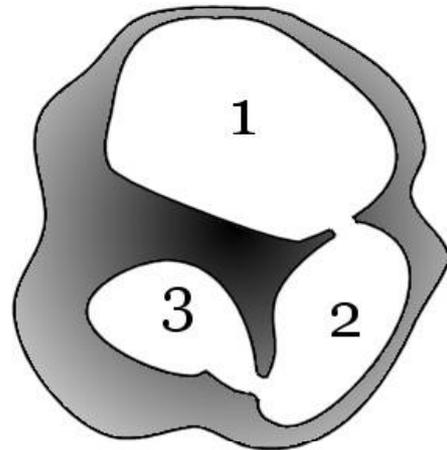
The retriever is headed to the item's location. The Selthian Orb is hidden inside an ancient, enormous tree, more than 20 meters wide and hundreds of meters tall. It is the oldest and largest tree in the forest, and its trunk has three natural cavities large enough to be considered caves. The tree has grown around the Orb over the course of several millennia. Only the druids that protect the forest know about it, though; the rest of the elves just think it's a big tree, and generally stay clear of it because people wandering in the area occasionally meet giant spiders.

The druids generally don't enter the tree, and when they do they use magic to avoid hurting it. The demonic construct isn't that kind; when the PCs reach the sacred tree, the retriever has just broken the trunk in the thin northern side and has entered area number 1. The druid is here, too, and she urges the PCs to do

something, quickly. Notice that the inside of the tree is very dark, and the PCs need some source of light.

1. This area is empty; the air is stale and the ground is composed of dust and some moss. The PCs can't see the top of the cave, which apparently goes on for some tens of meters. A lot of noise, roaring and chittering, and the occasional flash of light, comes from area 2.

2. This area is the nest of dozens of giant spiders. The druids employ them as guardians of the orb. Unfortunately, they just aren't tough enough for the retriever, which is strong enough to break their webs and immune to their poison. The spiders are attacking the creature en masse, without doing noticeable damage. The construct is being slowed, though; the area is full of webs and even though the retriever can break them easily, it still can't move anywhere close to normally. The spiders won't attack the druid, but they have no reservations about the PCs. She will use her spells to deter them from attacking, but there are too many of them.



The Sacred Tree

Giant spiders		Al. Neutral	Large Celestial Monstrous spider (Arborea)	CR: 3
Str: 15 (+2)	HP: 4d8+4 (22)	Speed: 9, climb 6		
Dex: 17 (+3)	AC: 14 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +3 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: -	Ref: +4 (+1 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +3	Grapple: +5	
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +5 (+4 base, +1 con)	Melee: +4 (+3 base, +2 str, -1 size)		
Cha: 2 (-4)	Will: +1 base	Ranged: +5 (+3 base, +3 dex, -1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
Bite +4 melee, damage 1d8+3+poison		Climb +11 (+8 racial, +3 dex)*		
Feats and special abilities		Hide +3 (-4 size, +4 racial, +3 ranks)**		
Darkvision 18 m		Jump +2 (+2 strength)		
Tremorsense (ex): can detect and pinpoint any creature in contact with the ground within 18 meters, or any creature in the spiders' room.		Move silently +3 (+3 dex)**		
Vermin traits		Spot +4 (+4 racial)		
Poison (ex): DC 13, damage 1d6 Strength primary and secondary.		* these spiders use their Dex modifier for Climb checks, and can always take 10		
Web (ex): it can throw a web up to eight times per day; range increment 3 m up to 15 m, effective on targets up to Huge size, as a net attack. The target can escape with Escape Artist (DC 13), a Strength check (DC 17), or by dealing 12 damage to the net.		** within this room, the spiders have a +8 racial bonus to Hide and Move silently		

Since the area is covered in giant webs, characters walking or flying in it are entangled and suffer a -2 penalty to hit, -4 to dexterity, must move at half speed and can't charge or run. They can free themselves with a successful Escape artist check (DC 16) or Strength check (DC 20), or by dealing 14 damage to the web (this clears a 1,5x1,5 meters section of webbing). Walking characters have a +5 bonus to any check to free themselves.

The retriever is killing off the spiders with its eye rays, but as soon as it notices someone getting near to the passage to area 3, it will focus its attention on him to try and stop him. Naturally, the druid is the first character doing this – she moves as fast as possible towards the passage, and the retriever kills her with its lethal beams. After a few rounds, during which the PCs should desperately and fruitlessly try to stop it while fending off the occasional giant spider, the construct reaches the passage and enters it. The hole is too small, so it breaks the wood some more, sending splinters everywhere.

3. This area is empty as the first one, except for a tall, irregular wooden column, which starts from the ground and disappears in the darkness above. The column seems to be alive, and part of the sacred tree. In the middle of the column, at about 1.7 meters from the ground, the Selthian Orb is embedded into the wood. It takes a DC 16 Strength check to get the sphere out of the wooden column, but this isn't a problem for the retriever, which jumps into the room and bites away the orb, together with a nice chunk of the column itself.

After the retriever has got the sphere, it will get back as quickly as possible, using its eye rays to dispose of anything that stands between it and the portal back to its master.

Not as easy as planned

The PCs now have to do some detective job, if they want to get the wooden sphere back. The monstrous creature which stole the item has vanished, and the Gardener is more desperate than ever. The heroes have to find where it went and why.

The retriever's tracks are fairly evident; a PC with the Track feat can follow them with a check, DC 10. After reaching the slags, though, the tracks vanish. Alternatively, the PCs can spend a few hours asking around the Hive, and if one of them passes a Gather Information check, DC 15, he can discover that a huge eight-legged monster has entered the slags not long ago. No one knows what the creature did within the slags, though – for what they know, it could probably still be there.

If the PCs enter the slags, they find that the retriever's tracks are a lot more confused. The creature walked on the rubble and cement, and while it certainly crumbled some walls and splintered some wood, the slags are *full* of crumbled walls and splintered timbers, so tracking isn't easy. Besides, the slags are a place bad enough that it hasn't been resettled, and there are lots of good reasons. For example, during the time the PCs spend in the slags, they will be attacked by a pack of fiendish dire rats. These were normal rats that, after several generation spent in the slags, acquired fiendish traits, possibly due to the powerful evil magic that had been used in the place.

What if...?

The retriever will almost certainly be able to scare the PCs off with its powerful eye rays, and with its fast healing capabilities it only has to run away for a few rounds to get back to full power. But should it be too damaged to return safely to the portal to the Abyss, Rothakon is *scrying* on the construct as it performs its mission, and has a *necklace of friends* linked to the retriever. He is reluctant to use the necklace, but will do so if it seems that the retriever can't make it.

After that, he will send the retriever through the portal, to activate the trap on the orb. Grazz't's pirates will steal it, and the adventure will be back on track.

Fiendish dire rats (20)		Al. Neutral Evil	Magical beast (Outlands)	CR: 1/3
Str: 10 (+0)	HP: 1d8+1 (5)	Speed: 12, climb 6		
Dex: 17 (+3)	AC: 15 (+1 size, +3 dex, +1 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +3 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 3 (-4)	Ref: +5 (+2 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +1	Grapple: -4	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +3 (+2 base, +1 con)	Melee: +1 base		
Cha: 4 (-3)	Will: +3 (+2 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +4 (+1 base, +3 dex)		
Attacks		Skills		
Bite +4 melee, damage 1d4+disease		Climb +11 (+8 racial, +3 dex*)		
Feats and special abilities		Hide +8 (+4 ranks, +3 dex, +1 size)		
Feats: Alertness, Weapon finesse		Listen +4 (+1 ranks, +2 feat, +1 wis)		
Low-light vision, Scent, Darkvision 18 meters, Resistance cold and fire 5, Spell resistance 6.		Move silently +4 (+1 ranks, +3 dex)		
Smite good (su): 1/day can make a normal melee attack to add +1 to damage to any good creature.		Spot +4 (+1 ranks, +2 feat, +1 wis)		
Disease (ex): filth fever, DC 12, incubation 1d3 days, damage 1d3 dex and 1d3 con.		Swim +11 (+8 racial, +3 dex*)		
		* Dire rats use their dexterity modifier for Climb and Swim checks		

The DC to track the creature here is 35. If a PC beats it, he can find the tracks again, leading up to a half-destroyed building that contains the portal the creature used.

The other way is to just wander around the slags. After a few hours of walking around, the PCs hear some noise from behind a heap of rubble. There, they find an ugly, filthy gnome (**Slett/male gnome rogue 5th/Outlands/chaotic neutral, Indep**); he is clothed with oily rags and carries on his shoulders an old backpack, way too big for the creature's size. He is named Slett, and he survives by scavenging the slags for any useful item he can find. It is a dangerous job, and Slett doesn't miss any occasion to mention it. He loves talking about his findings, his close encounters with the slags' creatures, and how experienced and tough you have to be in order to survive the slags. Slett has seen the retriever and is willing to tell the PCs where it went, in return for a few golds, or a bottle of good rum.

In any case, the PCs will eventually find the portal, but they will likely have to go back to gather more information and discover the portal key. The key is also the reason for which this particular portal sees very little use. To open it, a basher must have a claw, taken from a baatezu. Not any baatezu, either – the claws must come from a devil of cornugon status or higher. Assuming that they got to work as soon as they returned from Arborea, several hours will have passed by now. It is getting dark and these ruins and rubble all look the same; roll Orienteering/Survival for each PC in secret, versus DC 20. Those who succeed remember the right way out of the slags. Those who fail by 10 or more remember a *wrong* way. Tell the party which PCs seem to remember the way back, and let them decide who will be the guide. If no one succeeds at the roll, or if they follow a wrong direction, they get lost until dawn.

If they do get lost, use this as a first taste of being lost in an unfriendly place. Strange sounds during the night, unnatural shapes in the mist, and the occasional bone or skull amidst the ruins.

CAN TELL YA WHERE IT
WENT. CAN'T THINK WHY
YOU WOULD WANT TO
KNOW, THOUGH.
- PERPLEXED SLETT

What if...?

If the PCs somehow find the portal key without meeting Lianne, and don't feel inclined to look for her, the Gardener prompts them to do so. He says that a retriever doesn't go unnoticed, and that they'll probably find the guilty fairly fast. He says that they may gather some useful chant.

If they still want to get into the portal as soon as possible, let them. They'll have other chances to meet her.

If, instead, they *kill* the tiefling, they won't meet her later in the adventure. The implications of this fact will be explained in the following chapters.

During the night, they will be attacked by more fiendish dire rats, or by some other creature of the slags. If they decide to light a fire, or provide some other light source, make the sounds, shadow, and all the signs of a hostile environment increase; make them understand that the kind of dangerous creature that lives here isn't scared by fire – rather, it knows that food often lives near fires.

If the PCs go to the Hall of Information and check the portal registry for chant about this portal, they hit the blinds. It is little used, and while it is registered, there is no information to be found except for its location and a note stating that it leads to a lower planar location.

Another thing the PCs have to do is to locate the mystery poisoner. If they noticed Lianne back when they first met the Gardener, they'll probably figure out that they need to locate the eavesdropper. Naturally, there is practically no way to simply track her from the top of the Gardener's roof, and they probably don't have a description, either. However, if they ask about the retriever's run through the Hive, they can easily for a few coppers reconstruct the entire path. As it seems, the creature started from a semi-abandoned area not far from the slags.

It is a zone of old wooden huts and crumbling houses, built without plan or structure in a shapeless bunch. Only barmies and bubbers live here, and while each of them will be glad to provide the PCs with a colorful description of the Abyssal beast, none of them can tell for sure the exact point from which the creature left. The best the PCs can do is a Gather Information roll, DC 15; if they succeed, someone points them to a group of wooden huts where it seems that the retriever was first heard. As the PCs start to examine the huts, six more of Lianne's thugs, as well as those that didn't get killed or severely wounded during the first encounter with the PCs, take position near the tiefling's case. They hide in the shadows, pull out their blades, and wait for the PCs to get near. Lianne, instead, is here and hiding in the crate's remains in her shed.

Hive thug (6)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Human Rogue/Warrior 1 st /3 rd	CR: 3
Str: 15 (+2)	HP: 3d8+1d6 (17)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 14 (+2)	AC: 16 (+3 armor, +1 shield, +2 dex)	Armor: light		
Con: 11 (+0)	Initiative: +2 dex	% fail.: 20%	Check pen.: -2	
Int: 9 (-1)	Ref: +4 (+2 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +3	Grapple: +5	
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +3 base	Melee: +5 (+3 base, +2 str)		
Cha: 8 (-1)	Will: +0	Ranged: +5 (+3 base, +2 dex)		
Attacks			Skills	
Long sword +6 melee, damage 1d8+2, crit 19-20/x2, or			Bluff +3 (+4 ranks, -1 cha)	
Dagger +5 ranged 3 m, damage 1d4+2, crit 19-20/x2			Climb +4 (+4 ranks, +2 str, -2 armor)	
Feats and special abilities			Hide +6 (+6 ranks, +2 dex, -2 armor)	
Feats: Toughness, Power attack, Weapon focus: long sword.			Intimidate +5 (+6 ranks, -1 cha)	
Sneak attack +1d6, Trapfinding			Jump +4 (+4 ranks, +2 str, -2 armor)	
Equipment			Listen +4 ranks	
Long sword (1d8 damage, crit 19-20/x2)			Move silently +4 (+4 ranks, +2 dex, -2 armor)	
Studded leather armor (AB +3, max dex +5, check pen. -1, arc. fail. 15%)			Spot +4 ranks	
Light wooden shield (AB +1, check penalty -1, arcane failure 5%)				
Dagger (1d4 damage, crit 19-20/x2, range 3 m)				
15 stingers, 30 greens				

As the PCs check the huts near the one where Lianne kept the retriever, have each of them roll Spot against DC 26 (the thugs are taking 20 on Hide, and any person in heavier armor is standing 18 meters behind to avoid making noise). The PCs that win the check notice one or more of the hidden rogues, and the party may decide to attack. In this case, Lianne will stay hidden in her case. Maybe the thugs will take out the PCs, or maybe the heroes will just go away.

If the PCs look like they are about to enter Lianne's hut, the thugs attack. Again, they aren't very motivated and will run if seriously threatened, especially if a charismatic PC uses Intimidation on them when they are already wounded. After one round, the tiefling exits the wooden cabin and joins the fight. She is afraid of what the rest of her family will do if she lets the PCs escape (or, even worse, enter the Abyssal portal), but her primary motivation is survival. So, she will fight until she feels she can't win, and then offer to spill the dark in return for her life. She may tell the PCs that she had to poison the Gardener's plants so that he would send for the wooden sphere, and that then she had to activate the retriever, but she doesn't really know the complete plan. Only if the PCs threaten her, she will reveal that Rothakon the half-fiend hired her – which is still a half-truth – and that the portal in the slags leads to his fortress. If the PCs somehow probe her mind using magic or psionics, they can discover that Rothakon is her father, that a demon lord named Ithla-Sathlo is her grandfather, and that she suspects that even though she is following her father's orders, the full plan

was started by the tanar'ri lord. Lianne will try to convince the PCs to let her go in any way, and attempt to flee as soon as possible, leaving the PCs free to explore the cabin.

The cabin contains very little. There is a large crate, opened and broken, in the middle of the only room. The crate doesn't contain anything, though it seems that the inside is lightly scratched. There's a straw mattress on the floor and an oil lamp, as well as Lianne's backpack. It contains 400 gold coins, 100 silver coins, 50 copper coins, food for a couple of days, a potion of *cat's grace*, three potions of *cure light wounds*, and the empty bottle of the poison used on the Gardener's plants. There is also a bottle of a particular ointment that Lianne used to disguise her appearance. It's a clear paste that may cover her green streaks. Finally, there are a couple of what look like large claws, and they are tied to the backpack with a couple of strings. They are the baatezu claws, needed to open the portal in the slags.

Unusual parties

If the PCs lack a powerful healer, let them find less money and a few extra healing potions in the tiefling's backpack. They are going to need them.

Now, the PCs are ready to pass through the portal. When they do, the trap springs. Describe how the trip – despite being instantaneous – somehow feels like a bumpy ride, and how they come out very disoriented from the other side. The *real* adventure is about to begin.

Encounter Summary

<i>Encounter</i>	<i>EL</i>
Finding the Gardener	1
Defeating Lianne's thugs	7
Defeating the giant spiders (only one spider attacks)	4
Defeating the giant spiders (two spiders attack at the same time)	6
Defeating the giant spiders (four spiders attack at the same time)	8
Defeating the giant spiders (eight spiders attack at the same time)	10
Preventing the retriever from getting the Orb	11
Defeating the fiendish dire rats	5
Defeating Lianne and her thugs	9

CHAPTER II

In which the Heroes find themselves in a location most foul, and struggle to escape

Into a dark place

The portal leads to the 76th layer of the Abyss, within an obsidian fortress-prison named Castle Maldithar. This layer is always immersed in an eternal, darkest night. There is a lord of the layer, a blood who goes by the name Hayazeikanatzeras, but he lives very far from Maldithar and only concerns himself with the creatures of darkness (see below), so he leaves the fortress and its inhabitants alone. He *will* gladly interfere with divinations, as is the prerogative of all tanar'ri lords, though. No natural lights exist within the entire layer, and any light, natural or magical, has its light radius halved. The only exception is the gigantic lightning storms which occasionally envelop the entire layer, pouring down rain and lightning bolts with the same intensity. Metal armor draws the lightning strikes, though some kind of protection is needed because of the intensity and force of the rain and hail. Unsurprisingly, hide armor is popular among the troops here; the leaders, though, enjoy ironwood armors created by the dark druids of Infestant. Finally, there is a reason for which this layer was chosen as a prison location. Any kind of teleportation on this layer always fails, dealing 6d10 damage to the characters that were attempting it, and spells that enable passing through walls always seem to work but cease working as the character is inside a solid object. Unless the spell specifically mentions what happens in this case, the character must make a Fortitude save, DC 16. If he passes it, he takes 6d10 damage and is shunted back to where he came from. If he fails, he is embedded into the rock and killed.

As usual in the Abyss, if the environment doesn't kill you, the natives will do their best to complete the job. This place has bred its own kind of malice. The creatures that prowl the plane may be born from the nightmares of primes; they vaguely resemble prime material predators, but they are creatures of darkness, never quite in sight and constantly chipping at a body's nerves. They follow you in pitch black or dart from shadow to shadow, unnerving you, making just enough noise to let you know that they are there without pinpointing *where*. When they strike, it's as if a bolt of sharp, dark lightning has clawed you before returning to the black corners. When met in a lit place, these creatures resemble their prime material counterparts, except that they are invariably black in skin and fur, and move with such deadly grace that viewers feel hopelessly goofy by comparison.

<p>Creature of Darkness is an inherited template that can be added to any carnivore animal. A creature of darkness uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.</p> <p>Size and type: the creature's type changes to magical beast (augmented animal).</p> <p>Speed: increase by 6.</p> <p>Special attacks: a creature of darkness can perform sneak attacks as a rogue if it is small-sized or larger, adding +2d6 damage.</p> <p>Special qualities: a creature of darkness gains blindsight with a range of 36 mt.</p> <p>Abilities: a creature of darkness' Dexterity increases by +4, and its Intelligence increases to 3.</p> <p>Skills: the creature gains a +8 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks.</p> <p>Feats: the creature gains Mobility as a bonus feat.</p> <p>Challenge rating: as base creature +1.</p> <p>Alignment: always chaotic evil.</p>
--

Castle Maldithar was built with the purposes of securing the portal the PCs have just used, and to serve as a prison for captured Blood War soldiers. It is a wide, low, brooding building, with an extensive subterranean section. A small affluent of the Styx flows through the fortress. The river in this point isn't yet a part of the Styx; its water is dirty but drinkable. The underground complex comprises the upper prison, patrolled and maintained by the demon lord's mercenaries, and the lower prison. The lower prison is abandoned, and has become a place of terror; it is infested by fiendish creatures and the only "friendly" beings there are a bunch of prisoners, left to rot and for-

ALL RIGHT. LET'S JUST GET IN
AND GET OUT, RIGHT BOYS?
- OUR HEROES, GUILTY OF
OPTIMISM

gotten. But the portal never saw much use after the battle which left the Slags in Sigil the way they are now, and the vast cell complex, too, soon fell into abandon. Before Ithla-Sathlo sent his son Rothakon with some troops to conquer the fortress, the building was controlled by a small group of tanar'ri, tasked with keeping what few prisoners it holds. All the doors in the fortress are wide enough for a Large creature to pass through, though it'll have to crouch.

The entire Maldithar is fitted with an alarm system. Several points around the fortress contain a rope that can be pulled to sound a deafening shriek throughout the area. The shriek alerts everyone within 200 meters on the same floor, and deafens non-tanar'ri for 2d4 minutes.

The heroes get out of the swirling mist of the portal, and find themselves in a dark room (room number XX on the second floor of the palace map – see Chapter IV). There are no light sources; PCs without darkvision can't see anything. The room is an approximately square chamber, and the PCs are in the middle of it. Two steel grates divide the room in three rectangular sections, with the heroes in the middle of it. They are separated from the single exit by one of the grates. Each PC must roll a Fortitude save, DC 21, or be stunned for 1d4 rounds – a temporary side effect of the curse they just got without knowing. From now on, the PCs have a very dim abjuration aura on them; it is so faint that it can't be detected as long as the same person has other auras on him or her. The actual, way more powerful, aura of the curse is masked.

Call for initiative! The PCs are just in, at least a few of them are probably stunned, and the rest are surprised. There are several guards and a few demons in this room, outside the metal bars, and they've seen the portal activate right before the PCs got in, so they aren't surprised. The guards have orders to capture anyone that gets through the portal alive, and are armed with blowguns to this end. The demons will ready actions to counterspell using *dispel magic*, or attack physically if the PCs somehow get out of the grates. One of the guards will run out of the room to sound the alarm immediately.

The characters now cannot get out of the Abyss in any way. Attempts to use a portal deal 3d10 damage as reality warps around the character, while other methods of escape simply fail. The curse cannot be dispelled; attempts to do so deal damage instead. *Dispel magic* deals 3d10 damage. *Greater dispelling* or *limited wish* deals 10d10. *Disjunction* or *wish* deals 40d10 damage.

What if...?

If the PCs escape the guards and tanar'ri here, they still have to hide from the rest of the fortress defenders. With the alarm sounding, this will not be easy.

The palace map is in Chapter IV; currently, the place isn't in such a bad shape, but mercenaries and demons are almost everywhere.

If, by skill or luck, they manage to get in some safe place within the castle, the alarm will be ceased after six hours, though the guards will stay sharp for the intruders.

If they get out of the fortress, they may be able to meet the incoming baatezu forces, which haven't managed to find another way into the castle.

Mercenary guards (5)		Al. Neutral Evil	Human Fighter 5 th (Outlands)	CR: 5
Str: 13 (+1)	HP: 5d10+8 (32)	Speed: 6	Armor: medium	
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 14 (+4 armor)	% fail.: 25%	Check pen.: -4	
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +0	BAB: +5	Grapple: +6	
Int: 10 (+0)	Ref: +2 (+1 base, +1 dex)	Melee: +6 (+5 base, +1 str)	Ranged: +5 base	
Wis: 11 (+0)	For: +5 (+4 base, +1 con)			
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: +1 base			
Attacks			Skills	
Masterwork blowgun, +6 range 6m, damage poison, or			Climb +5 (+8 ranks, +1 strength, -4 armor)	
<i>Cold iron longsword</i> +1, +8 melee, damage 1d8+2, crit 19-20/x2			Jump +5 (+8 ranks, +1 strength, -4 armor)	
Feats and special abilities			Ride +8 ranks	
Feats: Weapon focus: longsword, Power attack, Quick draw, Toughness, Exotic weapon proficiency: blowgun.				
Equipment				
Scale mail (AB +4, max dex +3, check penalty -4, arcane failure 25%)				
Heavy steel shield (AB +2, check penalty -2, arcane failure 15%) (not equipped)				
<i>Cold iron longsword</i> +1 (damage 1d8+1, crit 19-20/x2) (not equipped) (faint evocation, CL 3)				
Masterwork blowgun (damage poison)				
10 poisoned darts (DC 19, primary and secondary damage 1d6 dexterity)				

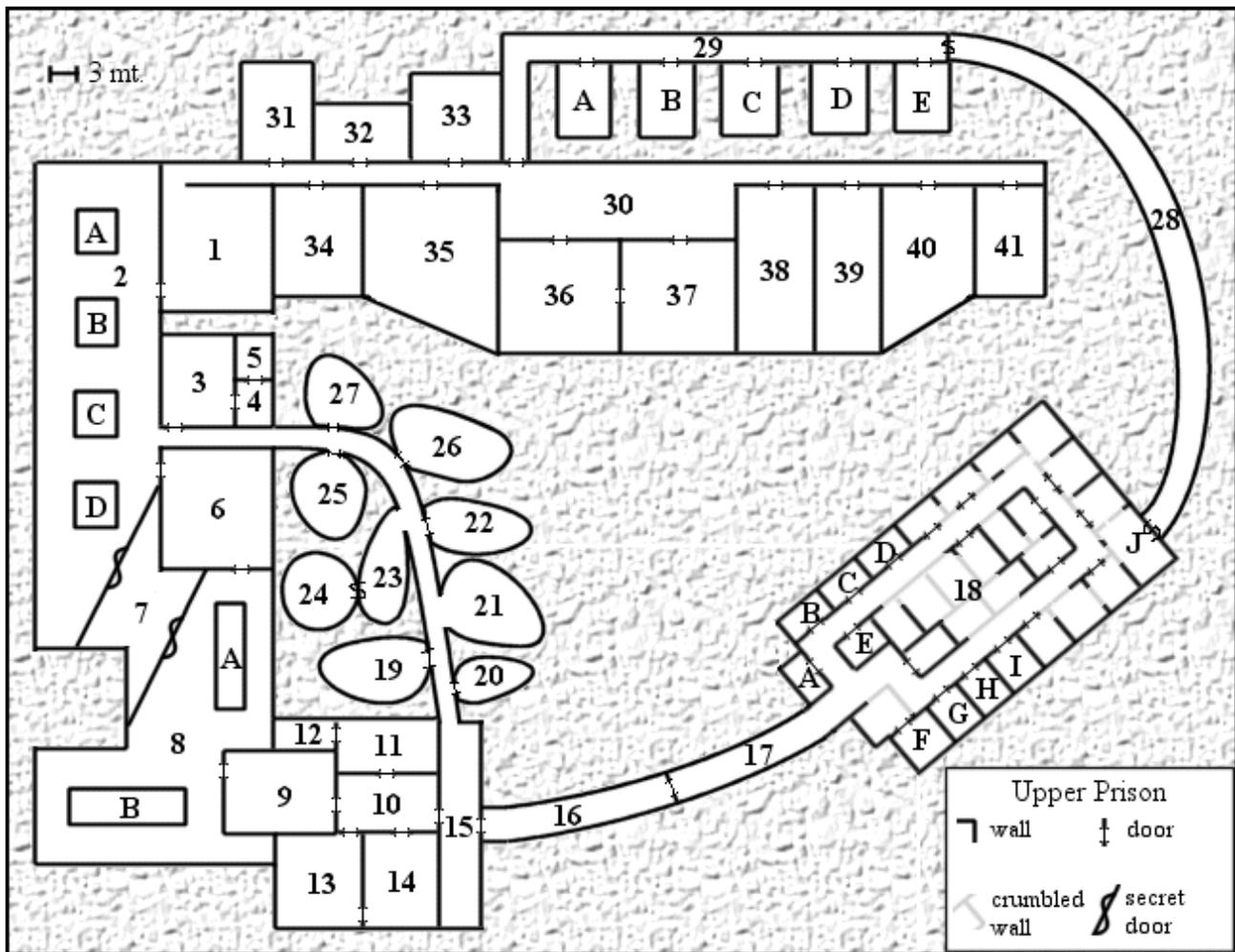
Mercenary guards (5)		Al. Neutral Evil	Tiefling Fighter 5 th (Outlands)	CR: 5
Str: 10 (+0)	HP: 2d10+3d6+8 (29)	Speed: 6	Armor: medium	
Dex: 14 (+2)	AC: 15 (+3 armor, +2 dex)	% fail.: 20%	Check pen.: -3	
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +2 dex	BAB: +5	Grapple: +5	
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +3 (+1 base, +2 dex)	Melee: +5 base	Ranged: +7 (+5 base, +2 dex)	
Wis: 11 (+0)	For: +5 (+4 base, +1 con)			
Cha: 8 (-1)	Will: +1 base			
Attacks		Skills		
Masterwork blowgun, +8 range 6m (+9 within 9m), damage poison, or		Bluff +1 (-1 cha, +2 racial)		
Masterwork blowgun, +6/+6 range 6m (+7/+7 within 9m), damage poison, or		Climb +3 (+6 ranks, -3 armor)		
Cold iron shortsword, +6 melee, damage 1d6+1, crit 19-20/x2, or		Hide +2 (+3 dex, +2 racial, -3 armor)		
<i>Shortbow +1</i> , +9 range 18m (+10 within 9m), damage 1d4+1, crit 20/x3		Jump +3 (+6 ranks, -3 armor)		
Feats and special abilities		Ride +7 (+4 ranks, +3 dex)		
Feats: Weapon focus: shortbow, Point blank shot, Rapid shot, Toughness, Exotic weapon proficiency: blowgun.				
Darkvision 18m; cold, fire and electricity resistance 5, <i>darkness</i> 1/day.				
Equipment				
Hide armor (AB +3, max dex +4, check penalty -3, arcane failure 20%)				
Cold iron shortsword (damage 1d6, crit 19-20/x2)				
<i>Shortbow +1</i> (damage 1d4+1, crit 20/x3) (faint evocation, CL 3)				
20 arrows				
Masterwork blowgun (damage poison)				
10 poisoned darts (DC 19, primary and secondary damage 1d6 dexterity)				

Babau (5)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 6
Str: 21 (+5)	HP: 7d8+35 (66)	Speed: 9	Armor: none	
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 19 (+1 dex, +8 natural)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Con: 20 (+5)	Initiative: +1 dex	BAB: +7	Grapple: +12	
Int: 14 (+2)	Ref: +6 (+5 base, +1 dex)	Melee: +12 (+7 base, +5 strength)	Ranged: +8 (+7 base, +1 dexterity)	
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +10 (+5 base, +5 con)			
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +6 (+5 base, +1 wis)			
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +12 melee, damage 1d6+5, and		Climb +15 (+10 ranks, +5 str)		
Bite +10 melee, damage 1d6+2		Disable Device +12 (+10 ranks, +2 int)		
Feats and special abilities		Disguise +13 (+10 ranks, +3 cha)		
Feats: Cleave, Multiattack, Power attack		Escape Artist +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Hide +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Sneak attack +2d6, damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 14, telepathy within 30 mt.		Listen +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); caster level 7 th .		Move Silently +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Protective slime (any weapon or character touching the babau takes 1d8 damage, ignoring hardness; magic weapon and characters may roll a Reflex save, DC 18, to avoid)		Open Lock +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
Summon 1 babau 1/day with 40% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		Search +20 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +2 int)		
		Sleight of Hand +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
		Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*)		
		Use Rope +3 (+1 dex, +2 synergy**)		
		* when following tracks		
		** when binding someone		

The metal grates have locks, and both of them are locked at the moment. It is almost impossible to fight with melee weapons through the grate (-10 penalty to hit).

When all PCs are down, dead or unconscious, they are dragged to room **29/A** and **29/B** in the upper prison. All their belongings are removed and placed in room **5**; all they have when they wake up is a filthy loincloth.

The Upper Prison



The upper prison is located about 5 meters below the ground. The ceiling and outer walls are reinforced with metal bars; they are support for the underground structure as well as occasional torture implement. They also further prevent the prisoners from attempting the use of various spells to escape. The rest of the walls, as well as the floor, are generally paved with granite blocks. The prison is in a dismal state; dust covers everything that isn't in use, the door hinges haven't been oiled in decades, and the lighting is poor in most locations (only the western area has wall torches; the rest of the floor is dark and the guards without darkvision have to carry torches). The cell doors are usually composed of steel bars, and the Strength DC to break them is 28. There's an eerie silence, with the exception of the guards' heavy steps on the floor. The noise seems to be always there, even in the most remote parts of the complex.

There are several areas in the upper prison. The area in the northern part of the map comprises several large cells, including some magically protected ones. The western area has a few offices, and some small, square cages, where the inmates are deprived of any kind of privacy and are exposed for show. This area was being expanded, but the works were never completed; there are some excavated caves (hastily plated with the usual metal bars) that are currently used as warehouses. Finally, there is another cellblock in the southeastern part of the map. It used to have many small isolation cells, though many of the cell walls were destroyed during a particularly flashy escape attempt some decades ago. They were never repaired, and only a fraction of the cells are in use now.

The upper prison is carefully patrolled by a large number of Ithla-Sathlo's mercenaries. Being an invasion force,

ILL? YOUR TURN TO
PATROL THE ISOLATION
CELLS. OK? ...ILL?
- MERC LEADER, STILL
GETTING THE HANG OF
"VOLUNTEERING"

they are a lot more numerous than what would be sufficient to control the prison, especially considering the low number of actual prisoners. Still, they don't really care about the captives, and their surveillance is sloppy at best. Also, they are reluctant to enter the lower prison, as well as the isolation cellblock, and won't do so unless ordered by a tanar'ri. Every ten minutes, there is a 10% chance that a patrol enters the room the PCs are currently in (or passes in front of it and looks through the door). The chance is 10% per hour within the caves (rooms 19 through 27), and patrols just won't go into room 18 unless they are sure that prisoners have escaped there. The patrol teams are composed of 3 mercenaries, but after the PCs' escape is noticed, they are reinforced to 7 mercenaries and a babau tanar'ri.

Patrol team merc, human		Al. Neutral Evil	Human Fighter 3 rd (Outlands)	CR: 3
Str: 13 (+1)	HP: 3d10+6 (22)	Speed: 6	Armor: medium	
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 14 (+3 armor, +1 shield)	% fail.: 25%	Check pen.: -4	
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +0	BAB: +3	Grapple: +4	
Int: 10 (+0)	Ref: +1 base	Melee: +4 (+3 base, +1 str)	Ranged: +3 base	
Wis: 11 (+0)	For: +5 (+4 base, +1 con)			
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: +1 base			
Attacks			Skills	
Shortbow, +4 range 6m, damage poison, or			Climb +3 (+6 ranks, +1 strength, -4 armor)	
Longsword, +5 melee, damage 1d8+1, crit 19-20/x2, or			Jump +3 (+6 ranks, +1 strength, -4 armor)	
Battleaxe, +5 melee, damage 1d8+1, crit 20/x3, or			Ride +6 ranks	
Warhammer, +5 melee, damage 1d8+1, crit 20/x3, or				
Scimitar, +5 melee, damage 1d6+1, crit 18-20/x2				
Feats and special abilities				
Feats: Weapon focus: <their melee weapon>, Power attack, Toughness, Weapon focus: shortbow.				
Equipment				
Hide armor (AB +3, max dex +4, check penalty -3, arcane failure 20%)				
Light steel shield (AB +1, check penalty -1, arcane failure 5%)				
Each patrol member has one of the following weapons: longsword, battleaxe, warhammer, scimitar. There is a 10% chance for this weapon to be magical, with a +1 enhancement bonus. 50% of the weapons are made in cold iron.				

Patrol team merc, tiefling		Al. Chaotic Evil	Tiefling Fighter 3 rd (Outlands or Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: 13 (+1)	HP: 3d10+6 (22)	Speed: 6	Armor: medium	
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 15 (+3 armor, +1 shield, +1 dex)	% fail.: 25%	Check pen.: -4	
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +1 dex	BAB: +3	Grapple: +4	
Int: 12 (+1)	Ref: +2 (+1 base, +1 dex)	Melee: +4 (+3 base, +1 str)	Ranged: +4 (+3 base, +1 dex)	
Wis: 11 (+0)	For: +5 (+4 base, +1 con)			
Cha: 9 (-1)	Will: +1 base			
Attacks			Skills	
Shortbow, +5 range 6m, damage poison, or			Bluff +1 (-1 cha, +2 racial)	
Longsword, +5 melee, damage 1d8+1, crit 19-20/x2, or			Climb +3 (+6 ranks, +1 strength, -4 armor)	
Battleaxe, +5 melee, damage 1d8+1, crit 20/x3, or			Jump +3 (+6 ranks, +1 strength, -4 armor)	
Warhammer, +5 melee, damage 1d8+1, crit 20/x3, or			Hide -1 (+1 dex, +2 racial, -4 armor)	
Scimitar, +5 melee, damage 1d6+1, crit 18-20/x2			Ride +7 (+6 ranks, +1 dex)	
Feats and special abilities				
Feats: Weapon focus: <their melee weapon>, Power attack, Toughness, Weapon focus: shortbow.				
Darkvision 18m; cold, fire and electricity resistance 5, <i>darkness</i> 1/day.				
Equipment				
Hide armor (AB +3, max dex +4, check penalty -3, arcane failure 20%)				
Light steel shield (AB +1, check penalty -1, arcane failure 5%)				
Each patrol member has one of the following weapons: longsword, battleaxe, warhammer, scimitar. There is a 10% chance for this weapon to be magical, with a +1 enhancement bonus. 50% of the weapons are made in cold iron.				

There are still some captives within the upper prison. Should the PCs free them, you may decide to have them follow the PCs around, and/or get them killed in some horrible way.

1. This is the entrance hall to the Maldithar underground, and it is extremely well protected. The stairs that climb upwards to the fortress are located in the southeastern corner of the room; they are an iron spiral staircase, designed to impede fighting from below. Anyone who is fighting on the staircase suffers a -2 penalty to hit foes that are higher on the steps. A locked steel grate blocks the access to this staircase. The wall in the northern area is mostly composed of a huge glass pane. The glass has been through a special tempering process, which gives it hardness 5 and 10 hit points. When it breaks, the glass shards will deal 1d4 damage to everyone within 1.5 meters from the glass.

The room is manned at all times by a dozen mercenaries and a few bulezau tanar'ri – fearsome fiends which look like gaunt, sickly minotaurs; they can and will tear a sod's arms from their sockets if angered, but they aren't exactly smart. The tiefling is a wizard and has a permanent detect magic spell on him. He's a nervous and paranoid guy – he will concentrate to detect magic at the slightest sound or movement. The lock on the staircase grate is probably the best one in the fortress; the DC to pick it is 35. There's a rope for the alarm in the middle of the room, a couple of tables, and a small safe near the door. The safe contains the key to the staircase and a *scroll of telekinesis*. The combination is only known to the tanar'ri in this room.

Tiefling wizard		Al. Chaotic Evil	Tiefling Wizard 9 th (Abyss)	CR: 9
Str: 9 (-1)	HP: 9d4+9 (31)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 14 (+2)	AC: 17 (+2 dex, +5 armor)	Armor: none		
Con: 13 (+1)	Initiative: +2 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 16 (+3)	Ref: +5 (+3 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +4	Grapple: +3	
Wis: 9 (-1)	For: +4 (+3 base, +1 con)	Melee: +3 (+4 base, -1 str)		
Cha: 7 (-2)	Will: +5 (+6 base, -1 wis)	Ranged: +6 (+4 base, +2 dex)		
Attacks			Skills	
Unarmed attack, +3 melee, damage 1d3-1 non-lethal			Concentration +17 (+12 ranks, +1 con, +4 combat casting*)	
Feats and special abilities			Craft (blacksmith) +7 (+4 ranks, +3 int)	
Feats: Brew potion, Combat casting, Empower spell, Spell focus: evocation, Spell penetration, Scribe scroll			Knowledge (Gray Waste) +14 (+5 ranks, +6 synergy, +3 int)	
Darkvision 18m; cold, fire and electricity resistance 5, <i>darkness</i> 1/day.			Knowledge (Pandemonium) +14 (+5 ranks, +6 synergy, +3 int)	
Wizard spells/day: 4/5/5/4/2/1 (DC 13+spell level, +1 evocation)			Knowledge (Abyss) +14 (+5 ranks, +6 synergy, +3 int)	
Equipment			Knowledge (Limbo) +14 (+5 ranks, +6 synergy, +3 int)	
<i>Bracers of armor</i> +5 (moderate conjuration, CL 10)			Knowledge (Arcana) +15 (+12 ranks, +3 int)	
<i>Pearl of power</i> (4 th level spell) (moderate transmutation, CL 7)			Spellcraft +17 (+12 ranks, +3 int, +2 synergy)	
Bag of spell components, including 2 black pearls worth 100 gold each.				
Spellbook (0 th level: all core; 1 st level: Protection from evil, Protection from good, Shield, Comprehend languages, Identify, Magic missile, Expeditious retreat; 2 nd level: See invisibility, Glitterdust, Invisibility, Arcane lock; 3 rd level: Fireball, Lightning bolt, Hold person, Slow; 4 th level: Dimensional anchor, Crushing despair, Ice storm, Dimension door; 5 th level: Permanency, Mirage arcana)			* when casting on the defensive	

Prepared spells:

0th level: Detect magic, Detect magic, Detect magic, Prestidigitation

1st level: Comprehend languages, Magic missile, Magic missile, Expeditious retreat, Identify

2nd level: See invisibility, See invisibility, Glitterdust, Glitterdust, Arcane lock

3rd level: Hold person, Hold person, Slow, Slow

4th level: Dimensional anchor, Dimension door

5th level: *Empowered* Lightning Bolt

Human elite mercenaries (11)		Al. Neutral Evil	Human Fighter 6 th (Outlands)	CR: 6
Str: 15 (+2)	HP: 6d10+15 (48)	Speed: 6		
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 21 (+8 armor, +3 shield)	Armor: heavy		
Con: 14 (+2)	Initiative: +4 improved initiative	% fail.: 50%	Check pen.: -4	
Int: 10 (+0)	Ref: +2 base	BAB: +6/+1	Grapple: +8	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +7 (+5 base, +2 con)	Melee: +8/+3 (+6 base, +2 str)		
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: +5 (+2 base, +1 wis, +2 iron will)	Ranged: +6/+1 base		
<u>Attacks</u>			<u>Skills</u>	
Cold iron two handed sword +1, +10/+5 melee, damage 2d6+6, crit 19-20/x2			Climb +7 (+9 ranks, +2 strength, -4 armor)	
<u>Feats and special abilities</u>			Jump +7 (+9 ranks, +2 strength, -4 armor)	
Feats: Weapon focus: two handed sword, Weapon specialization: two handed sword, Power attack, Toughness, Improved initiative, Quick draw, Cleave, Iron will			Ride +9 ranks	
<u>Equipment</u>				
Banded mail +2 (AB +8, max dex +1, check penalty -5, arcane failure 35%) (moderate abjuration, CL 6)				
Heavy steel shield +1 (AB +3, check penalty -1, arcane failure 15%) (faint abjuration, CL 3)				
Cold iron two handed sword +1 (damage 2d6+1, crit 19-20/x2) (faint evocation, CL 3)				
2 potions of cure light wounds (cures 1d8+1) (faint conjuration, CL 1)				

Bulezau (3)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 6
Str: 22 (+6)	HP: 7d8+21 (52)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 17 (+3)	AC: 23 (-1 size, +3 dex, +11 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 16 (+3)	Initiative: +3 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 7 (-2)	Ref: +8 (+5 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +7	Grapple: +17	
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +8 (+5 base, +3 con)	Melee: +12 (+7 base, +6 strength, -1 size)		
Cha: 11 (+0)	Will: +5 base	Ranged: +9 (+7 base, +3 dexterity, -1 size)		
<u>Attacks</u>			<u>Skills</u>	
Greataxe +12/+7 melee reach 3m, damage 3d6+9, crit 20/x3, or 2 claws, +12 melee reach 3m, damage 1d4+6, and Head butt +10 melee reach 3m, damage 2d8+3, and Tail slap +10 melee reach 3m, damage 1d3+3			Climb +16 (+10 ranks, +6 str)	
<u>Feats and special abilities</u>			Jump +16 (+10 ranks, +6 str)	
Feats: Improved bull rush, Multiattack, Power attack			Listen +10 ranks	
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.			Spot +10 ranks	
Damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 14.			Survival +10 ranks	
Awesome blow with the head butt, as the feat.			Swim +16 (+10 ranks, +6 str)	
Rage: 25% chance per round of combat, 75% in rounds during which it was damaged but didn't hit a foe. Rage lasts until all opponents are dead or until 5 rounds pass without combat; it otherwise works as a barbarian's rage.				
Spell-like abilities: at will - <i>cause fear</i> , <i>command</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>wall of fog</i> ; 1/day - <i>shout</i> . Caster level 7 th .				
Summon 1-3 rutterkin (40%) or 3-12 dretches (60%) babau 1/day with 25% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.				
<u>Equipment</u>				
Greataxe, Large size (damage 3d6, crit x3)				

2. This room is basically a wide hallway, which contains four large steel cages. A bunch of five mercenaries, led by a babau tanar'ri, walks up and down the hallway (stats are the same as other patrol team mercenaries).

You step into a dark room, or maybe a cave. It is immersed in darkness, and the walls must be farther apart than what you can see. You can see a group of people led by a fiend patrolling the area at least twenty meters from where you are. One of them is carrying a torch; the light reflects off something metallic in the middle of the room, maybe cages or grates.

The cages marked **A**, **B**, and **D** are empty (except for a few skeletons). Cage **C**, instead, contains a prisoner. He's an emaciated, weakened human named Jillon (Jillon/male human fighter 3rd/Outlands/neutral evil), who was imprisoned during the assault on the fortress. The captors haven't fed him, and every time the patrol walks by his cage they rattle the steel bars with their weap-

ons, preventing him from sleeping. The reasons for his imprisonment are unclear – he was a member of the mercenaries, but on a whim Rothakon claimed that he acted cowardly during the assault, and threw him in jail.

A corridor on the east side leads into an excavated area. On the north side of this corridor, an eroded plaque reads “jailmaster”.

The door just south of the corridor is half-rotten, and not even locked. Near the door, one of the granite stones on the wall can be pushed to activate the flaming oil in room 6. Noticing the device takes a Search check, DC 28.

The southeastern wall isn’t an outer wall, and thus doesn’t have the iron bars. It is also very thin. The DC to notice this with a Search check is 15. A Strength check, DC 21, or any other powerful hit, will cause the wall to fall into this room. It will fall on the cage marked **D**, without damaging it significantly, and then crumble, causing 3d6 damage to any character within 4.5 meters from the wall, unless they save on Reflex versus DC 17. The noise will likely be noticed by anyone in this hallway as well as anyone in room 6.

3. There’s a black granite desk in this room, and several stone benches, as well as a barrel of water. The hall serves as the jailmaster’s office. It is occupied by a tanar’ri, who guards the prisoners’ equipment and is pretty bored. He is just wishing for some intruder to get in.

Babau		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 6
Str: 21 (+5)	HP: 7d8+35 (66)	Speed: 9		Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 19 (+1 dex, +8 natural)	BAB: +7 Grapple: +12		
Con: 20 (+5)	Initiative: +1 dex	Melee: +12 (+7 base, +5 strength)		Ranged: +8 (+7 base, +1 dexterity)
Int: 14 (+2)	Ref: +6 (+5 base, +1 dex)	BAB: +7 Grapple: +12		
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +10 (+5 base, +5 con)	Melee: +12 (+7 base, +5 strength)		Ranged: +8 (+7 base, +1 dexterity)
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +6 (+5 base, +1 wis)	Melee: +12 (+7 base, +5 strength)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +12 melee, damage 1d6+5, and Bite +10 melee, damage 1d6+2		Climb +15 (+10 ranks, +5 str)		
Feats and special abilities		Disable Device +12 (+10 ranks, +2 int)		
Feats: Cleave, Multiattack, Power attack		Disguise +13 (+10 ranks, +3 cha)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Escape Artist +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
Sneak attack +2d6, damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 14, telepathy within 30 mt.		Hide +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>greater teleport</i> ; caster level 7 th .		Listen +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis)		
Protective slime (su): any weapon or character touching the babau takes 1d8 damage, ignoring hardness; magic weapon and characters may roll a Reflex save, DC 18, to avoid.		Move Silently +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Summon 1 babau 1/day with 40% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		Open Lock +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
		Search +20 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +2 int)		
		Sleight of Hand +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
		Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*)		
		Use Rope +3 (+1 dex, +2 synergy**)		
		* when following tracks		
		** when binding someone		

The door on the right is locked, and he has the key to open it, as well as the key to open the door to room 5, and the key to the northern door in room 10. The door is trapped as well; the DC to find the trap is 25, and the DC to disable it is 28. The granite desk has a single drawer, which contains a *portion of neutralize poison* (moderate conjuration, CL 7) and 32 silver pieces. The room has a rope for the alarm, but the system is broken in this point, and pulling it will be useless. The babau doesn’t know this, though.

4. This room is empty. However, if the characters entered by picking the lock and didn’t check for traps, a nasty trap activates as soon as someone steps into the room (Search DC 21, Disable Device DC 21). Roll Listen versus DC 15. Those who succeed hear a hissing sound (and have time to hold their breath). Toxic gas fills the room – it is a poison, DC 19, primary damage 1d6 constitution damage, secondary damage 1 permanent constitution drain. Characters can hold their breath, but it’s useless unless they did it quickly enough. As if it wasn’t enough, both doors lock again, and any characters caught inside are exposed to the poison every round until they can get out. If they open

the door to room 5, the gas disperses into both rooms; the heroes have one round before it fills both of them. If they open the door to room 4, the gas gets out – everyone in room 4 is affected for one round, then the poison disperses.

5. This room contains several shelves, with the prisoners' equipment. Small items are kept in a safe, but it is currently unlocked. The PCs' stuff is here, as well as a bunch of assorted clothes, a *portion of invisibility* (faint illusion, CL 3), a scroll of *plane shift* (moderate conjuration, CL 9), and a *portable hole* (moderate conjuration, CL 12). There is also a gold and silver ring. A Spot or Search check, DC 15, reveals that the ring bears the symbol of Baator on the inside. It also radiates a moderate divination aura.

6. A “safety” room used to separate two prison areas. The most notable feature of this room isn't very notable at all – it is a hidden device, installed just above the ceiling, which can be activated from the outside to drop flaming oil in the entire room. The trap only works once, but it deals 5d6 damage to anyone who is within the room and sets them on fire, dealing another 5d6 damage during the following round. Instead of an alarm rope, there's a steel rod hanging from the ceiling here. The purpose is the same.

7. This is nothing more than an empty and forgotten area. A thick layer of dust covers the ground. A careful search reveals several old and broken crossbow bolts near one of the walls. If the PCs beat DC 19 in their Search check, they will find 5 whole bolts. They are +1 *shocking burst*, too – remains from an ancient battle (moderate evocation, CL 10).

8. Like room 2, this large hallway contains large cages. There's a low noise of running water in the air. What happened in these cells is a prime example of the inhuman cruelty of the Abyss. There's smell of corpse around this room, and no guards.

The cage marked A is right under the fortress' huge water basin.

The water filters through cracks in the ceiling, and falls into the cage as hundreds of tiny stream and constant droppings. The cage's floor is composed of rusted metal grates, which let the water fall further into the floor to some unknown depth. There are some still-living prisoners in the cage – two human males and an elven female. All of them wear nothing more than a loincloth.

One of the humans is a brown-haired man; he is thin and looks weakened. He is crouching with his head between his legs, crying, sighing and trembling. The second human is a muscular man, seemingly the only one who is vaguely healthy. He's standing and holding the cage bars, loudly asking for food. The elven woman is pale and skinny, lying on the floor, and apparently unconscious.

They are adventurers, captured about four months ago by the tanar'ri. The rest of their group died; there are seven corpses in the cage. The running water dampens the smell – and helps driving the captives insane. The lower prison lake is beneath this area.

The elf (Tilana/female elf wizard 7th/Arborea/chaotic good), whose name is Tilana, is a pale and skinny remain of a woman. She is unconscious and dying, but even if somehow awakened, she just stares into the void. The first human, named Trevoc, is – was – a paladin. He lost his powers because of what he was forced to do. He occasionally tends to the elf, forcing her to drink some water and trying to wake her up. Whenever he tries to talk to her, or to talk about their situation, he breaks into tears. The second human, a fighter named Briwan, seems to be the only mostly sane one. Fact is, that's far from the truth. The demons that owned the fortress until some weeks ago refused to feed the ten prisoners until six of them were dead and the rest were starving. The demons told the survivors that they would be given food if they raped the elf. The party refused; after some days, one of them managed to commit suicide by taunting the fiends until they got angry and killed him. After some more time, Briwan broke and did what the tanar'ri wanted. Trevoc didn't attempt to stop him, and lost his paladin powers. Briwan was fed and shared his food with the others, though the shocked Tilana initially refused. It went one for more and more days, and Tilana eventually closed her mind completely and had to be fed by force. One day, Briwan coldly told Trevoc that he

could no longer share the food he got with him, because it was barely enough to feed him and Tilana. With more prodding by the demons, Trevoc fell as well.

Trevoc		Al. Chaotic Evil	Human Ex-Paladin 9 th (Elysium)	CR: 7
Str: 12 (+1)	HP: 9d10+9 (58)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 8 (-1)	AC: 10	Armor: none		
Con: 13 (+1)	Initiative: +0	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +2 (+3 base, -1 dex)	BAB: +9	Grapple: +10	
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +7 (+6 base, +1 con)	Melee: +10 (+9 base, +1 str)		
Cha: 15 (+2)	Will: +4 (+3 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +8 (+9 base, -1 dex)		
Attacks			Skills	
Unarmed attack, +10/+5 melee, damage 1d3+1 non-lethal			Concentration +17 (+12 ranks, +1 con, +4 combat casting*)	
Feats and special abilities			Diplomacy +9 (+12 ranks, +2 cha)	
Feats: Combat casting, Weapon focus: longsword, Power attack, Cleave, Improved critical: longsword.			Knowledge (religion) +5 ranks	
38 non-lethal damage due to hunger			Ride +11 (+12 ranks, -1 dex)	
Fatigued due to hunger (currently has -2 Strength and Dexterity; can't run or charge)			* when casting on the defensive	
Equipment				
Filthy loincloth				

Briwan		Al. Chaotic Evil	Human Fighter 9 th (Ysgard)	CR: 9
Str: 16 (+3)	HP: 9d10+18 (67)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 10	Armor: none		
Con: 15 (+2)	Initiative: +4 improved initiative	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 13 (+1)	Ref: +5 (+3 base, +2 light. ref.)	BAB: +9	Grapple: +12	
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +8 (+6 base, +2 con)	Melee: +12 (+9 base, +3 str)		
Cha: 11 (+0)	Will: +3 base	Ranged: +9 base		
Attacks			Skills	
Unarmed attack, +12/+7 melee, damage 1d3+3 non-lethal			Climb +15 (+12 ranks, +3 str)	
Feats and special abilities			Jump +15 (+12 ranks, +3 str)	
Feats: Blind-fight, Cleave, Combat expertise, Improved critical: battleaxe, Improved disarm, Improved initiative, Lightning reflexes, Power attack, Weapon focus: battleaxe, Weapon specialization: battleaxe.			Ride +12 ranks	
5 non-lethal damage due to hunger			Swim +15 (+12 ranks, +3 str)	
Fatigued due to hunger (currently has -2 Strength and Dexterity; can't run or charge)				
Equipment				
Filthy loincloth				

Even though those tanar'ri were ousted from their prison, they succeeded in irredeemably corrupting Briwan and Trevoc, dooming their souls to the Abyss. Both of them are now chaotic evil in alignment. The former paladin has got used to the horrible act, and is constantly playing self-justifications in his mind. He still has nothing on Briwan, who no longer feels the need for justification, and would be ready to do literally anything for food or freedom. He is also physically healthier, and he is holding the cage bars and shouting, demanding food and an explanation of what's going on.

The cage marked **B** contains a single ghoul, and two mangled corpses. The ghoul starts howling as soon as someone enters the room. What happened here is evident: the fiends forced this man to survive by eating the flesh of his dead cellmates. When he died as well, the Abyss brought him back as a ghoul.

A Cutter with Potential

Briwan and Trevoc are of about the right power level and in the right plot situation to join up the party. But they are also rapists and murderers – which may be more evil than what your players want to deal with. Therefore, be very careful.

Tilana would be a more politically correct addition to the party, if only she could be shaken off her catathonic state (see page XXX).

None of these characters are subject to the curse, but they may have very strong feelings of revenge against Rothakon, and they have nowhere else to go. Tilana would also feel in debt towards the PCs.

Ghoul		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Undead (Abyss)	CR: 1
Str: 13 (+1)	HP: 2d12 (13)	Speed: 9	Armor: none	
Dex: 15 (+2)	AC: 14 (+2 dex, +2 natural)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Con: -	Initiative: +2 dex	BAB: +1	Grapple: +2	
Int: 13 (+1)	Ref: +2 dex	Melee: +2 (+1 base, +1 strength)	Ranged: +3 (+1 base, +2 dexterity)	
Wis: 14 (+2)	For: +0			
Cha: 12 (+1)	Will: +5 (+3 base, +2 wis)			
Attacks			Skills	
Bite +2 melee, damage 1d6+1+paralysis			Balance +6 (+4 ranks, +2 dex)	
2 claws, +0 melee, damage 1d3+paralysis			Climb +5 (+4 ranks, +1 str)	
Feats and special abilities			Hide +6 (+4 ranks, +2 dex)	
Feats: Multiattack			Jump +5 (+4 ranks, +1 dex)	
Ghoul fever (su): disease—bite, Fortitude DC 12, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d3 Con and 1d3 Dex; a humanoid that dies of ghoul fever rises as a ghoul at the following midnight; a humanoid with 4 or more HD rises as a ghost instead.			Move Silently +6 (+4 ranks, +2 dex)	
Paralysis (ex): Fortitude DC 12 or paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds; elves are immune.			Spot +6 (+4 ranks, +2 wis)	
Darkvision 18 mt, undead traits, +2 turn resistance.				

The northwestern wall isn't an outer wall, and thus doesn't have the iron bars. It is also very thin. The DC to notice this with a Search check is 15. A Strength check, DC 21, or any other powerful hit, will cause the wall to fall into this room. It will fall on the cage marked **A**, breaking the door and letting the ghoul escape, and then crumble, causing 3d6 damage to any character within 4.5 meters from the wall, unless they save on Reflex versus DC 17. The noise will likely be noticed by anyone in this hallway as well as anyone in room **6** and **9**.

**I EAT
DEAD PEOPLE
- GHOUL**

There are two doors leading out of this hall; neither of them is locked, and near each of them there is a hidden stone, which can be pressed to activate the fire trap in the adjacent room. The stone can be detected with a Search check, DC 28.

9. This room is similar to room **6**. It has the same trap and the same metal rod used to activate the alarm.

10. An atrium. The room is empty. The door leading north is locked (DC 27 to pick it).

11. The antechamber to the stairs to the lower prison. A single sleepy tiefling guards the entrance. He currently has a -5 to Spot and Listen checks until something startles him.

Tiefling guard		Al. Chaotic Evil	Tiefling Fighter 3 rd (Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: 12 (+1)	HP: 3d10+3 (19)	Speed: 9	Armor: light	
Dex: 15 (+2)	AC: 16 (+3 armor, +1 shield, +2 dex)	% fail.: 25%	Check pen.: -4	
Con: 13 (+1)	Initiative: +4 improved initiative	BAB: +3	Grapple: +4	
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +3 (+1 base, +2 dex)	Melee: +4 (+3 base, +1 str)	Ranged: +5 (+3 base, +2 dex)	
Wis: 9 (-1)	For: +4 (+3 base, +1 con)			
Cha: 11 (+0)	Will: +0 (+1 base, -1 wis)			
Attacks			Skills	
Cold iron longsword, +5 melee, damage 1d8+1, crit 19-20/x2			Climb +5 (+4 ranks, +1 str)	
Feats and special abilities			Jump +5 (+4 ranks, +1 str)	
Feats: Dodge, Improved initiative, Mobility, Weapon focus: longsword.			Swim +5 (+4 ranks, +1 str)	
Darkvision 18m; cold, fire and electricity resistance 5, <i>darkness</i> 1/day.				
Equipment				
Hide armor (AB +3, max dex +4, check penalty -3, arcane failure 20%)				
Light steel shield (AB +1, check penalty -1, arcane failure 5%)				
Cold iron longsword (damage 1d8, crit 19-20/x2)				

12. Here are the stairs leading downwards, to room **1** in the lower prison. They are slabs of black granite, with no torches lighting them. If one of the PCs is carrying a light, they can see old pools of dried blood here and there on the steps.

13. This room is used by on-duty guards. There are 15 mercenaries at all times here. Five of them are humans, and seven are tieflings. Their stats are similar to the patrol teams'. The remaining three are elite mercenaries; their stats are similar to those of the mercenaries in room **1**. One of them has the keys to the doors in room **15**.

14. Like room **13**, this room contains 15 mercenaries. Eight of them are humans and five are tieflings; their stats are similar to the patrol teams'. The other two are elite human mercenaries like those in room **1**.

15. A hallway, this room is open to the north to an excavated area. Both doors are very heavy wood and steel doors (DC 25 to bash them open), though they are currently unlocked. The mercenaries in room **13** have the keys.

16. This dark corridor lacks torches or any kind of light. It ends in a steel grate, with a lock. The lock is too rusty to work, and the grate is open.

17. This corridor leads to the small cells of area **18**. It is completely dark. There's an alarm rope here.

18. This was an isolation cellblock.

This entire area is completely dark, and stinks of rotting corpses. You can't hear any other person around you, but you do hear some other noises. Growls, hisses, some sort of animal cries coming from the darkness. From what little you can see, you understand that this place has been wrecked. There is a crumbled wall near where you stand, and rubble covers the floor.

Patrols don't come here. After a magical incident during an escape attempt, several walls were destroyed, and they were never fixed. The cells marked with letters are the only ones that are still usable. The mid area's floor has partially crumbled, and a gaping hole (4.5 meters wide) to the lower prison is exposed. PCs might accidentally fall into the hole, or decide to climb down. The hole leads to a series of twisty tunnels; the tunnels have some very steep points, and are covered in some sort of slime that makes climbing very difficult (DC 30, 15 with a rope) and causes falling characters to slide all the way to the bottom (Balance check DC 25 to stop somewhere within the tunnels instead of falling). The tunnels, through several hundreds of meters of meandering passages, lead down to room **21** in the Lower Prison. Notice that the creatures of darkness have adapted to the slime and can climb with relative ease (DC 15).

Many creatures of darkness, coming up from the hole, roam the cellblock. They hide between the walls, in the rubble, on the ceiling, and stealthily creep up and down from the passage. Every minute the PCs spend in the cellblock, there is a 10% chance that 1d6 of the creatures attack them. The PCs are surprised unless they roll Spot versus the creatures' Hide, or Listen versus the creatures' Move Silently. Additionally, when the PCs pass near cell **F**, they see (if they have any lights, or darkvision) three of the creatures throwing themselves at the bars of cell **I**. The creatures see the PCs in turn, but keep attacking the cell unless the PCs move closer or attack.

If the PCs freed the former jailmaster (see room **29**), they may find his half-devoured corpse here.

Cells **C**, **D**, **F** and **H** are empty. The cell marked **A** just contains a heap of skeletons. The bone heap is a couple meters tall; there must be at least 50 skeletons here. The tanar'ri threw sick or diseased prisoners in this cell to die and rot. Though they are normal skeletons, the atrocity of this room is such that the evil energies of the Abyss will corrupt any resurrection or reanimation attempt performed in the entire cellblock. The spell will fail, and its power will cause the bone heap to reanimate as a monstrous undead creature. It can't get out of the cell, but it will attack anyone and anything that passes nearby.

Animated bone heap		Al. Chaotic Evil	Huge undead (Abyss)	CR: 9
Str: 18 (+4)	HP: 20d12 (130)	Speed: 0		
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 14 (+1 dex, +3 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: -	Initiative: +5 (+1 dex, +4 improved init)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: -	Ref: +7 (+6 base, +1 dex)	BAB: +10	Grapple: +22	
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +6 base	Melee: +14 (+10 base, +4 strength)		
Cha: 1 (-5)	Will: +12 base	Ranged: +11 (+10 base, +1 dexterity)		
<u>Attacks</u>				
4 claws, +12 melee reach 6 mt, damage 1d8+4				
<u>Feats and special abilities</u>				
Feats: Improved initiative				
Immunity to cold, DR 5/bludgeoning, fast healing 3.				
Undead traits.				

Cell **B** contains a decaying corpse of some humanoid race, with only a putrid loincloth on it. Manacles are tying its feet to the wall, so that it's hanging upside down. There's a pool of dried blood, vomit, and unidentifiable fluids under it. Cell **E** contains yet another rotting human corpse. He somehow managed to hang himself with the loincloth. If the PCs enter the cell, as soon as someone touches it, it suddenly animates as a zombie and attempts to grapple and strangle the hero.

Hanged zombie		Al. Neutral Evil	Medium undead (Abyss)	CR: ½
Str: 20 (+5)	HP: 2d12+3 (19)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 4 (-3)	AC: 12 (+2 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: -	Initiative: -3 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: -	Ref: -3 dex	BAB: +1	Grapple: +6	
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +0	Melee: +6 (+1 base, +5 strength)		
Cha: 1 (-5)	Will: +3 base	Ranged: -2 (+1 base, -3 dexterity)		
<u>Attacks</u>				
Slam, +6 melee, damage grapple				
<u>Feats and special abilities</u>				
Feats: Toughness				
Single actions only (it can only perform a single move or attack action per round).				
Undead traits.				

Being hanged, it can't move from the middle of the cell, though. If the character escapes, the PCs can safely retreat. Cell **G** contains three humanoid skeletons and two corpses (a human female and a dwarf), all hanging from manacles on the wall. The dwarven corpse is old and rotten, while the woman seems to have died just a few days ago. The body is covered in blood from a hundred cuts all over her body.

Cell **I** contains a still-living prisoner. He is a tiefling, his name is Liviux and he is a spy for the baatezu. Well, he was – when the forces of Ithla-Sathlo attacked, he was no different from the other fortress defenders in their eyes. However, he had the savvy to surrender and the intelligence to surrender to the human mercenaries instead of the tanar'ri commanders, who would have killed him outright. The mercenaries threw him into this cell, manacled him to the wall, and then forgot about him. He has bit through his left hand to free himself from the manacles, and used his loincloth to stop the blood loss (so he's naked). He managed to survive by eating his own hand, and then by chewing some rocks and a bit of moss scraped from the walls, but he's starving nonetheless. Additionally, he has 4 points of Constitution damage due to infection, though he is slowly recovering. When the PCs arrive, Liviux is desperately attempting to fend off three creatures of darkness that are trying to get him through the cell bars.

You hear pitched growls, and see movement near one of the rusty grates. Three animals are throwing themselves at the iron bars. They look like large black dogs, though there is something unnaturally sleek about the way they move. Their speed and agility are unnerving. When they notice you, they briefly turn and emit a pitched growl. Even their faces are deeply black, including their eyes. Despite this, you have the strong feeling that they are staring at your throat.

Hyenas of darkness (3)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 2
Str: 14 (+2) Dex: 19 (+4) Con: 15 (+2)	HP: 2d8+4 (13) AC: 16 (+4 dex, +2 natural) Initiative: +4 dex	Speed: 21 Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0		
Int: 3 (-4) Wis: 13 (+1) Cha: 6 (-2)	Ref: +7 (+3 base, +4 dex) For: +5 (+3 base, +2 con) Will: +1 (+0 base, +1 wis)	BAB: +1 Grapple: +3 Melee: +3 (+1 base, +2 strength) Ranged: +5 (+1 base, +4 dexterity)		
Attacks Bite +3 melee, damage 1d6+3		Skills Hide +12 (+4 dex, +8 racial)* Listen +6 (+3 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness) Move silently +12 (+4 dex, +8 racial) Spot +4 (+1 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Feats and special abilities Feats: Alertness, Mobility Sneak attack +2d6 as a rogue Low-light vision, darkvision 18 mt, Blindsight 36 mt, Scent. Trip (ex): if it hits with the bite attack, it can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action without making the touch attack or drawing an attack of opportunity; if it fails, the opponent can't react to trip the hyena.		* it has a +4 racial bonus in areas of tall grass or undergrowth, but this won't likely come up in this place		

Livlux		Al. Chaotic Evil	Tiefling Rogue 3 rd (Gehenna)	CR: 3
Str: 10 (+0) Dex: 17 (+3) Con: 8 (-1)	HP: 3d6-3 (7) AC: 13 (+3 dex) Initiative: +3 dex	Speed: 9 Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0		
Int: 13 (+1) Wis: 11 (+0) Cha: 10 (+0)	Ref: +7 (+4 base, +3 dex) For: +2 (+1 base, +1 con) Will: +3 (+1 base, +2 iron will)	BAB: +2 Grapple: +2 Melee: +3 base Ranged: +6 (+3 base, +6 dex)		
Attacks Unarmed strike, +3 melee, damage 1d3 non-lethal		Skills Bluff +8 (+6 ranks, +2 racial) Diplomacy +4 synergy Hide +13 (+6 ranks, +3 dex, +2 racial, +2 stealthy) Intimidate +2 synergy Listen +6 ranks Move silently +11 (+6 ranks, +3 dex, +2 stealthy) Open locks +9 (+6 ranks, +3 dex) Profession (cook) +7 (+6 ranks, +1 int) Search +7 (+6 ranks, +1 int) Sense motive +6 ranks Spot +6 ranks Survival +2 synergy**		
Feats and special abilities Feats: Stealthy, Iron will. Darkvision 18m; cold, fire and electricity resistance 5, <i>darkness</i> 1/day. Sneak attack +2d6, trapfinding, trap sense +1, evasion. Currently has 4 points of Constitution damage due to infection, but he is recovering (1 point per day as usual).		*when he is being observed and tries to stay in character ** when searching for or following tracks		
Equipment Filthy loincloth (used as bandage).				

There is a prisoner inside this cell. He is pale, naked and wounded; a filthy rag, soaked in blood, is tied around his left wrist. The hand is missing. His eyes are full of fear and his dark hair is encrusted with blood. He has exceptionally pointy teeth, but given his conditions, he doesn't look dangerous.

If the PCs help him, he thinks for a moment and then reveals them his status as Baatezu spy. He says that he knows about the prison, and that there is no way for him or the PCs to escape. He says that if he can somehow contact the devils, then they will attack the fortress and free them (well, free *him* at least. Probably). Even though it is a relatively unimportant place, they can use it as a beach-head into the Abyss, striking at their ancestral enemies' territory. He needs to recover his ring, held in room 5, through which he can communicate with his superiors. Then, he must find some way into the fortress for them to use – they won't attack unless it's an easy victory. Maybe the mysterious lower prison holds the key.

The area marked with **J** was a guard post. There's an alarm rope here. There are also a couple of old swords on a rack, a

TRUST ME. WE'LL BE
SAFE WHEN THE
BAATEZU WILL HAVE
CONQUERED THIS HOLE.
- LIVIUX, ANOTHER
OPTIMIST

table, and some broken chairs, but that's about it. The secret passage can be noticed with a Search check, DC 20, and then easily opened.

19. This cave and the others in the area were dug from the rock some months ago. They have no lighting, and are completely dark. The walls have been hastily reinforced with the metal bars that cover the rest of the prison. It is possible to remove the bars in three hours, but unless the PCs make a successful Profession (Miner) check, DC 10, they will cause the ceiling to collapse. All characters within the room take 5d6 damage immediately, and during subsequent rounds they have to roll a Reflex save, DC 18, or take further 5d6 damage. When a character passes the save, he manages to get out of the room. Additionally, the noise will alert all the guards of the prison. Even if the PCs work correctly, the noise involved in taking apart the metal sustains increases the chance for a patrol getting near from 10% to 30%. The PCs may attempt to set some sort of trap, so that striking a carefully placed beam will cause the ceiling to collapse. This requires a Craft (Trap making) or Profession (Miner) check, DC 20. If they miss the DC by 10 or more, the ceiling immediately collapses.

20. Like room **19**, this cave is empty and the characters might try to remove the bars from the walls.

21. This big cave is used as a warehouse. There are several crates of salted meat, a few barrels of clean water, and a chest with six bottles of strong liquor. There are a couple of torches on the walls, and another of the crates contains more torches and lantern oil.

22. Another empty cave.

23. The cave here looks empty. However, the bottom is covered in rubble from what appears to be a ceiling collapse. Have each PC roll Spot versus DC 18 (15 if they *don't* have any kind of light with them). Those who succeed notice a very faint light coming from below the rubble. It takes three hours to dig away the rocks and stones. If the PCs do it, they find an *everburning torch* and a passage to another cave, room **24**.

24. Boulders and large stones are everywhere on the floor of this cave. There are several dretch corpses, crushed by the rock. There's also a single tiefling corpse. His leg is trapped under a huge boulder, and his fingernails are all broken as if he tried to dig through the rubble. There is another *everburning torch* here, and the tiefling has a bag with 100 gold coins and a gold ring worth 130 gold.

25. Another empty cave.

26. The cave is empty, but the wall far from the door bears a horrible sight.

A woman is embedded into the wall, her beautiful face a mixture of surprise and terror. The face, the hands and a knee are all that sticks out of the wall and through the metal bars. The right hand is still holding an empty glass flask. Weirdly, there is some dust on the glass but the corpse doesn't look much rotten.

In fact, the woman is an erinyes baatezu, who was captured and then tragically failed an escape attempt. PCs that have spent some time on Baator or near devils may roll a Wisdom check, DC 14. If they succeed, they recognize that the corpse was a baatezu.

If the PCs somehow manage to pull the body down from the rock (it takes one hour of digging, provided they have the tools), then they see the erinyes' feathery wings. Before attempting to escape, she managed to get access to her equipment; she didn't waste time taking clothes (the body is only wearing the usual loincloth), but she did take a *wand of fireballs* (moderate evocation, it has 11 charges left) and her *bracers of armor* (moderate abjuration, AC +3). The bracers are on her arms, and the wand is tied to the loincloth.

27. This cave contains digging equipment – shovels, picks, and a small cart – and many steel beams of varying size as well as the tools needed to put them in place.

28. A dark corridor. The secret passages are fairly evident from the inside. If the PCs are coming in from room **29**, they will be attacked by a creature of darkness about halfway in.

Brown bear of darkness		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 5
Str: 27 (+8)	HP: 6d8+24 (51)	Speed: 18		
Dex: 17 (+3)	AC: 17 (-1 size, +3 dex, +5 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 19 (+4)	Initiative: +3 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 3 (-4)	Ref: +8 (+5 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +4	Grapple: +16	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +10 (+5 base, +5 con)	Melee: +11 (+4 base, +8 strength, -1 size)		
Cha: 6 (-2)	Will: +3 (+2 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +6 (+4 base, +3 dexterity, -1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +11 melee, damage 1d8+8, and		Hide +7 (+8 racial, +3 dex, -4 size)		
Bite +6 melee, damage 2d6+4		Listen +4 (+3 ranks, +1 wis)		
Feats and special abilities		Move silently +11 (+8 racial, +3 dex)		
Feats: Endurance, Run, Track, Mobility		Spot +7 (+6 ranks, +1 wis)		
Sneak attack +2d6, improved grab (claws), low-light vision, darkvision		Swim +12 (+4 racial, +8 str)		
18 mt, blindsight 36 mt, scent.				

29. This area contains five cells that are enveloped in an anti-magic field. The cells are used to keep prisoners that have powerful magical abilities that would allow them to escape. Currently, Rothakon's troops are using these cells for everyone they aren't sure about. The corridor is lit with torches, and there is the usual 10% chance for a patrol team to show up every ten minutes.

The PCs are initially kept in the cells marked **A** and **B**.

You wake up on a cold stone floor. You smell dust and hear a distant sound of metallic steps. When you can focus again, you see that you are in a big cell within a prison. There is a single door, made of solid metal. You have been stripped of all items, even your clothes. You are wearing a dirty loin-cloth, but that's all.

The doors are made of steel, with a slit that can be opened or closed from the outside. The surveillance is very sloppy; canny PCs can escape in a number of ways. First of all, it seems that no one has noticed that cell **B** was damaged during the attack. The anti-magic field has failed and spellcasting PCs in room **B** can use their spells or abilities normally (but they still lack material components). Furthermore, the hinges are slightly damaged and the DC to break down the door is only 24.

A single guard will come every 12 hours to give some salted meat and water to the PCs. On the off chance that Ithla-Sathlo is interested in the intruders, the mercenaries are going to keep them alive (at least for a while). The guard passes the food through the bars; PCs might attempt to grapple her as she does so (though they take a -5 to hit penalty on the touch attack), or pick pocket her for the keys (DC 20). In any case, the first time that a patrol team comes here and doesn't see the PCs, they'll sound the alarm. The heroes had better be somewhere else when this happens.

Cell **C** contains one of the former tanar'ri leaders of the fortress. He is safely chained to the walls, and wailing his fury at everything that passes near. If the PCs pass in front of the cell, he starts cursing at them and threatens a multitude of horrible fates, thinking them to be part of the mercenary force. The heroes just might be able to reason with him, and offer freedom for assistance, but the tanar'ri isn't a reliable ally. He burns with rage – he will attack patrol teams on sight, demand the party to follow his orders, and may even attack the PCs if they don't obey.

Hezrou		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 11
Str: 21 (+5)	HP: 10d8+93 (138)	Speed: 15		
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 23 (-1 size, +14 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 29 (+9)	Initiative: +0	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 14 (+2)	Ref: +7 (+7 base, +0 dex)	BAB: +10	Grapple: +19	
Wis: 14 (+2)	For: +16 (+7 base, +9 con)	Melee: +14 (+10 base, +5 strength, -1 size)		
Cha: 18 (+4)	Will: +9 (+7 base, +2 wis)	Ranged: +9 (+10 base, +0 dexterity, -1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
Bite +14 melee reach 3 mt, damage 4d4+5, and 2 claws, +9 melee reach 3 mt, damage 1d8+2		Climb +18 (+13 ranks, +5 str)		
Feats and special abilities		Concentration +22 (+13 ranks, +9 con)		
Feats: Blind-fight, Cleave, Power attack, Toughness		Hide +9 (+13 ranks, -4 size)		
Improved grab (must hit with both claws)		Escape Artist +13 (+13 ranks)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>chaos hammer</i> (DC 18), <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22,5 kg of objects only), <i>unholy blight</i> (DC 18); 3/day – <i>blasphemy</i> (DC 21), <i>gaseous form</i> . Caster level 13 th .		Intimidate +17 (+13 ranks, +4 cha)		
DR 10/good, darkvision 18 mt, immune to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, SR 19, telepathy within 30 mt.		Listen +23 (+13 ranks, +2 wis, +8 racial)		
Stench: non-demons within 3 mt. must roll a Fortitude save versus DC 24 or be nauseated for as long as they remain in the area plus 1d4 rounds. Those that save are sickened for as long as they remain in the area. Creatures that succeed are unaffected by following exposures for 24 hours. <i>Delay poison</i> or <i>neutralize poison</i> removes the condition; creatures that are immune to poison are immune to this effect; poison resistance applies.		Move Silently +13 (+13 ranks)		
Summon demon: once per day it can attempt to summon 4d10 dretches or another hezrou with a 35% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 4th-level spell.		Search +15 (+13 ranks, +2 int)		
		Spellcraft +15 (+13 ranks, +2 int)		
		Spot +23 (+13 ranks, +2 wis, +8 racial)		
		Survival +2 wis*		
		Use Rope +0**		
		* +2 synergy when following tracks		
		** +2 synergy when binding		

Cell **D** contains the former jailmaster. He's a cunning cambion named Kunthem and he managed to convince the winners that he has useful information for them. He'll try to do the same for the PCs in return for his freedom. Fact is, he does have good chant for the heroes – here's what they can gather from him if they offer him freedom and barter smartly (use Diplomacy; they gain a piece of information for every 4 points scored on the test, progressively from this list).

- He knows where the equipment of the PCs is being kept. He will tell this to the PCs easily, since he wants them to cause as much damage as possible to the invaders.
- He will warn the PCs not to attempt getting out of the prison through room 1; it is far too well protected and they have no chance of getting through. Again, he is interested in not getting the PCs killed immediately.
- He will suggest them to enter the lower prison through room **12**. The way he puts it – they won't get out, but at least they will survive. He explains that no prisoner has ever escaped from the fortress, but the lower prison is huge, abandoned, and unguarded, and several prisoners have fled there. They might find help. Kunthem knows that during the assault virtually all of the prisoners have escaped to the lower prison, and he secretly hopes that the PCs may mount a revolt and route the invaders. He doesn't have much hope, but it's worth trying.
- He knows about the secret passage to room **29** on both sides, and will present it to the PCs as a fast way to get to a place that is safe from the guards. If the PCs successfully roll Sense Motive versus his Bluff, they will sense that there is something more, and if pressed, Kunthem will admit that occasionally there are dangerous creatures around there. He doesn't know that the invaders haven't kept them in check, and that area **18** is now extremely dangerous, otherwise he would warn the PCs against it.
- He knows about the hole in room **18** that leads to the lower prison, and will warn the PCs not to enter it.
- Kunthem knows the structure of the whole fortress, even the lower prison, but he won't tell the PCs all the details. He can tell them about the areas of the upper and lower prison.

- He knows all about the physical and magical effects of the layer, and can tell everything about them to the PCs.
- He knows all about the horrible atrocities that were committed in this prison, since he ordered several of them himself. He knows that goody two-shoes don't take kindly to that kind of chant, and won't mention it unless explicitly asked.

Kunthem		Al. Chaotic Evil	Half-fiend Orc Barbarian/Wizard 3 rd /3 rd (Abyss)	CR: 8
Str: 18 (+4)	HP: 3d4+3d12+6 (32)	Speed: 12, fly 12 (average)		
Dex: 19 (+4)	AC: 15 (+4 dex, +1 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +4 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 14 (+2)	Ref: +8 (+4 base, +4 dex)	BAB: +5	Grapple: +5	
Wis: 8 (-1)	For: +5 (+4 base, +1 con)	Melee: +9 (+5 base, +4 str)		
Cha: 12 (+1)	Will: +3 (+2 base, +2 iron will, -1 wis)	Ranged: +9 (+5 base, +4 dex)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +9 melee, damage 1d4+4, and bite, +7 melee, damage 1d6+2		Bluff +10 (+9 ranks, +1 cha)		
Feats and special abilities		Craft (blacksmith) +5 (+3 ranks, +2 int)		
Feats: Iron will, Multiattack, Eschew materials.		Diplomacy (+9 ranks, +2 synergy, +1 cha)		
Darkvision 18m; light sensitivity (dazzled in bright light)		Gather information (+9 ranks, +1 cha)		
Smite good (su): 1/day he can make a normal melee attack to deal 6 extra damage to a good creature.		Intimidate (+9 ranks, +2 synergy, +1 cha)		
<i>Darkness</i> 3/day, <i>desecrate</i> and <i>unholy blight</i> 1/day.		Listen (+9 ranks, -1 wis)		
Immunity to poison, resistance to acid, fire, cold and electricity 10, DR 5/magic, his natural weapons are considered magic for the purpose of overcoming DR, SR 16.		Search (+6 ranks, +2 int)		
Barbarian rage 1/day, uncanny dodge, trap sense +1		Sense motive (+9 ranks, -1 wis)		
Wizard spells/day: 4/3/2 (DC 12+spell level)		Spot (+9 ranks, -1 wis)		
Equipment		Survival +2 synergy*		
Filthy loincloth.		* when finding or following tracks		

Prepared spells:

0th level: Detect magic, Detect magic, Prestidigitation, Read magic

1st level: Expeditious retreat, Magic weapon, Ventriloquism

2nd level: Blur, Invisibility

AHH... UH!... YEAH, THERE'S
SOME CRITTER, NOTHING
TO WORRY ABOUT
- KUNTHEM, YET
ANOTHER OPTIMIST

Once the PCs have let the cambion out, he will cast *invisibility* and *expeditious retreat* and flee to room **18** as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the creatures of darkness

will prove more numerous than he thought, and overwhelm him. The PCs might find the remains of his corpse in the isolation cellblock. Such is the nature of the Abyss.

30. The wider part in this corridor is occupied by several weapon racks. There are many swords, quarterstaves and daggers, and three battle axes. There is a two-handed cold iron sword. One of the swords is an exceptional weapon, and enchanted as well (it has a +1 enhancement bonus). Unless the PCs cast *detect magic*, it will take a Search check (DC 20) to find it.

Most of the rooms around here are empty. They are supposed to be large, common cells, but they either weren't used, or the prisoners escaped during the strike.

31. An empty cell; the door is bashed in.

32. Empty.

33. Empty; the door has been destroyed.

A Cutter with Potential

Kunthem might be used as a new PC, though bear in mind that this probably means that the party will get all the information he knows.

Also, he is irredeemably chaotic evil, with everything this entails.

He won't feel any loyalty towards the PCs, but neither he wants to keep serving Rothakon either. Also, he has no desire to leave the Abyss for now.

Unusual parties

The corridor with the weapon racks is where the PCs are supposed to get the minimal equipment needed to survive until they can recover their stuff.

They need to be able to deal damage to the babau in room **3**, hence the cold iron weapon. If the PCs lack another source of DR-bypassing firepower (such as prepared offensive spells), consider adding another small cold iron weapon here, to prevent the fight from becoming determined by whether the sword breaks or not against the babau's slime.

34. This room is a big latrine. As is to be expected, it stinks a lot. There's nothing unusual, though; a bunch of filthy holes (dropping into the lake of the lower prison, and protected by a rusty iron grid), and a barrel of murky water, that's about it.

35. Though this large room was designed to be a kitchen, it has never really been used. There are benches, chairs, and several empty barrels. Most of the fortress inhabitants don't really care about well-cooked food, and neither they care much about the inmates' nutrition.

36. This is a guard dormitory. There are 25 mercenaries sleeping here at all moments. There's a 15% chance of one of them being awake, though. Five of them are elites (see room I), and the rest have the same stats as patrol team members.

37. Same as room **36**.

38. Empty room; the door is broken.

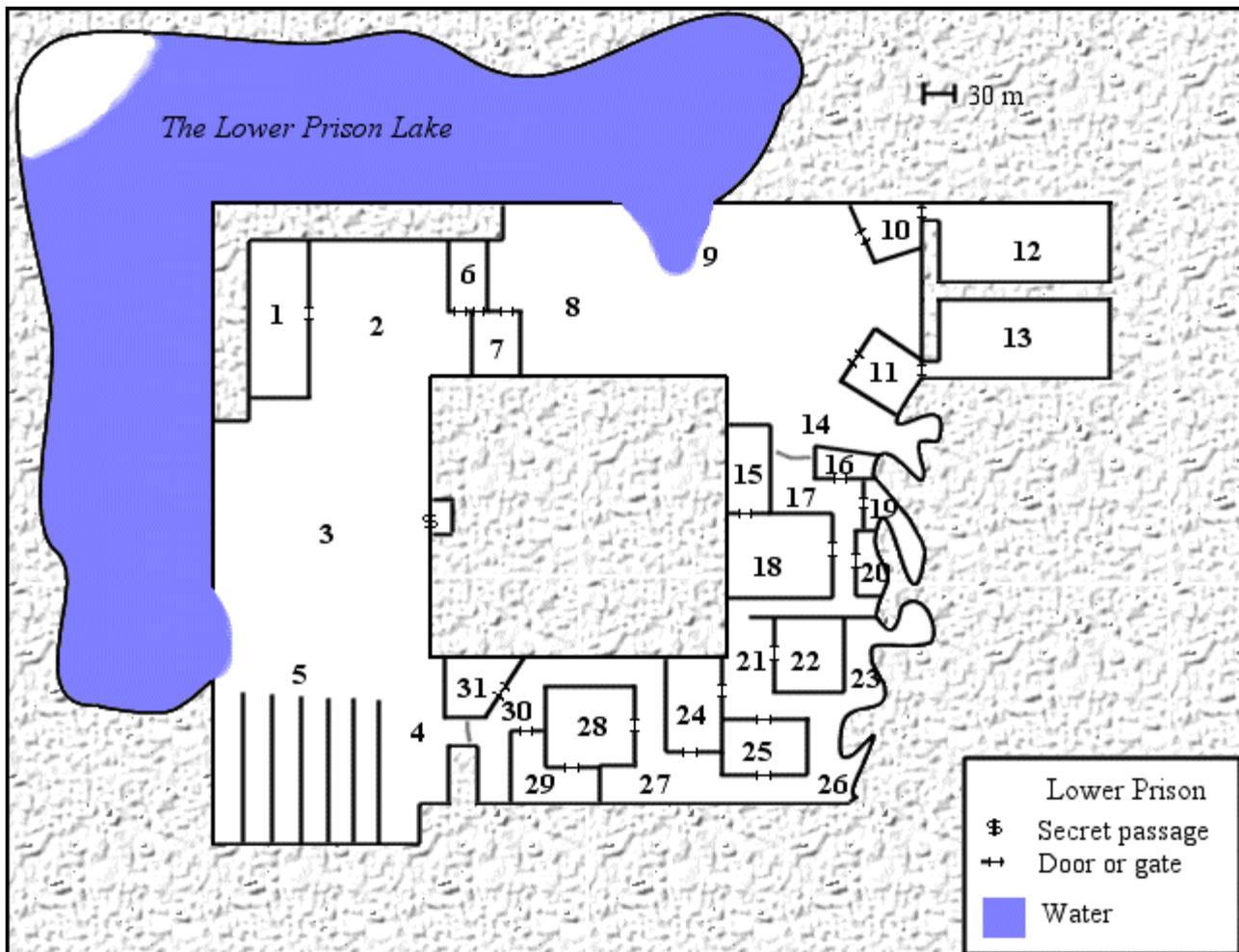
39. Empty common cell.

40. This room was used as a warehouse. However, most of the stuff has been moved to the caves, in room **21**. There are some empty crates, a barrel of clean water, and a chest with 30 meters of rope, manacles, 20 meters of chains, and a dozen torches. There's also a crate of coal.

41. This room is another latrine. It isn't as used as room **34**, but it has two troubles. First, someone dumped a couple of corpses in here. Second, the grids under the holes were too rusty and fell off, and a few carrion crawlers somehow managed to get into the room.

Carrion crawlers (3)	Al. Neutral	Large Aberration (Abyss)	CR: 4
Str: 14 (+2)	HP: 3d8+6 (19)	Speed: 9, climb 4.5	
Dex: 15 (+2)	AC: 17 (-1 size, +2 dex, +6 natural)	Armor: none	
Con: 14 (+2)	Initiative: +2 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0
Int: 1 (-5)	Ref: +3 (+1 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +2	Grapple: +8
Wis: 15 (+2)	For: +3 (+1 base, +2 con)	Melee: +3 (+2 base, +2 str, -1 size)	
Cha: 6 (-2)	Will: +5 (+3 base, +2 wis)	Ranged: +3 (+2 base, +2 dex, -1 size)	
<u>Attacks</u>		<u>Skills</u>	
8 tentacles, +3 melee, damage paralysis, and Bite, -2 melee, damage 1d4+1		Climb +12 (+2 ranks, +2 str, +8 racial*)	
		Listen +6 (+2 ranks, +2 wis, +2 alertness)	
		Spot +6 (+2 ranks, +2 wis, +2 alertness)	
<u>Feats and special abilities</u>		* can always take 10 when climbing	
Feats: Alertness, Combat reflexes, Track			
Paralysis (su): on a tentacle hit, DC 13, paralyzes for 2d4 rounds.			
Darkvision 18m, scent.			

The Lower Prison



The Lower Prison is in a state of complete abandon. Even before the assault by Ithla-Sathlo's forces, the vast caves were no longer patrolled or maintained. Nevertheless, over the course of the years many prisoners found their way to the immense halls of the lower prison. Sometimes the jailers would send them there themselves, but more frequently the lower prison's inhabitants are people that escaped from the upper prison somehow and were chased down to the caves. The prison masters never bothered about recovering them. The only known way out of the lower prison goes through the upper prison, so there is no way for them to get out.

This area is located more than 30 meters below the upper prison, and it is mostly composed of two vast empty spaces, about half a kilometer long with their ceilings between 25 and 27 meters high, and an area of huge abandoned rooms. There is a big underground lake as well, accessible from either of the two main areas. The roomed area is known to the inmates as "monster zone", as it is infested by creatures of darkness. The prisoners have erected two barricades to prevent the monsters from entering their living area. The lake's water is poisonous; characters that attempt to drink it are affected unless they save on Fortitude versus DC 14. The primary damage is 1d4 Strength, the secondary damage is 1 Strength. A character immersed in the water must save every round (though he takes the secondary damage only once, if he gets out of the water). Despite the toxicity, there are several dangerous creatures in the water. All of them, naturally, are immune to the poison in the water, and all of them cause the same effects if they are eaten without special preparation.

Every worked stone in the lower prison is a twisted, contorted element of demonic architecture. The huge columns bend and turn on themselves, darkish water trickling down them like blood. The gates and doors are adorned of spikes and bones. The walls in the roomed area are lined with chains and manacles of all sizes, each chain spiked, each handcuff barbed on the inside. The two main areas have their floor dotted with short iron spikes, so that whenever a character attempts to run he

must roll a Reflex save (DC 15) or be affected as if by caltrops, provided that he has a light source or darkvision. Otherwise, the DC is 25. There are ropes for the alarm system here, but almost all of them (or the devices they connect to) are broken.

There are a few people, mostly tieflings, that were born here. The majority of the lower prison's inhabitants, though, are prisoners fled from above. There are about 200 people, of which about 70 are human, another 70 are tieflings, and the rest of assorted species. The people that live in the lower prison have managed to organize themselves in some sort of loose self-government. There is a leader, who may be ousted through defeat in combat. The current leader is the dark elf Skralekos.

Skralekos		Al. Chaotic Evil	Drow Barbarian/Fighter 5 th /6 th (Prime material)	CR: 12
Str: 16 (+3)	HP: 5d12+5d10+10 (70)	Speed: 12		
Dex: 20 (+5)	AC: 22 (+5 armor, +3 shield, +4 dex)	Armor: light		
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +4 dex	% fail.: 25%	Check pen.: -1	
Int: 15 (+2)	Ref: +8 (+3 base, +5 dex)	BAB: +11/+6		Grapple: +14
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +8 (+9 base, +1 con)	Melee: +14/+9 (+11 base, +3 str)		
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +6 (+3 base, +1 wis, +2 iron will)	Ranged: +16/+11 (+11 base, +5 dex)		
Attacks			Skills	
<i>Adamantine rapier</i> +1, +18/+13/+8 melee, damage 1d6+4, crit 18-20/x2, or <i>Cold iron shortsword</i> , +16/+11 melee, damage 1d6+1, crit 19-20/x2			Climb +2 (+2 ranks, +1 str, -1 armor) Hide +16 (+8 ranks, +4 dex, -1 armor, +5 competence) Intimidate +16 (+13 ranks, +3 cha) Jump +5 (+3 ranks, +3 str, -1 check pen) Listen +11 (+8 ranks, +2 racial, +1 wis) Move silently +16 (+8 ranks, +4 dex, -1 armor, +5 competence) Search +4 (+2 racial, +2 int) Speak Abyssal Spot +3 (+2 racial, +1 wis) Survival +14 (+13 ranks, +1 wis)	
Feats and special abilities				
Feats: Blind-fight, Dodge, Iron will, Mobility, Quicken spell-like ability (<i>darkness</i>), Spring attack, Weapon finesse, Weapon focus (rapier). Immunity to sleep spells and effects; +2 on Will saves versus spells and spell-like abilities, SR 22, Low-light vision; can Search for a secret or concealed door automatically; light blindness (exposure to bright light blinds him for 1 round; during subsequent rounds, he is dazzled until the light is removed). <i>Dancing light</i> , <i>darkness</i> , <i>faerie fire</i> 1/day. Barbarian rage 2/day, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +1				
Equipment				
<i>Ghostrings</i> (shadow chain mail +1 of light fortification of silent moves; AB +5, max dex +4, check penalty -1, arcane failure 20%; +5 competence to hide and move silently; 25% chance of ignoring a critical) (strong abjuration, CL 13) <i>Buckler</i> +2 (AB +3, check penalty 0, arcane failure 5%) (moderate abjuration, CL 6) <i>Adamantine rapier</i> +1 (damage 1d6+1, crit 18-20/x2) (faint evocation, CL 3) <i>Cold iron shortsword</i> (damage 1d6, crit 19-20/x2) <i>Potion of expeditious retreat</i> (faint transmutation, CL 3) <i>Potion of flying</i> (faint transmutation, CL 5) <i>Everburning torch</i>				

He's been trapped in the lower prison for over a century and has led it for a couple of decades, and he knows every inch of it, even every spike on the ground. There's currently a small crisis, because of the sudden influx of new prisoners, and as a result, Skralekos is more aggressive than usual in his dealings. The people living down in the lower prison live off the fishes in the lake (they know how to detoxify them) as well as small mushrooms they grow on the walls in the southern area. They also gather water from the thick air moisture, using wide sails and cloths, and from the few trickling streams of drinkable water from above. They spend most of their time guarding the barricades against the creatures of darkness, gathering food, and fighting among themselves. There is some sort of economy based on barter; light sources are especially valuable because the only spellcaster in town capable of casting *continual light* charges absurd prices for it. If the characters wish to trade, assume that no inmate will accept money, preferring to barter for useful items instead. A torch or a flask of lantern oil is worth 5 gold, while an *everburning torch* is worth 1000 gold. The prisoners have learnt to distil some kind of lantern oil from the poisonous fishes, but the process isn't very efficient and the oil doesn't abound. Most people wear some kind of hide cloth, sewn from the lake creatures or the occasional dead creature of darkness.

Characters that are born in this place, or that have spent several years here, may take low-light vision as a feat with no prerequisites, unless they already have it.

Here are sample stats for Skralekos' guards. You can use them for reference whenever the PCs encounter them. Feel free to change their equipment occasionally; they use whatever they can put their hands on.

Skralekos' guards (2)		Al. Neutral Evil	Human Fighter 6 th (Abyss)	CR: 6
Str: 13 (+1)	HP: 6d10+9 (42)	Speed: 6		Armor: medium % fail.: 30% Check pen.: -5
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 15 (+5 armor)	BAB: +6/+1		
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +4 improved initiative	Melee: +7/+2 (+6 base, +1 str)		Grapple: +7
Int: 9 (-1)	Ref: +2 base	Ranged: +6/+1 base		
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +6 (+5 base, +1 con)			
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: +2 base			
Attacks				Skills
Cold iron two handed sword, +8/+3 melee, damage 2d6+1, crit 19-20/x2				Climb +5 (+9 ranks, +1 strength, -5 armor)
Feats and special abilities				Heal +2 self-sufficient
Feats: Weapon focus: two handed sword, Low-light vision, Power attack, Toughness, Improved initiative, Self-sufficient, Cleave, Blind-fight				Intimidate +9 ranks
Equipment				Jump +5 (+9 ranks, +1 strength, -5 armor)
Chain mail (AB +5, max dex +2, check penalty -5, arcane failure 30%)				Survival +2 self-sufficient
Cold iron two handed sword (damage 2d6, crit 19-20/x2)				
Hide clothes, 2 torches				

More of the dark

Skralekos was born on the prime world of Toril almost two hundred years ago. As a young male in that matriarchal society, he was destined to be a servant to the house matron forever. Skralekos never accepted this, and always thirsted for freedom. He kept pushing his luck with small disobediences, until the matriarch of his House got tired and sold him to a tanar'ri in return for some petty service.

Skralekos dreaded the slavery, and managed to escape, but while he was wandering the Abyss a bunch of fiends from Maldithar spotted him, beaten him senseless, and scragged him. He endured their tortures for almost ten years, and then fled to the Lower Prison in a daring pitch for freedom.

The freedom he got wasn't much; the leader of the caves at that time was an arrogant tanar'ri, every bit as oppressive as his old matron. Eventually, Skralekos ousted him, and now he leads his own small hellhole. This is about the best he ever got from life, and he doesn't want to change it. He *likes* to dominate these wretches.

Skralekos knows all the secrets of the prison. Fact is, about ten years ago he secretly ventured into the monster zone with a comrade, a cleric of Thoth named Sajah. In the deepest area of the complex, they found an ancient prison logbook. Among other things, it revealed that a portal found on the other side of the underground lake could lead outside the prison.

While Sajah, excited, wanted to immediately go back and use the portal to get away, the dark elf felt worried. If the way to escape were to be known, his reign would be over. So, he backstabbed and killed the priest, but he was almost immediately attacked by a swarm of creatures of darkness, and he couldn't burn the logbook as well.

1. This is the room where the stairs to the upper prison are located. Every single wall in this room is carved with stone faces, each face bearing a different expression of untold agony. The ceiling is supported by tall and thin columns, chiseled to resemble humanoid bodies, stretched into impossible positions. There is a tall, wide iron gate leading out of the room. Its original lock is broken, and it is currently locked by a length of chain. The chain can be broken with a Strength check (DC 22) or by picking its lock (DC 20). When the PCs approach the gate, the guards in the next area spot them if they have any lights with them. They'll startle and slowly approach the gate.

2. There are two of Skralekos' guards here. They are supposed to welcome visitors, and run to warn the village if tanar'ri come through.

You reach a wide steel gate. The walls adjacent to it are chiseled with hundreds of humanoid faces, each one bearing a different expression of untold torment. Beyond the gate, you see two men – one is a human, the other looks like a tiefling. They are wearing an old and patched chain mail and carry large swords on their back. They turn to look at you: they seem more surprised than you are.

After a moment, one of them slowly approaches the PCs, telling them not to attack. The other waits until the PCs have started talking with the guards, and then goes to inform the leader. The guard quickly explains to the PCs the situation in the lower prison, and tells them that Skralekos is arriving to welcome them. They must not offend him, they must not contradict him, and they must do what he says.

The dark elf arrives after a few minutes, and greets the PCs.

You see a light approaching. A couple of armed men, one of whom is carrying a torch, are escorting a third person. When he gets closer, you can see that he looks like an elf, except for the black hue of his skin. He's wearing a jet-black chain mail; a short sword and a rapier hang from his belt. His bearing is neither hostile nor friendly, just cold. Unlike the people you've met until now, the dark elf and his bodyguards look clean and well fed.

He tells them that they can do whatever they want, as long as they don't cause trouble and obey him and his guards, and suggests them to head the way he came from, in order to reach their "village". They have some days to get used to the place, then Skralekos will assign them some duties. The dark elf doesn't even wait for an answer; he turns and quickly gets back.

If the PCs wish to speak with Skralekos again, they just have to ask around. The dark elf is always doing something somewhere, be it checking the integrity of the barricades, doing an inventory of supplies, giving orders to the guards, or any number of other tasks. To tell the truth, there just isn't that much to do here, so he is never in a hurry.

3. This is the main settled area of the cave.

The immense room is sustained by wide columns, bending and twisting in every direction. The people of the lower prison live in about fifty skin tents, held up by bones or metal poles; only a few torches carried by a couple of persons give off lights. Everyone walks slowly, keeping his eyes on the ground. Within the village, the iron spikes have been removed or bent down, but most villagers are used to walking safely.

What if...?

Let's see what the various people which the PCs may have rescued do, now that they have a limited freedom.

Liviux sticks with the PCs, hoping that they can find some way for his masters to enter the fortress. If he's dead, the party may still be able to use his ring to communicate with the Baatezu, and strike an agreement.

Briwan is going to join the guards. He's a capable fighter and will have no trouble.

Trevoc will act overprotective towards Tilana, and try to find some way to feed both of them. The elf is going to die in a matter of a couple of days no matter what, unless the PCs can come up with some manner of powerful healing that can cure her catatonic state. Only *greater restoration*, *healing*, *wish*, *miracle*, or *limited wish* will do, however. Alternatively, a member of the Bleak Cabal might be able to use his faction abilities to cure her. In any case, Tilana doesn't remember clearly what happened while she was imprisoned, though she feels a very strong urge to stay away from Briwan and Trevoc.

Jillon is going to sneak back into the Upper Prison, hoping to re-enter the graces of his superiors. Not so. He won't be heard of again.

GOLD? LISTEN BERR, GIVE ME
SOMETHING I CAN EAT, OR
SOMETHING I CAN BURN, OR
SOD OFF.
- LOWER PRISON DWELLER

There aren't "shops" here; everyone may or may not be willing to trade something for something else. It takes a Gather Information check to find something; the check takes one hour to make. If a character scores at least 25 on any of these checks, not only he finds what he was looking for, but he also meets someone who is willing to trade a rare item decided by the DM (for example, a magical item, an exotic weapon, or a heavy armor). To reflect the random nature of the market in the lower prison, it is impossible to take 10 on this check.

random nature of the market in the lower prison, it is impossible to take 10 on this check.

- Finding someone willing to trade vital goods such as food, water, or lantern oil: DC 5.
- Finding someone willing to trade goods that can be produced here or that come in good supply from above, such as simple and martial weapons, light and medium armor, or basic equipment such as rope or a tent: DC 10.
- Finding someone willing to trade uncommon goods that can't be easily produced here and don't often come from above, such as potions, alchemical items, or specific spell reagents: DC 20.

Naturally, if the PCs come to know someone who specifically deals with a specific kind of supply, they don't have to make a check to find him.

Apart from the village, the hall contains several wide cloths used to collect moisture, and many skin recipients placed under points where drinkable water trickles down from the ceiling.

There is a secret passage on the room wall on the eastern side. The passage (and the room behind it) has been carefully crafted by the prisoners and is fairly difficult to spot (DC 27), though everyone here knows about it. It leads to a room, 25 meters by 30 meters, where in theory all the prisoners could hide should the need arise (for example, should the creatures of darkness escape). The room contains several large skin barrels full of clean water, and nothing else.

One of the most picturesque figures in the community is Abrit Atticus, a wizard who has been here for almost 30 years. He helped Skralekos in the little coup which gave him the leadership, and he still helps him by casting *detect thoughts* in secret every now and then to make sure that no one plots against the dark elf. In return, Abrit has whatever privileges are worth having in this hole; he gets halfway-decent food and free basic supplies. Also, Skralekos makes sure to warn spellcasting newcomers not to spoil the old man's market for *everburning torches*. Not that it's needed – the spell takes a ruby to cast, and only Abrit seems able to make do without. To tell the truth, the wizard, in his long stay, has learnt to make do without spell components of any kind!

Abrit is an old human, wearing a faded old robe and a large leather cap. Chains of small bones dangle from his long, dirty beard, and deep shadows lurk around his eyes. He *always* talks as if he were angry at the listener, but people tolerate his rudeness because he's just too useful to the community, and Skralekos' thugs will beat the snot out of anyone who attempts to touch him. He is the only one capable of making *everburning torches*, even though he won't do so except for an exceptional offer.

Abrt Atticus		Al. Chaotic Evil	Human Wizard 8 th (Outlands)	CR: 7
Str: 6 (-2)	HP: 8d4 (20)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 9 (-1)	AC: 12 (-1 dex, +3 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 10 (+0)	Initiative: -1 dex	% fail.: 0%		Check pen.: 0
Int: 17 (+3)	Ref: +1 (+2 base, -1 dex)	BAB: +4		Grapple: +2
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +2 (+2 base, +0 con)	Melee: +2 (+4 base, -2 str)		
Cha: 7 (-2)	Will: +5 (+6 base, -1 wis)	Ranged: +3 (+4 base, -1 dex)		
Attacks			Skills	
Unarmed attack, +2 melee, damage 1d3-2 non-lethal			Concentration +12 (+11 ranks, +1 con)	
Feats and special abilities			Decipher script +8 (+6 ranks, +3 int)	
Feats: Still spell, Eschew material, Greater spell penetration, Greater eschew material (he can cast a spell requiring a costly material component without using the component, provided that he spends XP equal to one fifth of the component's value, rounding up; he can also substitute an inexpensive focus for a costly one if he pays XP equal to one fifth the cost of the original focus as he crafts it), Spell penetration, Scribe scroll			Knowledge (Abyss) +16 (+11 ranks, +2 synergy, +3 int)	
Wizard spells/day: 4/5/5/4/2/1 (DC 13+spell level, +1 evocation)			Knowledge (Outlands) +14 (+9 ranks, +2 synergy, +3 int)	
Equipment			Knowledge (Arcana) +14 (+11 ranks, +3 int)	
<i>Amulet of natural armor</i> +3 (moderate transmutation, CL 9)			Spellcraft +17 (+11 ranks, +3 int, +2 synergy)	
Tattered robe and an assortment of bones.				
Spellbook (0 th level: all core; 1 st level: Identify, Jump, Magic missile, Magic weapon, Protection from chaos, Shield, Summon monster I; 2 nd level: Acid arrow, Blindness/deafness, Continual flame, Detect thoughts, Knock, See invisibility; 3 rd level: Dispel magic, Fireball, Flame arrow, Haste, Hold person, Rage; 4 th level: Lesser globe of invulnerability, Remove curse).				

Prepared spells (metamagic is marked in **bold**):

0th level: Acid splash, Detect magic, Prestidigitation, Resistance

1st level: Magic missile, Magic missile, Protection from chaos, Shield, **Still Message**

2nd level: Acid arrow, Blindness/deafness, Detect thoughts, See invisibility

3rd level: Dispel magic, Fireball, Fireball, Haste

4th level: Lesser globe of invulnerability, **Still** Flame arrow

4. There are four guards here at all times. They control the barricade – a tall heap of whatever stuff the prisoners could grab, blocking passage to and from the monster zone. This barricade is made of lots of big metal things. Looking closely, they are hundreds of torture instruments. They have been taken from the monster zone and used to build the barricade. The guards here are reluctant to let the PCs enter. They'll warn the PCs that the last bunch of people that went through – all newcomers like them – haven't returned in days and were certainly killed. If the PCs make it clear that they definitely intend to enter no matter the danger, the guards shift mental gear and ask for a share of any loot found, in return for passage. The details can be negotiated, but if the PCs don't accept to share at least a bit of loot, the guards won't let them pass.

5. It is not quite clear what these long walls were supposed to do, but the prisoners are now using them to cultivate fungi. A dozen people are usually here, carrying water in buckets from the lake to the fungal cultures. These fungi don't suffer from the poison in the water, and greatly reduce its toxicity. Characters that eat a significant amount of mushrooms during a single day must save on Fortitude or take 1 point of Strength damage. As a result, most people in the lower prison are slightly weakened at all times, though some have been here for so long that they've become resistant to the poison and don't suffer from the fungi.

The prisoners don't fish here as they do in area 9, because for some reason the lake creatures attack twice as frequently in the waters around this point.

6. This room as well as room 7 are designed to separate the two main areas. The room is generally empty. The only notable feature is a lever that can cause a heavy grate to fall between this room and room 7, effectively separating them. The grate is parallel to the door, and can be broken with a Strength check (DC 30).

7. This room is similar to room 6. It has a lever, used to cause another identical grate to fall parallel to the door.

8. There are two guards at all times in this area. They mostly serve as messengers between the fisher zone and the village.

9. This area has been turned into a small, primitive harbor. A few of the prisoners have built small hide and bone boats, and use them to fish in the lake. Even if the fishermen never get more than one or two hundred meters from the harbor, it's a dangerous job, because of the hostile creatures of the lake, and the poisonous water; no one ever sails into the lake alone and the fishers are respected by the other inmates. The fish must be treated by exposing it to the cave fungi and then removing its skin, before it can be eaten safely. The whole process takes several days; as a result, the fish is never quite fresh. Still, it's better than eating mushrooms for all your life.

Some of the fishermen also carry skin recipients, and position their ships under several points where a consistent stream of drinkable water falls into the lake. This is a dangerous operation, because the creatures are more frequent near those streams, but it allows the fishermen to collect a good amount of water in a few hours.

If you want to add some combat to the game, have a boat go out to collect water, and have it be attacked by one of the creatures of the lake. It takes a lot of the prisoners' resources and time to make a boat, and the PCs will earn some respect from the people here if they save it (the actual people manning it aren't as important for them). You can find the stats for the creatures in the lake later in this chapter.

10. This room is manned by two guards at all times. The door to enter is a heavy metal door. There are two stone benches here, and a lever that shuts down the eastern passage (which has two heavy grates in place of a door). The guards have orders to keep the door to room **12** shut, always, and to pull the lever should they even just have the feeling that something isn't right. The PCs may convince them to let them look into room **12**, but the guards will stay right behind them with their weapons drawn. There is a rope for the alarm system here, and it's working. A sickly yellow-orange glow comes from the passage to room **12**.

11. This room is similar to room **10**. There are two guards, and the same security system. An eerie green glow comes from the passage to room **13**.

12. Besides the double grates leading to room **10**, there is a steel slab 10 cm thick blocking entrance to this room. The slab has a small square hole to look inside, and what's inside isn't pretty.

The cave contains a colossal creature, held here for who knows how many centuries and hopefully forever. The monster is wormlike, two hundred meters in length and ten meters wide, with ten-meters-long tentacles all around its body. The walls of the cave are covered in fluorescent slime, and ooze tendrils stick from ceiling to floor and all around the creature.

Nothing is known about this creature, but just about everyone agrees that it'd better not be freed, ever.

13. If possible, the horror contained in this room is even worse than the worm of room **12**.

A treelike creature is rooted in the middle of the room. Its trunk is 60 meters wide and it grows up to the ceiling (24 meters) and then bends 90-degrees and follows it for 100 more meters. Snakelike tentacles grow from the floor of the cave, flailing around constantly, and the entire trunk pulsates with green light. What makes the whole scene twice as horrible is the desiccated human corpse that lies just a few meters from the door, in clear sight. It is turned to face to trunk, so its face is hidden, and it looks as if it was drained of all fluids, and it is enveloped in the green tentacles. Every now and then, a hand or shoulder twitches.

If asked, the guards shudder and relate that the body has been there for decades, maybe centuries; no one has any idea of who it was, but everyone, even the most degenerate of the lower prison inhabitants, hopes that it is actually dead despite the twitching. The alternative is too horrific to contemplate. It is not clear whether the plant could extend beyond the door if it were to be opened, or whether the corpse could be retrieved, but no one is willing to experiment.

14. There are four guards here at all times. They control the barricade that prevents the creatures of darkness from entering the settled area. The barricade is mostly composed of bones, metal bits, and rubble. If the PCs wish to enter the monster zone, the guards want a small share of any loot in return for allowing passage, but a good diplomat could convince them that there's no need for that. The caverns on the eastern side are used as storage zones; there are several hide sacks full of raw fish and some waterskins. There are also wide cloths hanging in the caves, used to collect moisture.

If you want to add some combat to the game, you may have one of the monsters beyond the barricade crawl out and attack. You can find the stats for several creatures of darkness below.

The monster zone

While the PCs stay in the monster zone, there's a 50% chance every ten minutes they stay here that they are attacked by one of the creatures lurking here. The monsters employ hit and run tactics, using their superior speed and nerve-wracking stealth. Most creatures of darkness are fast enough to close and strike with a partial charge during a surprise round, dealing sneak attack damage. Then they'll try to retreat to the shadows and disappear until the next attack.

All doors in the monster zone are Large sized and wide open, though they are almost too broken to be useful anyway.

Don't be afraid of throwing nasty odds at the PCs, forcing them to retreat and rest before mounting another raid. If the PCs retreat from the monster zone, the numbers of the creatures will be quickly replenished. Assume that any room the PCs clear will be infested again by creatures of similar CR within 12 hours.

An assortment of creatures of darkness for use in this chapter follows. You can also use the template to make more varied monsters. Chapter 3 contains several more creatures of darkness, though it should be noted that dire animals of darkness are very rare inside the prison.

More of the dark

The inmates don't have the strength to clear out the monster zone, and the PCs don't have the numbers. Still, a party of PCs at this level can wipe the floor with a sizable number of them. But no matter what, after a few hours the creatures are as numerous as ever within the monster zone.

Maybe the unexplored tunnels that connect the upper and lower prison are linked to the outside as well. Maybe the Abyss itself generates more and more of the creatures.

Whatever the answer, the monster zone can't be fully and permanently secured, not without an army.

Cheetah of darkness		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: 16 (+3)	HP: 3d8+6 (19)	AC: 17 (+6 dex, +1 natural)	Speed: 21	Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0
Dex: 23 (+6)	Initiative: +6 dex		BAB: +2	
Con: 15 (+2)	Ref: +9 (+3 base, +6 dex)	For: +5 (+3 base, +2 con)	Melee: +5 (+2 base, +3 strength)	Grapple: +5
Int: 3 (-4)	Will: +2 (+1 base, +1 wis)		Ranged: +8 (+2 base, +6 dexterity)	
Wis: 12 (+1)			Skills	
Cha: 6 (-2)			Hide +16 (+2 ranks, +8 racial, +6 dex)	
Attacks				Listen +4 (+1 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)
Bite +8 melee, damage 1d6+3, and				Move silently +16 (+2 ranks, +8 racial, +6 dex)
2 claws, +3 melee, damage 1d2+1				Spot +4 (+1 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)
Feats and special abilities				
Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse, Mobility				
Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, darkvision 18 mt, blindsight 36 mt, scent.				
Sprint (ex): 1/hour can charge up to 210 meters away.				
Trip (ex): if it hits with a claw or bite, it may attempt to trip the opponent as a free action without drawing an attack of opportunity; the opponent cannot counter-trip if the attempt fails.				

Ape of darkness		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: 21 (+5) Dex: 19 (+4) Con: 14 (+2)	HP: 4d8+11 (29) AC: 16 (-1 size, +4 dex, +3 natural) Initiative: +4 dex	Speed: 15 Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0		
Int: 3 (-4) Wis: 12 (+1) Cha: 7 (-2)	Ref: +8 (+4 base, +4 dex) For: +6 (+4 base, +2 con) Will: +2 (+1 base, +1 wis)	BAB: +3 Grapple: +12 Melee: +7 (+3 base, +5 strength, -1 size) Ranged: +6 (+3 base, +4 dexterity, -1 size)		
Attacks 2 claws, +7 melee reach 3 mt, damage 1d6+5, and Bite +2 melee reach 3 mt, damage 1d6+2		Skills Climb +14 (+3 ranks, +8 racial, +5 str)* Hide +7 (+8 racial, +3 dex, -4 size) Listen +5 (+2 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness) Move silently +11 (+8 racial, +3 dex) Spot +5 (+2 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness) Swim +8 (+4 racial, +8 str)		
Feats and special abilities Feats: Alertness, Toughness, Mobility Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, darkvision 18 mt, blindsight 36 mt, scent.		* it can always take 10		

Wolf of darkness		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 2
Str: 13 (+1) Dex: 19 (+4) Con: 15 (+2)	HP: 2d8+4 (13) AC: 16 (+4 dex, +2 natural) Initiative: +4 dex	Speed: 21 Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0		
Int: 3 (-4) Wis: 12 (+1) Cha: 6 (-2)	Ref: +7 (+3 base, +4 dex) For: +5 (+3 base, +2 con) Will: +1 (+0 base, +1 wis)	BAB: +1 Grapple: +2 Melee: +2 (+1 base, +1 strength) Ranged: +5 (+1 base, +4 dexterity)		
Attacks Bite +3 melee, damage 1d6+1		Skills Hide +12 (+8 racial, +4 dex) Listen +3 (+2 ranks, +1 wis) Move silently +13 (+1 ranks, +8 racial, +4 dex) Spot +3 (+2 ranks, +1 wis) Survival +1 wis*		
Feats and special abilities Feats: Track, Weapon Focus (bite), Mobility Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, blindsight 36 mt, scent. Trip (ex): if it hits with a bite, it may attempt to trip the opponent as a free action without drawing an attack of opportunity; the opponent cannot counter-trip if the attempt fails.		* +4 racial bonus when tracking by scent		

Polar bear of darkness		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 5
Str: 27 (+8) Dex: 17 (+3) Con: 19 (+4)	HP: 8d8+32 (68) AC: 17 (+3 dex, +5 natural, -1 size) Initiative: +3 dex	Speed: 18 Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0		
Int: 3 (-4) Wis: 12 (+1) Cha: 6 (-2)	Ref: +9 (+6 base, +3 dex) For: +10 (+6 base, +4 con) Will: +3 (+2 base, +1 wis)	BAB: +6 Grapple: +18 Melee: +13 (+6 base, +8 strength, -1 size) Ranged: +8 (+6 base, +3 dexterity, -1 size)		
Attacks 2 claws, +13 melee, damage 1d8+8, and Bite +8 melee, damage 2d6+4		Skills Hide +8 (+1 rank, +8 racial, +3 dex, -4 size)* Listen +5 (+4 ranks, +1 wis) Move silently +11 (+8 racial, +3 dex) Spot +7 (+6 ranks, +1 wis) Swim +16 (+8 racial, +8 str)**		
Feats and special abilities Feats: Endurance, Run, Track, Mobility Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, darkvision 18 mt, blindsight 36 mt, scent, improved grab (claw)		* the polar bear of darkness, being actually black, lacks the racial bonus to hide in snowy environments ** it can always take 10, and it can run while swimming (in a straight line only)		

Eagle of darkness		Al. Chaotic Evil	Small Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 1
Str: 10 (+0)	HP: 1d8+1 (5)	Speed: 12, 30 fly (average)		
Dex: 19 (+4)	AC: 16 (+4 dex, +1 natural, +1 size)	Armor: none		
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +4 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 3 (-4)	Ref: +6 (+2 base, +4 dex)	BAB: +0	Grapple: -4	
Wis: 14 (+2)	For: +5 (+2 base, +1 con)	Melee: +1 size		
Cha: 6 (-2)	Will: +2 wis	Ranged: +5 (+4 dex, +1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 talons +5 melee, damage 1d4, and Claw, +0 melee, damage 1d4		Hide +12 (+8 racial, +4 dex)		
Feats and special abilities		Listen +2 wis		
Feats: Weapon Finesse, Mobility		Move silently +12 (+8 racial, +4 dex)		
Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, blindsight 36 mt.		Spot +4 (+4 ranks, +2 wis, +8 racial)		

After the PCs have performed their first raid in the monster zone, Skralekos will show up to check with them. He will politely ask them to leave half of the loot they found for use by the community, and take the occasion to mention that he wants to keep tabs on who has magic in the lower prison, so they should inform him immediately should they give or trade for magical items with anyone. He will also ask several casual questions, such as what kind of creatures they met, and how far they got. This last one, though, is what he is really interested in. He is afraid that the PCs find the book, read it, and discover the portal. Unless the PCs are real leatherheads, they won't mention it, and canny characters should overinflate their difficulties and say that they didn't get far.

In any case, the minute Skralekos starts thinking that the PCs have a chance to reach the book, he will try to get rid of them. However, he doesn't want to directly confront them, not wanting to have to give explanations to the rest of the prisoners. He will wait for them to begin another raid, and then he will kill the guards at the barricade the PCs crossed, using a slashing weapon. Hopefully, the heroes will try to get back there when they are too exhausted to fight any more, but they'll find the barricade closed with noone on the other side to help them opening it. Skralekos can say that some creatures of darkness must have escaped and killed the guards; naturally, he will deny any involvement on his part. The real confrontation is postponed to when the PCs will pull out their knowledge of the portal leading out.

15. This bloodied room is largely empty.

Like all the rooms in this area, pools of dried blood dot the floor and the walls are lined with rusty steel manacles. The chains are spiked, and the manacles have barbs and serrated blades on the inside, making them a torture implement by themselves.

Since this room contained rows and rows of torture tables, the prisoners of the lower prison often targeted it for their raids, to collect wood and metal. Often, the creatures of darkness would take advantage of the men carrying the bulky tables, and strike at the most unexpected moments. There are several skeletons, mostly near the door (the raiders never saw the need to explore the 40x70 meters room completely). Near the end of it, though, there's a foreign corpse. The body is half-eaten and surrounded by fetid fluids. The unlucky sod escaped from his cell above, fled to the isolation block in the upper prison, and climbed down the hole, fighting dozens of creatures of darkness. He arrived in the middle of the monster zone, and ran into the darkness up to this room. Once he reached the opposite wall, he was in a dead end and the monsters got him.

They didn't get the stuff he brought back from the prison, though: a dagger, a cold iron mace, 20 gold coins, a chain shirt and two *potions of bull's strength* (faint transmutation, CL 3) that he stole from a guard. Three eagles of darkness are pecking at the remains, trying to get to the flesh under the chain shirt. When they spot the PCs' lights, they fly high near the ceiling and wait for them to get near the corpse, then attack.

16. This room is empty. Being very close to one of the barricades, it has been thoroughly raided.

17. The wide, utterly dark corridors of the monster zone are silent and still. Except for the occasional flicker just beyond the range of the light, and for the hiss or step of some unknown enemy

IN THE ZONE,
NO ONE CAN HEAR
YOU SCREAM
- A BARRICADE
GUARD

waiting in ambush. If the PCs pass in front of the door to room **20** without opening it, the monsters in that room will get out and strike at their back. It could be interesting to note that the door to room **19** has been bashed down – from the inside.

18. This room is *huge*, almost 100 meters long and 80 meters wide.

As the PCs wander it in the darkness, they find huge iron cages, shattered splinters of wood, wheels, iron maidens and other large torture implements, steel chains dangling from the roof, skulls and bones lying on the floor, and lots of other rubbish. Though everything useful and small enough to be carried has been taken away during the raids by the most daring of the prisoners, there's still enough junk here to give plenty of hiding places to all manner of dark things.

Every time that the PCs stop for more than a few seconds to search, talk, cast spells, or anything else, they will be attacked by one or more of the creatures, striking from hiding and then going back.

19. As soon as the PCs enter this room, a wolf of darkness strikes at them ferociously. They'll likely dispatch it easily and check the area: the room seems to extend into a fairly deep cave. At less than 20 meters from the entrance, they find a pile of steel chains in relatively good condition. If finding good items that haven't been raided this close to the barricade doesn't tip them off, and they walk into the cave, they'll find themselves right in the middle of a lair of wolves of darkness. There are 40 of them, and if the PCs disturb them, they'll chase them until they are either dead, or until they flee out of the monster zone.

If the PCs manage to patiently wipe them out, they can find the remains of dozens of other creatures, and of a few humanoids as well, at the bottom of the cave. The wolf dragged the bodies here, so there are several useful items, including a lantern, six torches, a still-intact *potion of greater magic fang* +3 (moderate transmutation, CL 9), a steel mace, three daggers, a longsword and a chain mail. If the PCs search the room and roll at least 25 on the check, they can also find a set of masterwork thieves' tools and a *ring of jumping* (faint transmutation, CL 2).

20. There are two cheetahs of darkness lurking in this room. They are mighty hungry and will strike at the first poor berk that enters the room. Apart from this, the room is mostly empty. There's a huge (4 meters tall, 2 meters wide) filing cabinet on the northern side. *Detect magic* shows an aura of faint necromancy, and it is trapped:

CR 3; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; lock bypass (Open Lock DC 30); Atk +12 ranged (1d8 plus poison, arrow); poison (Large monstrous scorpion venom, DC 14 Fortitude save resists, 1d4 Con/1d4 Con); Search DC 19; Disable Device DC 15.

The cabinet contains bunches of magically preserved, if disturbing, human organs, alphabetically sorted, maybe by one of the less chaotic tanar'ri.

21. The wall on the western side of this area has a wide hole leading into a cave, which snakes upwards into the rock. It eventually leads to the isolation cellblock in the upper prison, after several hundreds of meters and assuming that one doesn't get lost in a side cave. Or eaten by any of the hundreds, maybe thousands, of creatures of darkness of all kinds that lurk in the tunnels.

Four polar bears of darkness get out of the hole as soon as the PCs approach and attack. After a couple of rounds, however, they let out some fearful high-pitched shrieks and run back into the tunnel as fast as they can. Then there's a moment of complete silence. A low growl. Out of room **22**, barely fitting through the door, enters a large and terrifying dark beast. Spawned by the pitch darkness of this layer, it has only fed on others of its kind up to now, and is eager to taste some fresh flesh.

ACTUALLY, WE HEAR YOU
ALRIGHT. ONLY, WE DON'T
GIVE A DAMN.
- ANOTHER BARRICADE
GUARD

Dire tiger of darkness		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 10
Str: 27 (+8)	HP: 19d8+57 (142)	Speed: 18		
Dex: 19 (+4)	AC: 19 (-1 size, +4 dex, +6 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 17 (+3)	Initiative: +4 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 3 (-4)	Ref: +15 (+11 base, +4 dex)	BAB: +14	Grapple: +26	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +14 (+11 base, +3 con)	Melee: +21 (+14 base, +8 strength, -1 size)		
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: +7 (+6 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +17 (+14 base, +4 dexterity, -1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws +22 melee, damage 2d4+8, and		Hide +14 (+4 ranks, +8 racial, +4 dex, +2 stealthy, -4 size)		
Bite +16 melee, damage 2d6+4		Jump +14 (+6 ranks, +8 str)		
Feats and special abilities		Listen +6 (+3 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Feats: Alertness, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Improved Natural Attack (bite), Run, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (claw), Mobility, Spring Attack		Move silently +17 (+3 ranks, +8 racial, +4 dex, +2 stealthy)		
Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, blindsight 36 mt, scent, improved grab (bite).		Spot +7 (+4 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Pounce (ex): can make a full attack on a charge, including two rake attacks at +20 for 2d4+4 damage.		Swim +10 (+2 ranks, +8 str)		

The dire tiger of darkness will pounce on the closest member of the party during the surprise round. After that, it will make use of its spring attack to avoid full attacks from the party's strong fighters and staying in the darkness as much as possible. It will attempt to sunder torches, lanterns and other light sources carried by the party (the AC of a torch is 14 + dex modifier of the character holding it; its hardness is 5, and it has 20 hit points; a lantern has the same AC, hardness 10 and 10 hit points).

Killing the dire tiger of darkness will cause the other creatures around to become wary of the PCs for a while. They won't suffer any random encounter for the next two hours.

22. This is the room where the tiger was lurking. It is empty of creatures of darkness now. Living, at least. There are the mangled corpses of four apes of darkness, and several bones. The room has lots of steel cages. Some are several meters tall and wide, while some are less than one meter in each dimension. From the skeletons within, it seems that the demons enjoyed putting people in far too small cages for long periods of time. Some of the skeletons are even deformed because of this. In the back of the room, there's a bunch of *staves of healing*. Presumably, the fiends didn't want their toys to die too soon. However, only one still has magic (moderate conjuration, CL 8, 29 charges).

23. The passage leads to a cave into the rock. Odd enough, a faint reddish light can be seen radiating from the bottom of the cave. When the PCs get there, they find themselves in an old library or archive.

There are frail shelves stacked against the cave walls, with many ancient books and tomes. A couple of the wooden frames have crashed on the floor, so the floor near the walls is littered with books, many of which have crumbled to dust. On the middle of the floor, the source of light. A human skeleton, its clothes long ripped to shreds, still holding firmly a holy symbol and a mace.

This last item is what gives off the light. It is a *+1 flaming mace* (moderate evocation, CL 10), its head still wrapped in flames. If the PCs search the body, they can't find anything else, but if they roll at least 20 on the Search check, they can notice something strange. The cloth on its back, where it hasn't been shredded by the monsters, is pierced at hearth height, with a way smaller and more precise hole than what the claws of the creatures of darkness could do. The corresponding rib is chipped, too. A healing check (DC 20, trained only) can confirm that a piercing weapon did this.

Near the flaming weapon, at just a few centimeters, lies a huge leather-bound book; it is slightly scorched, extremely old, and covered in blood, but the inside is readable. It is written in Abyssal language – if the PCs can't read it, someone at the village certainly can, but this means letting someone know whatever it contains. It can also be read with a decipher script check, DC 25.

The book is a log of events for a specific year in the lower prison. It seems like it dates back to when the place was actually used. Though most of the pages are faded, missing, or crumbled, the most interesting part is still clear. The tanar'ri found a portal on the other side of the lake, and ana-

lyzed it, determining that it leads to Oinos on the Gray Waste, and that it can be opened with some salt, rubbed on the fresh wounds of a mortal. According to the log, the portal was used to gather troops there and fight some Blood War battle, but canny PCs should realize that the events are so far away in time that currently anything could be on the other side.

As soon as he knows this, Liviux will contact his Baatezu superiors and tell them. They will order him (or the PCs if the tiefling is dead) to go through the portal and determine the exact location of its destination. A small but sufficient quantity of salt can be found at the village.

There are other books as well. They are all similar logs, though they vary in size and format. Some are fairly accurate, detailing most relevant events, but many are very sparse, only noting very important stuff such as the discovery of a new torture technique, or the achievement of some milestone in prisoner survival. Some vary wildly from maniacal detail to bunches of blank pages even within the same log. The dates are approximate at best and in a system that is currently unknown, but the PCs can broadly tell the most ancient logs from the most (so as to say) recent ones.

One of the oldest ones even tells about the two gigantic monsters locked in the rooms **12** and **13**. Apparently, each of them was the scourge of an entire layer of the Abyss, and the tanar'ri teleported them into specially built rooms of this prison in order to get them out of the way. Plus, when they figured how to control them, they could sic them on the baatezu.

The immense worm was caught on a slimy, gooey, swampy layer, where it viciously attacked anything getting in. Apparently, it could sense everything within the layer, and travel very quickly there through some unknown mean. Its tentacles paralyze anything tough enough not to get killed on the first strike (this is actually false), and it regenerates quickly.

The huge tree comes from no other place than Infestant itself. The 329th layer housed this monstrosity long before Ithla-Sathlo claimed it. The tanar'ri had to fight it viciously for literally days before being able to finally teleport its roots to its specially prepared cage. The plant had slowly extended its tentacled area to the whole layer. The flailing roots can grab a person, drain the life out of him, and still keep him alive for decades, indefinitely, until it finally dies of old age. At which point, it becomes a bodak, and *still* prisoner.

24. This room has lots and lots of rusty spiked chains attached to the ceiling and coming down like vines in patches. Some of the patches have skeletons entangled within them. The chains give plenty of places to hide, but it is fairly difficult to go around without accidentally hitting one, so attempts to move silently here suffer a -4 circumstance penalty.

When the PCs come in, they can hear an eerie tingling of chains coming from some place near the middle of the room, coupled with grunts. One of the chain patches has a dead ape of darkness, trapped in much the same way. Another ape is tearing at it with its claws and eating it. Shortly after the PCs have entered, it will spot their lights, stop, and try to hide to attack them. When the PCs spot it, two wolves of darkness rush in from the opposing door as well, ignoring the noise they make.

25. This room contains dozens of braziers, and racks of small torture instruments. A polar bear of darkness is hiding and waiting to jump at the PCs.

26. There are a half dozen half-eaten corpses here, all that remains of the last expedition. They have their equipment: a half plate armor, a chain mail armor, a hide armor, a *+1 sword* (faint evocation, CL 3), a greataxe, a masterwork falchion, two daggers, a large wooden shield, a bone buckler, three potions of *cure light wounds* (faint conjuration, CL 1) and a bunch of scattered gold coins (134 of them).

27. Six eagles of darkness circle on the roof, at 24 meters height. The PCs can't see them, but the eagles can see them. The evil birds will strike as the PCs cross the corridor, attempting to deal damage and escape without getting killed.

28. This room contains another of the tanar'ri twisted torture games. The central part is occupied by a 60 meters by 60 meters labyrinth made of black metal panes, and the inside is magically lit. The panes are about 6 meters tall, and raised platforms placed at the four corners of the room allow a full view from the above of the whole structure.

The creatures of darkness don't go into the maze, but that doesn't make it a safe place. The maze is trapped with dozens of lethal devices, more and more dangerous as one comes close to the center. All the traps are mechanical and automatically reset (though some need to have their supply of ammunition replenished every now and then), and vary from the common arrow trap to insane whirling, burning, crushing, poisoned devices of doom. Currently though, any given device has a 40% chance to malfunction due to age.

If the PCs for some reason decide to go into the maze, assume that there is a random mechanical trap every 1d6 meters. The first 10 traps are CR 1, the second 10 are CR 2, and so on. There's nothing special in the middle. It's a tanar'ri death game, what do you expect? They told the prisoners that they would be freed if they reached the end alive. When, every now and then, one did, they laughed, reloaded the traps, and left him there.

GOOD FISHING
TODAY
- A BOATTIAN,
GLAD BECAUSE HE'S
STILL ALIVE

29. Whatever this room was used for, it has been thoroughly raided. There are several empty pits around it. They are one meter deep, but the length and width vary from one to two meters. There's some mud on the bottom, and steel rings stuck to the floor, under the mud, but nothing else. For some undefined reason, even though there doesn't seem to be anything particularly dangerous in this moment, this room feels even creepier than the others.

Truth is, while any place in this prison is good to break the body and maybe mind of a sod, this is the place where the tanar'ri broke their prisoners' souls. The captives were chained inside a hole, and then subjected to every kind of psychological abuse and forced to perform evil acts on their companions, over and over again, if they wanted to get out. Over and over again, until they got used to it, and then over and over again, until they enjoyed it. *Then* the demons killed the sod, certain that he would be back to the Abyss as a petitioner soon enough. That's the same treatment they planned and performed on the group to which Tilana, Briwan and Trevoc belonged. This place gained more souls to the Abyss than a whole brothel of succubi, and there's some mental residue still floating around.

However, the PCs can't find this dark (unless maybe they pick up all the books in room **23** and read them carefully).

30. There are four cheetahs of darkness prowling this corridor. If the PCs are entering from room **4**, then as soon as part of the barricade is removed to let the characters in, the cheetahs run outside and attack the guards and PCs.

31. This room contained lots of assorted torture devices, and many of them have been used to build the barricades. There are still racks of big weirdly shaped metal tools, their exact use not quite clear to people not expert of this field.

The lower prison lake

The lake is a flat, cold surface, broken by ripples created by the unknown monsters lurking in its depths. The sounds of water dropping and pouring from above can be heard in the darkness. The underground lake is largely unexplored; the last person who did the full tour from area **9** to area **5** was Skralekos, and that was many years ago.

If the PCs want to explore the lake, the best thing they can do is fly. Almost all of the monsters in the water (except for the squirtfish) can't do a thing to a blood a few meters up in the air, so flying characters can tour the site quickly and without too much danger. Failing that, the PCs may hope to borrow a boat. The locals won't want to even hear about it though. It takes lots of time and re-

sources to build a boat, and “exploring” the lake is suicidal in their eyes. Not that they care much about the PCs, but they don’t want to lose a boat. Unless the characters can make an extraordinary offer (say, useful magical items), there is no way they can convince the fishers to let them take a boat.

Building a boat from bones and leather, should the characters decide that they are in no hurry after all, can be done with any appropriate Craft skill. A rowboat here is valued 900 gold pieces, and the time to craft it goes up accordingly, because of the scarcity of appropriate materials (good leather, wood or bones of the appropriate size and shape, decent wire and rope, etcetera) and the lack of good tools. The DC to build a rowboat in these conditions is 15.

Finally, the PCs might decide to steal a boat. That’s hard, because there’s almost always someone fishing near the harbor and there’s no way they can fail to notice a missing boat.

The entire lake is toxic (DC 14, primary damage 1d4 Strength, secondary damage 1 Strength), and all of the creatures that live in it are just as bad if not worse. Here are the stats for a couple of the monsters of the lake. There’s also a variety of relatively harmless fiendish fishes as well, though they tend to have stronger teeth and a worse temper than usual.

Squirtfish		Al. Neutral	Medium animal (Abyss)	CR: 2
Str: 10 (+0)	HP: 4d8+8 (26)	Speed: 12 swim		Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0
Dex: 14 (+2)	AC: 16 (+2 dex, +4 natural)	BAB: +3		
Con: 15 (+2)	Initiative: +2 dex	Melee: +3 base		Grapple: +3
Int: 1 (-5)	Ref: +4 (+4 base, +2 dex)	Ranged: +5 (+3 base, +2 dex)		
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +6 (+4 base, +2 con)			
Cha: 2 (-4)	Will: +2 (+1 base, +1 wis)			
Attacks		Skills		
Bite +5 melee, damage 1d6		Move silently +5 (+3 ranks, +2 dex)		
Feats and special abilities		Spot +5 (+4 ranks, +1 wis)		
Feats: Ability focus (poison spray), Weapon finesse.				
Low-light vision, blindsight 36 mt.				
Poison spray (ex): can shoot a stream of poison once per hour as a ranged touch attack within 36 meters; the poison has DC 16 based on constitution, and deals 1d6 strength as primary damage and 1d4 strength as secondary damage.				

This annoying fishy creature is dangerous in packs. As a by-product of its respiration within the toxic water, it maintains a sac of concentrated venom which it can squirt at fairly long distances with nasty accuracy, and which can affect even creatures that live in the lake (though they have a +2 bonus to save against the poison). A school of squirtfishes will concentrate fire on a target until it is completely paralyzed, and then chew on it as it lays helpless.

Squid, giant		Al. Neutral	Medium animal (Abyss)	CR: 9
Str: 26 (+8)	HP: 12d8+18 (72)	Speed: 24 swim		Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0
Dex: 17 (+3)	AC: 17 (+3 dex, +6 natural, -2 size)	BAB: +9		
Con: 13 (+1)	Initiative: +3 dex	Melee: +15 (+9 base, +8 str, -2 size)		Grapple: +29
Int: 1 (-5)	Ref: +11 (+8 base, +3 dex)	Ranged: +10 (+9 base, +3 dex, -2 size)		
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +9 (+8 base, +1 con)			
Cha: 2 (-4)	Will: +5 (+4 base, +1 wis)			
Attacks		Skills		
10 tentacles +15 melee reach 9 mt., damage 1d6+8, and		Listen +10 (+7 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Bite +10 melee reach 4.5 mt., damage 2d8+4		Spot +11 (+8 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Feats and special abilities		Swim +16 (+8 str, +8 racial*)		
Feats: Alertness, Diehard, Endurance, Toughness (2).		* for special actions and avoiding hazards; can always take 10 while swimming; can run in a straight line while swimming		
Low-light vision, blindsight 36 mt, improved Grab (tentacle), constrict (1d6+8 damage), +4 racial bonus on grapple checks.				
Jet (ex): can jet backward 1/round as a full-round action, at a speed of 96 meters. It must move in a straight line, but does not provoke attacks of opportunity.				

The variety of giant squid that lives in the lower prison lake lacks the ink cloud attack (as it would be mostly useless here). It does have a big advantage, though: it can grapple people out of boats while staying submerged, and drag them in the water, where the poison will paralyze them quickly. This makes the giant squid a lethal encounter. Fortunately, only a few of these beasts exist in the lake. Much like the creatures of darkness themselves, it is not clear whether there actually is an ecological system going on or the Abyss itself spawns these monsters.

At the far corner of the lake, the floor rises until the water is just a few centimeters deep. The cave proceeds into the darkness; grayish water covers its floor entirely. The portal is at its bottom, closed. Analyze portal or similar magic can tell that it leads to some place on the Gray Waste.

If the PCs attempt to use the portal, they suffer 3d10 damage and are flung back into the cave. The spell is as strong as ever. However, anyone else can pass through with no problems. When the baatezu know about this, they require someone (Liviux, for example) to get through and find where the portal is connected to. If Liviux is still around, he'll volunteer and warn the PCs that he isn't getting back until the army arrives; otherwise, the PCs have got to find someone else, capable to survive Oinos for the time (hours or days at DM's discretion, depending on the skill of the person) needed to discover his position. After that, they'll have to use Liviux's ring to tell the devils where the portal is located. Then they have to wait for the army to arrive.

Unless the PCs have taken extraordinary care not to be seen while traveling through the river, by this time Skralekos knows that they've been there. Remember, the dark elf already has suspicions on the PCs, he has spies throughout the lower prison community, and Abrit the wizard can cast *detect thoughts* for him (he'll only cast it on the PCs as a last resort, but he will use it on any other person they contact). When the devil troops are just about to start pouring in through the portal, the dark elf together with Abrit and four of his thugs will find and confront the PCs.

Skralekos has learnt combat from the creatures of darkness. Under the effect of Abrit's *haste* spell, he'll strike and retreat, leaving the thugs to soak up most of the damage. The wizard himself will cast a globe of invulnerability and stay outside the PCs' field of vision, in the darkness. There, he'll ready actions to counterspell. If the PCs are heavy on magic, Skralekos may eventually retreat to the globe of invulnerability for protection.

In the middle of the combat, the baatezu troops start arriving. If the action is taking place near the portal, there is a shimmering and dozens of barbazu start marching in, shortly followed by a gelugon who starts freezing the lake to let the troops across. Skralekos sees this and, after a short moment of disbelief, quaffs his *potion of flying* and vanishes in the darkness, moving as fast as possible back to the lower prison's halls. If the combat is happening somewhere else, the baatezu have already started crossing the lake. A gelugon and several barbazu march towards the scene of the fight; Skralekos spots them before anyone else thanks to his superior darkvision and starts running away.

Whatever the case, there are little chances of catching him immediately. Thanks to *haste*, if flying his speed is 27, and on land he moves at 21. Additionally, since he is perfectly familiar with the ground of the lower prison, he can run normally despite the spiked floor. The dark elf heads eastwards, to the cells containing the two monsters. He plans on killing the guards and free the worm, then run to the village and hide in the secret room with his most faithful followers. Hopefully, the

What if...?

Good PCs may decide to tell everyone in the lower prison about the portal, before the baatezu arrive. Remember, though: good deeds in the Abyss have a tendency to backfire. Specifically, if the PCs haven't yet figured out that Skralekos already knows about the portal and doesn't want anyone to use it, they are in for some big trouble.

The dark elf will try to persuade the people that the PCs are lying, and a verbal duel between him and the PCs will ensue. The PCs start with the upper hand, thanks to the sudden flame of hope in the inmates' hearts. However, they might be forced to reveal that they are going to let the baatezu in, and that will be a potent fuel for Skralekos' arguments – especially if the PCs initially attempt to hide it. Most of the people here are on the chaotic evil side of the spectrum, and they will be (correctly) dubious of the baatezu's good intentions.

If they are convinced that the PCs were lying and possibly attempting to trap them, the characters will better flee or they'll be lynched. Fortunately, the lower prison doesn't lack places to hide while waiting for the devils to show up.

worm will destroy the baatezu and then... well, the *then* can take care of itself; the dark elf doesn't have the time or clarity of mind to think his plan through. He figures he can blame everything on the PCs afterwards.

Unless the PCs are extraordinarily quick in some way, they will arrive far too late. They'll hear screams from the darkness, inhuman roaring so loud that it sounds like the walls might shatter, and then something impossibly huge crawling towards the village. Opening the door has automatically ended the spells that prevented the worm from bashing down the wall. The antechamber to its cell has been destroyed, leaving only some blood-spattered stones and some bits of the guards; the cell itself is empty, Skralekos is nowhere to be seen. The silence of darkness is shattered by screams, cries, the shouts of baatezu giving orders, readying for battle, and the earth-shaking roar of the titanic monster.

The Worm		Al. Chaotic Evil	Colossal Aberration (Abyss)	CR: 29
Str: 48 (+19)	HP: 90d8+1170 (1575)	Speed: 12		
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 28 (+26 natural, -8 size)	Armor: none		
Con: 36 (+13)	Initiative: +0 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: -	Ref: +30 base	BAB: +67	Grapple: +102	
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +43 (+30 base, +13 con)	Melee: +78 (+67 base, +19 str, -8 size)		
Cha: 2 (-4)	Will: +47 base	Ranged: +59 (+67 base, -8 size)		
Attacks				
Bite +78 melee reach 4.5 mt., damage 4d8+19, and				
100 tentacles +73 melee reach 12 mt., damage 3d6+9				
Feats and special abilities				
Size: the creature is 200 meters long and 10 meters wide. It has about a hundred tentacles, but it can only attack a single creature with three tentacles at a time.				
Darkvision 18 meters, regeneration 50 (nothing currently known deals normal damage; any attack that would slay it instantly such as <i>disintegrate</i> or <i>finger of death</i> deals 1585 nonlethal damage instead). Mindless.				
Tremorsense (ex) extending to any square it has passed on, through the goo it leaves behind.				
At will – <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus any creature it is grappling). However, the worm is subject to the usual limitations of the 76 th layer of the Abyss.				
If the worm decides to grapple with a tentacle, then each tentacle can grapple a different creature with no penalties.				
The tentacles can be attacked separately from the body; they have AC 22 and 20 hit points. A severed tentacle regenerates back in 1d4+1 rounds.				
Improved grab (bite, huge or smaller creatures only), swallow whole (2d8+10 physical damage and 10 acid damage per round, a creature can cut the worm open to get out by dealing 30 damage against AC 14; the hole regenerates back after the creature has exited).				
Spit (ex): it can spit a stream of brownish goo within 30 meters that entangles the creature it hits and creatures around him. The worm makes a ranged touch attack; the creature hit is automatically entangled, while creatures within 9 meters can save on Reflex versus DC 55 (dex based) to avoid it. Entangled creatures can escape with a Strength or Escape artist check versus DC 68 (con based). The goo becomes weak enough to escape automatically after 90 minutes.				

It's not long before the forces of Rothakon above start wondering what the hell is going on and decide to check up. Soon, a three-way battle between the baatezu, the tanar'ri, and the worm creature rages throughout the lower prison and slowly expands upwards. The folks of the lower prison aren't really a factor; some hide in their secret room while the rest get mercilessly crushed by one force or the other. The situation quickly evolves to this point:

- The lower prison is hell. Screams and the stench of the worm's gooey secretions fill the air. The flashes and flames of heavy combat magic illuminate the scene like lightning strikes in a stormy night, enabling the PCs to see the impossibly huge monster devouring demons and devils alike, and the fiends ripping at each other.
- The upper prison is in panic. Tanar'ri and guards are rushing downwards as fast as they can, to try and contain the tide, while others flee upwards in terror. Noone is going to mind the PCs much here, unless they really try to draw attention.

- The first floor of the fortress is more organized, though barely so. Tanar'ri captains are struggling to keep the troops in line. If the PCs choose to go here, then they can probably bluff their way to the doors. The passages to the upper floors, however, are well guarded by mercenaries, babaus and bulezaus.
- The second and third floors are on full alert and guarded by elite tanar'ri troops and mercenaries. It will be very hard for the PCs to get here and look around; they'd better just get out and wait for the chaos to increase.

Assuming that the PCs try to head upwards as soon as possible, when they are in the upper prison, the ground shakes and a loud rumbling noise is heard. Then, a cloud of dust and debris hits them violently (they take 2d6 non-lethal damage). When the smoke clears, they see that a relatively small section of the fortress has apparently collapsed on itself. There is now, a short distance from them, a huge hole full of dust, boulders and debris that extends from the lower prison up to the sky. The PCs can climb the pile of rubble and get out of castle Maldithar fairly easily. The explosions, lightning strikes and other magic flashing down below allow them to see relatively well. The majority of the mass has landed directly on the worm. It is pinned, but it isn't dead and it is inexorably freeing itself. It seems that the battle is going to rage on for some more time.

Outside Maldithar

By this time, many of the mercenaries are running away, out of the fortress. Since they seem to know where to go, smart PCs will follow them and possibly question them (it's not like they have any interest in the PCs now). They are heading towards point where they arrived; a barge led by marraenoloths is supposed to take them away.

Outside, the darkness stretches into infinity. From the rubble you just crawled out of, you can see more flashes of light, and you can hear the roar of the worm. The only other source of illumination is the torches of the fleeing mercenary forces, about five hundred men. They form a line snaking through the darkness, headed away from the castle.

Unfortunately, the lights immediately start attracting creatures of darkness by the dozen. If the PCs join the mercs' column – none of the bashers care much about them – they see tired faces, becoming progressively more worried. Every minute or so, a series of screams from somewhere in the flanks announces another strike by the layer's denizens. A light goes out, then it's over; the march doesn't even stop. If it seems that the PCs can take it, the DM could have them too get attacked.

Alternatively, the PCs could decide to follow the soldiers from afar. This is easy; the mercenaries are the biggest light source by far and in the utter darkness of the layer, they can be seen from miles. If the PCs have their own light sources, however, they are too easy targets for the layer's creatures. Most of the biggest monsters are busy attacking the column, but that won't prevent some of the weaker creatures from paying a visit to the PCs.

If, instead, the PCs are somehow proceeding in the dark, the

What if...?

It should be fairly clear that even if the PCs could bring the Orb back to the Gardener, it would be too late to save his plants. Besides, even the most loyal and dedicated character by now should be only thinking about getting out of this place.

If the PCs, instead, stick around to see the end of the battle, they find out that the tanar'ri are losing and fleeing the fortress. However, the monster worm is proving too much for the baatezu to handle.

The devils eventually decide that it would take them far too much effort to drive the worm away and defend the fortress, so they decide to retreat through the portal.

If the PCs had some kind of agreement with the baatezu, they should realize that the fiends aren't going to be happy about the outcome, and that whatever they agreed to (as well as the PCs' lives) will be forfeit on the basis that the fortress wasn't conquered.

The fortress is left unapproachable. It is swarmed by creatures of darkness, and the worm roams the surrounding area.

What if...?

If the PCs choose to avoid the mercenary column and head elsewhere, there's no problem. For what they know, it's a bad idea because they are wasting a chance to flee on the barge. In fact, though, they don't actually have that chance, so they don't lose anything except some more information on their condition.

Anyway, the adventure can proceed normally.

creatures won't bother with them for now. Remember that creatures that can't see have a 50% miss chance against any target, lose their Dexterity bonus to AC, take -2 to AC, move at half speed, and take a -4 to any check requiring sight. Being vulnerable to sneak attacks is suicide in this place; the PCs might get away with it now but only because the soldiers are attracting all the monsters.

The mercenaries are headed towards the rendezvous point with a forced march. A character who walks for more than 8 hours must make a Constitution check, DC 10 (+2 for each extra hour), or become fatigued and take 1d6 nonlethal damage. By the time the soldiers reach the portal, many of them have fallen to exhaustion. Their comrades aren't going to pick them up; they'd rather leave them to certain death than slow down.

If the PCs ask around, they are told that the course they are going to take on the Styx will lead them to Pandemonium. A Gather Information check, DC 20, also reveals that the infernal boatmen aren't going to wait forever; if the soldiers keep marching, they'll arrive just in time. After that, no marraenoloth has been hired to come here before at least one full month. Some of the soldiers know about the forest and the portal it contains – however, they don't know its exact location, and all they know is that the portal leads to Rothakon's home layer. The PCs can only find this dark if they beat DC 35.

When the deserters reach the rendezvous point, they meet a huge barge, constructed of wood and bones, handled by the gaunt marraenoloths, the boatmen of the Styx. They look like tall humanoids, wrapped in hooded robes.

The mercs already have an agreement, and the fiends don't seem to be bothered by the fact that these soldiers have left the field of battle. They lower a plank and the men climb into the boat. If the PCs try to board, however, a hooded fiend stops them. He states that the PCs are not included in the deal, and no amount of persuasion will make he change his mind. The PCs have to make an offer in return for a hike. The fiend will accept any offer without question. Real bloods will know that if the marraenoloth isn't satisfied with the payment, he'll say nothing, but he'll betray them for sure.

That isn't really important though. Both the fiend and the characters are in for a surprise. As the barge sails down the river, after several hours the PCs see the boat, the fiends and the mercenaries slowly become traslucid and vanish. Seconds after the strange phenomenon begins, purple and blue lightning starts crackling around the PCs, dealing 1d6 damage per round. This isn't actual electricity though – it's damage not unlike the one from a botched *teleport*, and no resistance will help against it. The transparent people look surprised and walk away from the PCs. Even the fiends seem slightly puzzled. Nothing the characters can do will stop this, unless they jump out of the barge. In this case, the damage stops and they find themselves in the water of the river with no sign of the boat anywhere. Otherwise, after 5 rounds the boat has completely vanished and the remaining characters fall into the water all the same. They are still on the 76th layer, somewhere between the rendezvous point and the fortress.

Now the characters are free, but they are truly, horribly lost.

Encounter Summary

All combat-related ELs should be increased by 2 as long as the PCs are without any equipment, and by 1 as long as they only have minimal equipment found in the prison.

More of the dark

What is Rothakon doing right now? The retriever came back *without* the orb, even though Lianne reported that it had the item.

Depending on what the PCs did, Lianne may or may not have returned to Castle Maldithar. If so, she was punished by Rothakon for what happened, and then sent back to Infestant to explain everything to her grandfather.

In any case, Rothakon is still in the castle when the attack begins, but not for long. He sneaks out of the castle with an elite guard and heads towards the shifting gate leading out of the 76th layer. By this time, the gate's destination has changed; the half-fiend knows this, but he just wants to get away from the Baatezu and the Worm.

YES! GUYS, WE'RE FINALLY
OUT!

— ONE OF THE HEROES. OPTIMISIT
IS HARD TO SHAKE OFF

<i>Encounter</i>	<i>EL</i>
Avoiding capture upon entering Maldithar	17
Upper Prison	
Escaping the prison through room 1	15
Defeating a small patrol team	5
Defeating a large patrol team	8
Saving Jillon in the first cages room	7
Defeating the Jailmaster	6
Surviving the trap in room 4	7
Defeating the ghoul in the second cages room	1
Defeating Briwan and Trevoc (fatigued, hungry and without equipment)	6
Defeating Briwan and Trevoc (in good health and with some equipment; +1 if they have good equipment given by the PCs)	9 or 10
Defeating Briwan and Trevoc (in good health and with adequate equipment)	10
Avoiding the tiefling guard in room 11	3
Defeating the mercenaries in room 13	10
Defeating the mercenaries in room 14	10
Defeating the animated bone heap in the isolation block	9
Defeating the hanged zombie in the isolation block	1
Saving Livieux in the isolation block	5
Defeating the brown bear of darkness in corridor 28	5
Defeating the carrion crawlers in room 41	7
Lower Prison	
Defeating two of Skralekos' guards	7
Defeating three eagles of darkness in room 15	3
Defeating a wolf of darkness in room 19	2
Defeating 40 wolves of darkness in room 19	10
Defeating two cheetahs of darkness in room 20	5
Surviving the trap in room 20	3
Surviving the polar bears of darkness in room 21 until they flee	7
Defeating the polar bears of darkness in room 21	9
Defeating the dire tiger of darkness	11
Defeating six eagles of darkness in room 27	5
Reaching the far end of the lake	9
Surviving Skralekos, his thugs and Abrit Atticus until the baatezu arrive	10
Defeating Skralekos, his thugs and Abrit Atticus	13

<i>Encounter</i>	<i>EL</i>
Getting out of the prison, avoiding the tanar'ri, the baatezu and the Worm	9
Defeating the Worm (yeah, right)	29
Reaching the Styx and boarding the barge	6

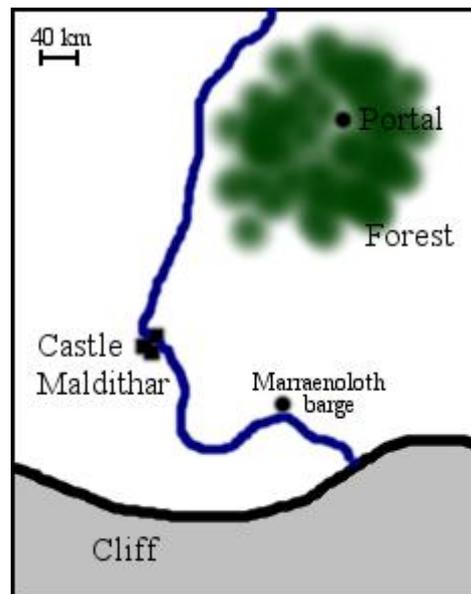
CHAPTER III

In which the Heroes realize that they fled a cage, only to find themselves in a larger one

Survivors

The layer – at least, the part of it that the PCs are in – doesn't have many features. Following the river upstream from the fortress leads to the rendezvous point of the mercenaries. Beyond that, travelers will reach a seemingly infinitely tall cliff, dotted by cracks and caves, infested by creatures of darkness. The river originates from a waterfall, crashing down from above. It is about 30 meters wide and its water is dirty but drinkable. Unfortunately, it is also infested by crocodiles of darkness, and some of them grow to be similar to giant crocodiles.

Following the river downstream, eventually the outskirts of a forest can be reached. The vegetation quickly becomes thick as a body gets close to the center, where it clears somewhat. The rest of the layer is a vast rocky plain, mostly barren except for occasional areas of tall grass. It is also rich in caves and narrow crevices, where the monsters hide. The river doesn't enter the forest; after several hundreds of kilometers it leaves it and proceeds onwards.



Crocodile of darkness	Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: 19 (+4)	HP: 3d8+9 (22)	Speed: 12, 15 swim	
Dex: 16 (+3)	AC: 17 (+3 dex, +4 natural)	Armor: none	
Con: 17 (+3)	Initiative: +3 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0
Int: 3 (-4)	Ref: +6 (+3 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +2	Grapple: +6
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +6 (+3 base, +3 con)	Melee: +6 (+2 base, +4 str)	
Cha: 2 (-4)	Will: +2 (+1 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +5 (+2 base, +3 dex)	
Attacks	Skills		
Bite +6 melee, damage 1d8+6, or	Hide +28 (+3 skill focus, +4 ranks, +8 racial, +3 dex, +10 cover*)		
Tail slap +6 melee, damage 1d12+6	Listen +4 (+1 ranks, +2 alertness, +1 wis)		
Feats and special abilities	Move silently +11 (+8 racial, +3 dex)		
Feats: Alertness, Skill focus (Hide), Mobility	Spot +4 (+1 ranks, +2 alertness, +1 wis)		
Improved grab (bite), can hold breath for 4 times its Constitution before drowning	Swim +12 (+4 str, +8 racial**)		
Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, blindsight 36 mt.	* if it lies in the water with only its eyes out		
	** with special actions or avoiding hazards; it can always take 10; it can run while swimming, though only in a straight line		

Giant crocodile of darkness		Al. Chaotic Evil	Huge Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 5
Str: 27 (+8)	HP: 7d8+28 (59)	Speed: 12, 15 swim		
Dex: 16 (+3)	AC: 15 (+3 dex, +4 natural, -2 size)	Armor: none		
Con: 19 (+4)	Initiative: +3 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 3 (-4)	Ref: +8 (+5 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +5	Grapple: +21	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +9 (+5 base, +4 con)	Melee: +11 (+5 base, +8 str, -2 size)		
Cha: 2 (-4)	Will: +4 (+2 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +6 (+5 base, +3 dex, -2 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
Bite +11 melee reach 3 mt, damage 2d8+12, or Tail slap +11 melee reach 3 mt, damage 1d12+12		Hide +22 (+3 skill focus, +6 ranks, +8 racial, +3 dex, +10 cover*, -8 size)		
Feats and special abilities		Listen +5 (+2 ranks, +2 alertness, +1 wis)		
Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Skill focus (Hide), Mobility		Move silently +11 (+8 racial, +3 dex)		
Improved grab (bite), can hold breath for 4 times its Constitution before drowning		Spot +5 (+2 ranks, +2 alertness, +1 wis)		
Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, blindsight 36 mt.		Swim +16 (+8 str, +8 racial**)		
		* if it lies in the water with only its eyes out		
		** with special actions or avoiding hazards; it can always take 10; it can run while swimming, though only in a straight line		

Traveling the layer poses many problems, some of which have already been mentioned. If the PCs carry any light, they are like a beacon for the creatures of darkness. If they don't, the attacks will be a lot less frequent, but they'll have to find some way of seeing where they are going. Any character that can't see at all will have to move at half speed. Additionally, the layer is subject to violent storms.

More likely than not, the PCs have the means to feed themselves indefinitely by magic. Even if they don't, there should be no problem. Starvation is not the way this layer kills you. The river's water is dirty but it can be drunk with no ill effects, and the flesh of the creatures of darkness is tough but edible. The bashers will have to risk lighting a fire if they want to cook it, though.

The PCs have no idea of where to go. They can't leave the Abyss, and they don't know the only way to leave the layer without leaving the plane (the portal in the forest). They can't teleport, either. As per the rule of threes, they have three choices: follow the river upstream, follow it downstream, or choose a random direction and start walking.

It's likely that they'll try to get back to the fortress. It's the only place they know in the layer. They'll reach it in three days of march. However, the Worm is currently furious for the wounds it received during the battle. The entire area surrounding the fortress is covered in its slimy secretions in a radius of about a half-kilometer. Its enormous body is wrapped around the fortress like a snake, its tentacles flailing wildly all around and reaching almost as high as the towers. There are several fires going on in the building, so the monstrous scene can be seen from far away. There is no real way to get in the fortress right now.

What if...?

If the PCs don't head towards the fortress and instead follow the river upstream or head into the plains, nothing changes. Have them meet the merc survivor somewhere, and proceed normally from there.

After another day, as the PCs wander around in frustration, they get a rare strike of luck.

You hear someone shouting from the darkness, no more than a few meters from the limit of where they can see. It's a human voice, calling for help. When you get near, you see a man lying on the ground, wearing the uniform of the fortress' mercenaries. He is badly wounded, his legs are broken and torn. The corpse of a dead wolf of darkness lies no more than half a meter from him.

He saw the PCs' light and waited for them to pass near before speaking – he learnt on his skin the virtues of silence during the past few days.

Rob Benton		Al. Chaotic Evil	Human Fighter 6 th (Outlands)	CR: 6
Str: 15 (+2)	HP: 6d10+9 (42)	Speed: 6		
Dex: 11 (+0)	AC: 21 (+8 armor, +3 shield)	Armor: heavy		
Con: 13 (+1)	Initiative: +4 improved initiative	% fail.: 50%	Check pen.: -4	
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +2 base	BAB: +6/+1	Grapple: +8	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +6 (+5 base, +1 con)	Melee: +8/+3 (+6 base, +2 str)		
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: +5 (+2 base, +1 wis, +2 iron will)	Ranged: +6/+1 base		
Attacks			Skills	
<i>Cold iron long sword</i> +1, +10/+5 melee, damage 1d8+5, crit 19-20/x2			Climb +7 (+9 ranks, +2 strength, -4 armor)	
Feats and special abilities			Jump +7 (+9 ranks, +2 strength, -4 armor)	
Feats: Weapon focus: long sword, Weapon specialization: long sword, Power attack, Toughness, Improved initiative, Quick draw, Cleave, Iron will			Ride +9 ranks	
Between wounds and blood loss, he currently only has 2 hit points left.				
Equipment				
<i>Banded mail</i> +2 (AB +8, max dex +1, check penalty -5, arcane failure 35%) (moderate abjuration, CL 6)				
<i>Heavy steel shield</i> +1 (AB +3, check penalty -1, arcane failure 15%) (faint abjuration, CL 3)				
<i>Cold iron long sword</i> +1 (damage 1d8+1, crit 19-20/x2) (faint evocation, CL 3)				
Two empty flasks.				

The soldier's name is Rob Benton. He is one of those who were left behind during the forced march away from the fortress. Instead of pushing himself to unconsciousness, he left the column and found a cave. He killed a couple of hyenas of darkness there, and rested. Then he got out and tried to return to the fortress. Unfortunately, he didn't have enough torches. Eventually, the last one went out, and he could no longer defend himself effectively; the creatures got him. The last wolf ripped at his legs so hard that they are practically torn to pieces. He won't be able to stand without a *regeneration* spell.

A Cutter with Potential

Rob Benton could become a PC (maybe with a couple of extra levels, and let the poor sod find a *regeneration* somewhere). He's chaotic evil, but not strongly so; you may even change his alignment to suit the party if you wish.

The mercenary is going to barter information for help. He has seen the Worm blocking access to the fortress, and he knows that attempting to leave the layer through Castle Maldithar is suicide. However, he knows of another portal. If the heroes accept to carry him to safety, he will guide them to it. Rob doesn't know the exact location of the portal; what he knows is that the forest can be reached by following the river downstream from the fortress and that the portal is in a clearing in the middle of the thickest part of the forest. This is hardly enough to actually locate it, but he'll act as if he knew the path perfectly and just didn't want to reveal anything about it. He is afraid that if the PCs found out that all he knows can be related in a minute, then they'd just leave him there and find the exit on their own.

COULD BE WORSE.
COULD BE RAINING.
- ROB BENTON

The PCs reach the river again, taking a wide detour around the fortress, and follow it downstream according to Rob's indications. It will take them at least four days to reach the forest's outskirts. If they carry lights, however, they will be repeatedly attacked by packs of creatures of darkness, at least once every two or three hours. This may force them to rest more often, slowing them down.

What's worse, during the third day, as the characters are crossing a hill, a nasty storm breaks out.

The wind drives the raindrops so hard that it feels as if a hundred tiny hammers were battering each of you. Lightning bolts arc around the sky constantly. For the first time, for brief instants, you can see clearly in the distance and behold the landscape of the layer. You see the jagged plain, and you see figures of all sizes and shapes darting around, stalking each other, running from rock to crevice. Everywhere, as far as the eye can see, the creatures of darkness roam the land. Many of them, it seems, are following you and waiting for a good moment to strike. It seems that most of them are looking for shelter now.

Any penalty for acting in the dark is halved during the storm, because of the frequent flashes of light. However, the rain is so thick and heavy that any character caught on the outside during a

storm takes 1 point of non-lethal damage per minute (no damage if he wears a medium or heavy armor, or has a natural armor bonus of +4 or better). Additionally, any character has a 5% chance per hour of being struck by lightning (15% if wearing metal armor) and taking 8d6 electricity damage. A reflex save, DC 14, halves the damage. After an hour or so, hail starts coming down as well, and if the PCs haven't started looking for shelter, they should do so now. The damage is now normal (or non-lethal if he wears a medium or heavy armor, or has a natural armor bonus of +4 or better).

The heroes can easily find a cavern or crevice, but almost all such locations are the lair of some monster or another. If the characters look for a cavern, it takes them half an hour to find one big enough, minus one minute for each point they score on a Search check, minimum five minutes. Unless the PCs split, only one of them can make the roll (though the others can aid him normally).

When they do find a shelter, they see a wide crack on the ground, reaching down into the darkness. Well, the same darkness as outside, really. When another lightning lets them see clearly for an instant, the characters can spot something moving in the crevice.

Advanced dire bats of darkness (4)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 4
Str: 17 (+3)	HP: 6d8+18 (45)	Speed: 12, 18 fly (good)		
Dex: 26 (+8)	AC: 22 (+8 dex, +5 natural, -1 size)	Armor: none		
Con: 17 (+3)	Initiative: +8 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 3 (-4)	Ref: +13 (+5 base, +8 dex)	BAB: +4	Grapple: +11	
Wis: 14 (+2)	For: +8 (+5 base, +3 con)	Melee: +6 (+4 base, +3 str, -1 size)		
Cha: 6 (-2)	Will: +7 (+5 base, +2 wis)	Ranged: +11 (+4 base, +8 dex, -1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
Bite +11 melee, damage 1d8+4		Hide +12 (+2 stealthy, -4 size, +8 racial, +8 dex)		
Feats and special abilities		Listen +12 (+4 ranks, +2 alertness, +2 wis, +4 racial*)		
Feats: Alertness, Stealthy, Mobility, Weapon finesse		Move silently +19 (+3 ranks, +2 stealthy, +8 racial, +8 dex)		
Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, blindsight 36 ft.		Spot +10 (+2 ranks, +2 alertness, +2 wis, +4 racial*)		
* unless blindsight is negated				

These vicious beasts attack by flanking one character at a time and dealing as much sneak attack damage as possible. They attempt to bring down the most wounded character first (including Rob Benton).

The crack extends into a small cave, whose floor is covered in bat guano. In a corner, there is a pile of bleached bones. If the PCs rummage through them, they find an old leather belt, with two scroll cases and a smelly pouch attached. The cases contain a scroll of *wind wall* and one of *greater heroism*, while the pouch is full of sulphur. Under the guano crust on the floor, there's a silvered dagger, though it'll take a Search check (DC 20) to find it.

The storm outside is going to last for at least five hours. If the PCs choose to rest here, they'd better set up guard turns, because they are going to be attacked by two more dire bats a few hours after they've gone to sleep. These bats, however, have taken 20 nonlethal damage each from the sleet outside.

Eventually, the storm subsides and the PCs can resume their march.

As the PCs walk through the darkness, they hear a cacophony of growls and shrieks. The noise grows louder and louder, until a horde of several dozens of assorted creatures of darkness runs out of the black, passes right around and through the PCs, and keeps running as if fleeing from something.

Seconds after the strange event, you hear a high-pitched laughter and see a small light some tens of meters from them. After a while, a man approaches you. His age is undefined, though he is thin and bears a long white beard. He is wearing leather travel clothes, which look quite battered and patched in many points. He's looking at you and chuckling, but he doesn't seem hostile. He carries a lantern inside which a large flame burns. However, the flame gives off no more light than that of a small candle.

Wilmer	Al. Chaotic Neutral (Bleak Cabal)	Human Diviner 6 th (Pandemonium)	CR: 5
Str: 6 (-2) Dex: 13 (+1) Con: 20 (+5)	HP: 6d4+30 (46) AC: 11 (+1 dex) Initiative: +1 dex	Speed: 9 Armor: none % fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0
Int: 16 (+3) Wis: 7 (-2) Cha: 7 (-2)	Ref: +3 (+2 base, +1 dex) For: +7 (+2 base, +5 con) Will: +4 (+5 base, -2 wis, +1 insanity)	BAB: +2 Melee: +1 (+2 base, -2 str) Ranged: +4 (+2 base, +2 dex)	Grapple: +3
Attacks Unarmed attack, +1 melee, damage 1d3-2 non-lethal		Skills Concentration +10 (+9 ranks, +1 con) Knowledge (Abyss) +14 (+9 ranks, +2 synergy, +3 int) Knowledge (Pandemonium) +14 (+9 ranks, +2 synergy, +3 int) Survival +9 (+4.5 ranks, +3 int, +2 synergy*) Knowledge (Arcana) +12 (+9 ranks, +3 int) Spellcraft +14 (+9 ranks, +3 int, +2 synergy)**	
Feats and special abilities Feats: Eschew material, Create wondrous item, Endurance, Manic-depressive (insanity: 2), Insanity buffer, Scribe scroll Forbidden school: evocation, can prepare 1 bonus divination spell per day. Wizard spells/day: 4+1/4+1/3+1/2+1 (DC 13+spell level, +1 evocation)		* on the Abyss or Pandemonium ** +2 when learning divination spells	
Equipment <i>Amulet of health</i> +2 (moderate transmutation, CL 8) <i>Eyeballs of Allsight</i> (faint divination, CL 5) <i>Dark lantern</i> (faint enchantment, CL 5). Several meat chunks and a small waterskin. Spellbook (0 th level: all core; 1 st level: Protection from chaos, Summon monster I, Comprehend languages, Expeditious retreat; 2 nd level: See invisibility, Bear's endurance, Misdirection, Levitate; 3 rd level: Blindsight, Clairaudience/Clairvoyance, Nondetection, Deep slumber).			

Prepared spells:

0th level: Detect magic, Detect magic, Prestidigitation, Resistance

1st level: Protection from chaos, Summon monster I, Comprehend languages, Expeditious retreat, Expeditious retreat

2nd level: See invisibility, Bear's endurance, Levitate, Levitate

3rd level: Blindsight, Clairaudience/Clairvoyance, Deep slumber

Darkvision

Transmutation

Level: Sor/Wiz 3

Duration: 10 minutes/level

This spell is identical to darkvision except as noted, and it grants blindsight within 9 meters instead.

Wilmer is a mad wizard from Pandemonium. He went a bit too far into the Bleaker credo that nothing in the multiverse is significant and that truth only lies within the self. He entered this layer several years ago through the Styx much like the mercenaries did, except that he managed to piss off the boatmen somehow and was left here. He had several able bodyguards, and before they all got killed he managed to enchant a device that somehow keeps the creatures of darkness away. After that, he eventually discovered the forest and the portal within it, but he didn't use it. His reasoning is that if truth can only be found within oneself, then the place where you are is irrelevant. Who cares about getting anywhere, it's useless. Notice that, since Wilmer is a Bleaker himself, his madness can't be cured.

All the knowledge he has, though, is worthless for the PCs, because talking to Wilmer is a mighty task in itself. He chuckles and giggles constantly, talks nonsense, lies thinking that he's telling the truth, and vice versa. Sometimes he just goes off on a tangent. Even when he does say something useful, he speaks in riddles.

Wilmer's magical device – an enchanted lantern inside which an almost-lightless fire burns – creates a radius of about 20 meters which affects creatures of darkness like an *antipathy* spell, with no saving throw. The result is that there always is a horde of creatures circling around him, alternately running away and trying to return to eat him. With his little magical skills, how he could create such a powerful item is a real puzzle. Unfortunately, his descriptions of the process are as nonsensical as everything else he says. The PCs might be able to figure out that the item, instead of actually using *antipathy* magic, somehow interferes with the creatures' blindsight. Creatures that are attacked by someone within the circle are free to attack, but their blindsight is still negated within the circle, they take a -4 penalty to their Dexterity, and they can't sneak at-

MONSTERS?
WHAT MONSTERS?
- WILMER

tack.

The lantern isn't the only interesting thing Wilmer is carrying. He's drawn a map of the layer, similar to the one at the beginning of this chapter. He's also got several dozens of crusty eyeballs in his belt pouches. Disgusting as they are, if a cutter is willing to eat one, they work like a potion that grants blindsight within 36 meters, for a duration of six hours. Again, the secret to their creation isn't something that can be pried from Wilmer's mad mind.

Wilmer is headed in the opposite direction from the PCs, for some unfathomable reason, and nothing can change his mind. Which means that even if the magical lantern would be incredibly useful to the PCs, they won't be able to have it unless they kill or kidnap the old geezer (which Rob Benton will suggest if he's still there). Even worse, as soon as he leaves, at least a part of the creatures surrounding him are going to throw themselves at the PCs. The Abyss keeps nudging them to evil. Still, there is something they can obtain from Wilmer. The old man is willing to part with some of his magical eyeballs in exchange for simply other, "normal" eyeballs. He can give as many as 30 of them. He may also show the PCs his map, which will be useful especially if the merc Benton is dead and can no longer guide them.

If the PCs attempt to follow Wilmer, he won't object (Benton will, though). However, with his total +9 modifier on the forced march check, the man is virtually unstoppable. He can take 10 on the forced march Constitution check and still look fresh even as most of the PCs are fatigued, and he's not going to stop until he gets fairly tired. It will be very hard for the PCs to keep up with him. If they do manage it somehow, Wilmer will proceed in a wide, meaningless arc, eventually leading to the forest. Keep in mind that, like many Bleakers, every day there's a 5% chance for Wilmer to be depressed; if this happens, he'll sit around for the whole day, sulking and telling the PCs to go away.

The dark forest

The river eventually reaches the outskirts of a forest. On the right side of the water, the trees grow out of a wet soil, similar to a marsh. On the left side, the rocky plain stretches outward as usual. The forest doesn't seem to be very thick from here, and the trees – a mixture of wide-leafed plains vegetation – aren't very lush or tall. The marsh is quiet, but not entirely silent. The cries of some kind of bird can be heard, and sometimes a gust of wind will cause the leaves to rustle.

As always, the PCs can only see as far as their lights or darkvision will allow. The forest is inhabited by the usual creatures of darkness, but there are also several new surprises for the heroes. First of all, there are some local will'o'wisps along the river's course and one of them has decided to harass the PCs.

Fiendish will'o'wisp		Al. Chaotic Evil	Small Aberration (Air) (Abyss)	CR: 8
Str: 1 (-5)	HP: 9d8 (40)	Speed: 15 (perfect)		
Dex: 29 (+9)	AC: 29 (+1 size, +9 dex, +9 deflection)	Armor: none		
Con: 10 (+0)	Initiative: +13 (+9 dex, +4 improved init.)	% fail.: 0%		Check pen.: 0
Int: 15 (+2)	Ref: +12 (+3 base, +9 dex)	BAB: +6		Grapple: -3
Wis: 16 (+3)	For: +3 base	Melee: +2 (+6 base, -3 str, +1 size)		
Cha: 12 (+1)	Will: +9 (+6 base, +3 wis)	Ranged: +16 (+6 base, +9 dex, +1 size)		
Attacks			Skills	
Shock, +16 melee touch, damage 2d8 electricity			Bluff +13 (+12 ranks, +1 cha)	
Feats and special abilities			Diplomacy +3 (+2 synergy, +1 cha)	
Feats: Alertness, Blind-fight, Dodge, Improved initiative, Weapon finesse.			Disguise +3 (+1 cha, +1 synergy*)	
Smite good 1/day (+9 damage), darkvision 18 mt, resistance to cold and fire 10, DR 5/magic, SR 14.			Intimidate +3 (+1 cha, +2 synergy)	
Immune to any magical spell or effect that allows spell resistance, except for magic missile and maze.			Listen +17 (+2 alertness, +3 wis, +12 ranks)	
It can extinguish its glow, becoming invisible, as an extraordinary ability.			Search +14 (+12 ranks, +2 int)	
			Spot +17 (+2 alertness, +3 wis, +12 ranks)	
			Survival +5 (+3 wis, +2 synergy**)	
			Languages: common, auran	
			* when acting in character	
			** when following tracks	

It will attempt to lead the characters to the lair of several dire boars of darkness and then attack them.

Dire boar of darkness (3)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 5
Str: 27 (+8)	HP: 7d8+28 (59)	Speed: 18		
Dex: 14 (+2)	AC: 17 (+2 dex, +6 natural, -1 size)	Armor: none		
Con: 17 (+3)	Initiative: +2 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 3 (-4)	Ref: +7 (+5 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +5	Grapple: +21	
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +8 (+5 base, +3 con)	Melee: +12 (+5 base, +8 str, -1 size)		
Cha: 8 (-1)	Will: +5 (+2 base, +1 wis, +2 iron will)	Ranged: +6 (+5 base, +2 dex, -1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
Gore +12 melee, damage 1d8+12		Hide +6 (+8 racial, +2 dex, -4 size)		
Feats and special abilities		Listen +8 (+5 ranks, +2 alertness, +1 wis)		
Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Iron will, Mobility		Move silently +10 (+8 racial, +2 dex)		
Ferocity (ex): it can fight normally while disabled or dying.		Spot +8 (+5 ranks, +2 alertness, +1 wis)		
Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, blindsight 36 mt.				

If the PCs defeat the fiendish will'o'wisp and the boars, as they stop and catch their breath, they feel putrefaction in the air. Following the nasty smell, they reach the rotting corpse of a dretch. It is relatively fresh, maybe less than a day old.

This dretch is part of Rothakon's escort. The half-fiend has reached the forest about a day before the PCs. All the remaining mercenaries have deserted him, and he's passed through here with just a bunch of dretches, six babau and three vrocks. Still, more than enough to defend himself against all the dangers of this forest. As the PCs travel to the center of the woods, they can clearly see a trail of destruction – broken and burned trees, scorched earth, and, every now and then, mangled corpses of creatures of darkness lying in pools of blood. They even reach an area which was blasted by the vrocks' dance of ruin.

You see a sixty-meters wide clearing where the trees seem to have literally exploded, leaving nothing but splinters and still-smoking tree stumps. The entire area is littered with the remains of a huge pack of wolves of darkness. The flesh has been torn from their bones, and blood has coalesced in large pools all around the place.

Have everyone roll Spot versus DC 25 (or Search versus DC 20 if the PCs search the clearing). Those that succeed will notice a human corpse among all the gory remains. It's one of the few mercenaries that made it this far. Apparently, the tanar'ri don't really take care of collateral damage.

One day later, the characters are in the thickest part of the forest, and are likely wandering around hoping to see something strange that could reveal the portal's location. Suddenly, they hear a roaring voice, speaking Abyssal. Assuming that either someone in the party understands the language or can cast an appropriate spell, they hear: "I DON'T CARE! You will stay here, guard the gate, and search for that blasted Selthian Orb, FOREVER if need be! It can only be on this layer, and it can only get out through here! It will take me a long time to get back now that the gate has shifted, and by all the powers of the Abyss, I'LL HAVE YOUR FAT ASSES PLUCKED AND READY FOR MY DINNER UNLESS YOU FIND IT BEFORE THAT TIME!!!"

More of the dark

Rothakon has no clue as to where the orb is. He has seen the retriever come out of the portal, without the item. Worse, the construct doesn't know where to go, which can only mean that the orb is on another plane or layer for which the retriever doesn't know of a portal.

If the PCs sneak towards the voice, they reach a wide clearing, where Rothakon is about to enter the gate leading out of the layer.

Rothakon	Al. Chaotic Evil	Half-fiend Human Barbarian/Sorcerer/Eldritch Knight 1 st /6 th /3 rd (Abyss)	CR: 12
Str: 26 (+8) Dex: 17 (+3) Con: 18 (+4) Int: 16 (+3) Wis: 10 (+0) Cha: 16 (+3)	HP: 1d12+6d4+3d6+40 (90) AC: 20 (+3 dex, +1 nat, +4 arm, +2 def) Initiative: +3 dex	Speed: 12, fly 12 (average) Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0	
	Ref: +7 (+3 base, +3 dex, +1 resist) For: +12 (+7 base, +4 con, +1 resist) Will: +9 (+6 base, +2 iron will, +1 resist)	BAB: +7/+2 Melee: +15/+10 (+7/+2 base, +8 str) Ranged: +10/+5 (+7/+2 base, +3 dex)	Grapple: +13
Attacks 2 claws, +15 melee, damage 1d4+8, and bite, +10 melee, damage 1d6+4, or white render, +18/+13 melee, damage 2d6+14 + 1 point Con damage (+2d6 vs law, +2d6 vs good), crit 19-20/x2		Skills Appraise +3 int* Concentration +14 (+10 ranks, +4 con) Craft (alchemy) +15 (+12 ranks, +3 cha) Craft (armorsmith) +7 (+4 ranks, +3 cha) Handle animal +7 (+4 ranks, +3 cha) Intimidate +7 (+4 ranks, +3 cha) Knowledge (abyss) +11 (+8 ranks, +3 int) Knowledge (arcana) +13 (+10 ranks, +3 int) Listen +4 ranks Sense motive +10 ranks Spellcraft +13 (+10 ranks, +3 int) Spot +2 ranks Survival +6 (+4 ranks, +2 synergy**)	
Feats and special abilities Feats: Iron will, Weapon focus: greatsword, Power attack, Combat expertise, Improved sunder, Dodge. Smite good (su): 1/day he can make a normal melee attack to deal 10 extra damage to a good creature. <i>Darkness</i> (DC 15) and <i>poison</i> (DC 17) 3/day; <i>desecrate</i> (DC 15), <i>contagion</i> (DC 16) and <i>unholy blight</i> (DC 17) 1/day. Darkvision 18 mt, immunity to poison, resistance to acid, fire, cold and electricity 10, DR 5/magic, his natural weapons are considered magic for the purpose of overcoming DR, SR 20. Barbarian rage 1/day. Sorcerer spells known (DC 13 + spell level): 0 th level: <i>dancing lights</i> , <i>touch of fatigue</i> , <i>prestidigitation</i> , <i>detect magic</i> , <i>read magic</i> , <i>daze</i> , <i>ray of frost</i> , <i>resistance</i> ; 1 st level: <i>expeditious retreat</i> , <i>comprehend languages</i> , <i>shield</i> , <i>magic missile</i> , <i>protection from good</i> ; 2 nd level: <i>glitterdust</i> , <i>invisibility</i> , <i>detect thoughts</i> ; 3 rd level: <i>displacement</i> , <i>haste</i> ; 4 th level: <i>dimension door</i> Sorcerer spells/day: 6/7/7/6/3, caster level 8 Rothakon has a permanent <i>resistance</i> spell on him.		* +2 synergy with alchemical items and armors ** in the Abyss	
Equipment <i>Bracers of armor</i> +4 (moderate conjuration, CL 8) <i>Belt of Balor fury</i> (grants a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength; while the wearer is raging, he is wrapped in flames and deals 6d6 fire damage to anyone who is grappling him; moderate transmutation and evocation, CL 10) 3 doses of <i>Silversheen</i> <i>The White Render</i> (+2 <i>unholy anarchic greatsword of wounding</i>) (strong evocation [evil, chaos], CL 16) 3 <i>potions of cure serious wounds</i> (faint conjuration, CL 5) <i>Potion of heroism</i> (faint enchantment, CL 5) <i>Potion of barkskin</i> +5 (strong transmutation, CL 12) <i>Ring of protection</i> +2 (moderate abjuration, CL 6) <i>Wand of dispel magic</i> (10 charges left, moderate abjuration, CL 10) Several belt pouches holding spell components and the various potions 150 jinxes Tanglefoot bag			

Rothakon is almost as tall as a vrock. His skin is a very dark shade of green, bulging with muscles. He has light green eyes, and a streak of brown hair running from the top of his head to the middle of his back. He's equipped with some of the best stuff his father could gather – the most prized possessions being a black leather and fur belt, with a bronze horned skull symbol in the middle to cover his manhood; and his two handed sword, a powerful weapon the color of pale, sickly flesh.

Rothakon is as good a spellcaster as he is a fighter. When confronted with a powerful foe, his favorite tactic is to fly or *dimension door* away, cast *invisibility* followed by as many protection spells as he thinks he can get away with (*shield*, *displacement*, *haste*, *resistance*). When he feels ready, he'll fly or *dimension door* in while invisible and start with full attacks (against a single foe), cast *glitterdust* (against multiple enemies), or use his *wand of dispel magic* (against magic-using foes). When facing spellcasters, he may cast *protection from good* to thwart domination attempts.

In the middle of the clearing, about one hundred meters from you, you see a group of tanar'ri (three vrocks, six babau and thirteen dretches), gathered around a tall stone structure. The structure is composed of three megaliths arranged in a crude arch, and just before it stands a dark winged, hu-

manoid figure, almost as tall as the vrocks. Tiny flames dance around his skin, giving off enough light to see. He terminates his speech stating that he'll send reinforcements as soon as possible. Then, for no apparent reason, he grabs a white-hued two handed sword hanging from his back and cleaves the nearest dretch almost in half. While the rest of the smallish, stupid fiends reel back, he picks up the corpse and tosses it through the gate, which flares into life. The fiend steps through the gate, which closes after him.

This leaves a bunch of tanar'ri around the gate, apparently almost as confused as the PCs themselves. They argue for a while, a couple of the babaus start fighting each other, the vrocks forcefully divide them, the dretches start running away, the rest of the demons round them up, and after some more time they somehow manage to divide themselves in three teams, each composed of one vrock, two babaus, and four dretches. One team guards the portal, while the other two leave in opposite directions.

The three teams are supposed to rotate between guarding the gate and looking for enemies. For a day or so, it works; but vrocks aren't really made to command. If the PCs wait, eventually the shifts become irregular and the tanar'ri end up having sometimes almost everyone at the gate, and sometimes a vrock gets bored and flies away leaving only two babaus and a half dozen or so dretches. The best thing the PCs can do is remember about the dretch corpse they found some time before, go get it, wait for the surveillance to become weak, and then create a distraction for the time needed to enter the gate. They might also adopt guerrilla tactics to reduce the fiends to a manageable number. The worst thing they can do, though, is wait too much. After some days – the DM should decide when – the reinforcements arrive, including a better-trained fiend that can at least organize the patrol and surveillance. It will become much more difficult for the PCs to get through.

Or, of course, they could just charge. It will be a tough battle, especially if the heroes don't at least wait for a moment during which all three vrocks are out.

Dretch (6)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Small Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 2
Str: 12 (+1)	HP: 2d8+4 (13)	Speed: 6		
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 16 (+1 size, +5 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 14 (+2)	Initiative: +0	% fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0		
Int: 5 (-3)	Ref: +3 base	BAB: +2 Grapple: -1		
Wis: 11 (+0)	For: +5 (+3 base, +2 con)	Melee: +4 (+2 base, +1 strength, +1 size)		
Cha: 11 (+0)	Will: +3 base	Ranged: +3 (+2 base, +1 size)		
Attacks			Skills	
2 claws, +4 melee, damage 1d6+1, and			Hide +9 (+5 ranks, +4 size)	
Bite +2 melee, damage 1d4			Listen +5 ranks	
Feats and special abilities			Move Silently +5 ranks	
Feats: Multiattack			Spot +5 ranks	
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.			Search +2 (+5 ranks, -3 int)	
Damage reduction 5/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and			Survival +2 synergy*	
poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 14, telepathy within 30				
mt.				
Spell-like abilities: 1/day – <i>scare</i> (DC 12), <i>stinking cloud</i> (DC 13); caster level 2 nd .				
Summon 1 dretch 1/day with 35% success, equivalent to a 1 st level spell.				
Telepathy (su): can communicate with any creature that speaks Abyssal within 33 me-				
ters.				

Babau (3)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 6
Str: 21 (+5)	HP: 7d8+35 (66)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 19 (+1 dex, +8 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 20 (+5)	Initiative: +1 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 14 (+2)	Ref: +6 (+5 base, +1 dex)	BAB: +7	Grapple: +12	
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +10 (+5 base, +5 con)	Melee: +12 (+7 base, +5 strength)		
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +6 (+5 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +8 (+7 base, +1 dexterity)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +12 melee, damage 1d6+5, and Bite +10 melee, damage 1d6+2		Climb +15 (+10 ranks, +5 str)		
Feats and special abilities		Disable Device +12 (+10 ranks, +2 int)		
Feats: Cleave, Multiattack, Power attack		Disguise +13 (+10 ranks, +3 cha)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Escape Artist +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
Sneak attack +2d6, damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 14, telepathy within 30 mt.		Hide +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); caster level 7 th .		Listen +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis)		
Protective slime (su): any weapon or character touching the babau takes 1d8 damage, ignoring hardness; magic weapon and characters may roll a Reflex save, DC 18, to avoid.		Move Silently +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Summon 1 babau 1/day with 40% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		Open Lock +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
		Search +20 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +2 int)		
		Sleight of Hand +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
		Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*)		
		Use Rope +3 (+1 dex, +2 synergy**)		
		* when following tracks		
		** when binding someone		

Vrock		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 9
Str: 23 (+6)	HP: 10d8+70 (115)	Speed: 9, fly 15		
Dex: 15 (+2)	AC: 22 (-1 size, +2 dex, +11 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 25 (+7)	Initiative: +1 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 14 (+2)	Ref: +9 (+7 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +10	Grapple: +20	
Wis: 16 (+3)	For: +14 (+7 base, +7 con)	Melee: +15 (+10 base, +6 strength, -1 size)		
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +10 (+7 base, +3 wis)	Ranged: +11 (+10 base, +2 dexterity, -1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +15 melee reach 3mt, damage 2d6+6, and Bite +13 melee reach 3mt, damage 1d8+3, and 2 talons +13 melee reach 3mt, damage 1d6+3		Concentration +20 (+13 ranks, +7 con)		
Feats and special abilities		Diplomacy +5 (+3 cha, +2 synergy)		
Feats: Cleave, Combat reflexes, Multiattack, Power attack		Hide +11 (+13 ranks, +2 dex, -4 size)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Intimidate +16 (+13 ranks, +3 cha)		
Damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resis- tance 18, telepathy within 30 mt.		Knowledge (abyss) +15 (+13 ranks, +2 int)		
Dance of ruin (su): three or more vrocks can dance for three rounds, if they are not interrupted by stunning, paralyzing or killing one of them, a wave of energy deals 20d6 damage to every non-demon within 33 meters. Reflex half, DC 18.		Listen +24 (+13 ranks, +8 racial, +3 wis)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>mirror image</i> , <i>telekinesis</i> (DC 18), <i>greater teleport</i> (self and 22.5 kg only); 1/day – <i>heroism</i> ; caster level 12 th .		Move Silently +15 (+13 ranks, +2 dex)		
Spores (ex): 1/3 rounds, free action, they deal 1d8 damage to every adja- cent creature and 1d4 damage/round for 10 rounds; <i>bless</i> , <i>neutralize poison</i> , <i>remove disease</i> or holy water kills them.		Search +15 (+13 ranks, +2 int)		
Stunning screech (su): 1/hour, all non-demons within 10 meters must save on Fortitude, DC 22, or be stunned for 1 round.		Sense motive +16 (+13 ranks, +3 wis)		
Summon 2d10 dretches or 1 vrock 1/day with 40% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		Spellcraft +15 (+13 ranks, +2 int)		
		Spot +24 (+13 ranks, + racial, +3 wis)		
		Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*, +2 syn- ergy**)		
		* when following tracks; +2 synergy in the Abyss		
		** in the Abyss		

In case of a fight, the tanar'ri aren't much coordinated. The vrock will prompt the rest to charge while it casts *mirror image* and *heroism*. One or two of the babaus could decide to throw a *darkness* spell or ready an action for *dispel magic*. The dretches will use *scare*, or *stinking cloud* if they are far enough, and then start summoning outright. The rest of the fiends will only summon if the fight goes badly; like most fiends, they dislike being in debt with someone.

Whatever the characters do, they'll hopefully sooner or later be able to open the gate with the mangled corpse of a dretch and step through it. Like Rothakon said, the gate no longer leads to Infestant; it has shifted and now leads (as it usually does) to the first layer, the Plain of Infinite Portals.

The Plain of Infinite Portals

If the PCs have stepped through the gate in the middle of a battle, they'd better not think it's over, because the tanar'ri they left behind aren't going to give up so easily. Unless they are already too damaged to stand a chance, they charge through before the gate closes (it takes one full round for the passage to vanish), or open it again. Nevertheless, both the fiends and the PCs have been in complete or near-complete darkness for weeks – after stepping through the gate into normal light, they are dazzled (-1 to hit, Search and Spot) for 1d4 rounds.

You step through the gate and are almost blinded by the sudden light. It takes your eyes several seconds before adjusting to a normal light level. You are standing in the middle of a vast rocky plain, at less than a meter from a wide, dark hole in the ground. Only a few bushes and some low, sickly tree can be found as far as you can see. A glaring red sun gives a slightly crimson tinge to the environment, and you can feel that the air is noticeably warmer. You can clearly see a tall building against the horizon, several kilometers from where you stand.

The PCs have appeared not too far from the city of Broken Reach. The building they can see on the horizon is the iron fortress of Mithrengo. The city lays the opposite way from where the PCs stand; have them roll Spot versus DC 10. Those that succeed can make out several low towers that comprise the outskirts of Broken Reach. Knowledge (the Abyss), DC 20, is required to recognize Broken Reach from this distance.

The heroes can decide to go towards the iron fortress Mithrengo, or towards the abyssal city Broken Reach. In the first case, when they get at about one kilometer from the fortress, they notice a tanar'ri patrol heading towards them. It includes a hezrou and a half-dozen babaus – the PCs have better make a good impression.

The fiends won't attack on sight, which is good because the PCs' chances of victory in a fight would be slim even if they hadn't just escaped another combat. They are a patrol from Mithrengo: recently, the fortress' master has grown worried that Broken Reach is preparing an attack on him, and he has ordered his patrols to capture and question anyone that passes nearby. The fiends have just eviscerated a bunch of rival tanar'ri that came too near, and the PCs can see the hezrou munching on a piece of someone's guts as he approaches.

Now, the best thing to do with tanar'ri is to stay as far away from them as you can, possibly on another plane entirely. Since that's not an option for the PCs, they'll have to learn the three basic ways of dealing with demons. First, you can bribe them. Some will content themselves with money, many will want lots of it, others will want magic. Some will want something else (possibly something very unpleasant). But they have no real sense of duty, and they'll do whatever brings them the greatest gain. Second, you can make them paranoid. Everyone in the Abyss has enemies, and the most powerful the

The fiend talks sarcastically to the PCs while the babaus just stand around and grin. He'll demand to know whether they come from the city, what they are doing around here, and then will casually mention that he has orders to carry them back to the fortress to have them horribly tortured "...that is, unless you pay the fine for trespassing, you know". If someone needs to roll Sense Motive to understand that the basher wants some garnish, let him. DC 5. The demon feels slightly frustrated at having to perform simple guard duty, and he wants to earn some easy money at his boss' expenses. Nothing less than 1000 GP will do the trick, but daring and knowledgeable PCs could attempt to outsmart the fiend. Hezrous excel in combat, not in subtlety, and they can't detect magic at will. He could be bluffed into believing that a shiny masterwork item is enchanted, for example. And if he

doesn't then maybe one of the babaus will – and then one or more of the fiends could be convinced that the others are trying to rip him off.

In the meantime, one of the babaus could attempt to pickpocket one of the PCs... if he gets discovered, it could add further confusion to the talks.

Hezrou		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 11
Str: 21 (+5) Dex: 10 (+0) Con: 29 (+9)	HP: 10d8+93 (138) AC: 23 (-1 size, +14 natural) Initiative: +0	Speed: 15 Armor: none % fail.: 0%		Check pen.: 0
Int: 14 (+2) Wis: 14 (+2) Cha: 18 (+4)	Ref: +7 (+7 base, +0 dex) For: +16 (+7 base, +9 con) Will: +9 (+7 base, +2 wis)	BAB: +10 Melee: +14 (+10 base, +5 strength, -1 size) Ranged: +9 (+10 base, +0 dexterity, -1 size)		Grapple: +19
Attacks Bite +14 melee reach 3 mt, damage 4d4+5, and 2 claws, +9 melee reach 3 mt, damage 1d8+2			Skills Climb +18 (+13 ranks, +5 str) Concentration +22 (+13 ranks, +9 con) Hide +9 (+13 ranks, -4 size) Escape Artist +13 (+13 ranks) Intimidate +17 (+13 ranks, +4 cha) Listen +23 (+13 ranks, +2 wis, +8 racial) Move Silently +13 (+13 ranks) Search +15 (+13 ranks, +2 int) Spellcraft +15 (+13 ranks, +2 int) Spot +23 (+13 ranks, +2 wis, +8 racial) Survival +2 wis* Use Rope +0**	
Feats and special abilities Feats: Blind-fight, Cleave, Power attack, Toughness Improved grab (must hit with both claws) Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>chaos hammer</i> (DC 18), <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only), <i>unholy blight</i> (DC 18); 3/day – <i>blasphemy</i> (DC 21), <i>gaseous form</i> . Caster level 13 th . DR 10/good, darkvision 18 mt, immune to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, SR 19, telepathy within 30 mt. Stench (ex): non-demons within 3 mt. must roll a Fortitude save versus DC 24 or be nauseated for as long as they remain in the area plus 1d4 rounds. Those that save are sickened for as long as they remain in the area. Creatures that succeed are unaffected by following exposures for 24 hours. <i>Delay poison</i> or <i>neutralize poison</i> removes the condition; creatures that are immune to poison are immune to this effect; poison resistance applies. Summon demon: once per day it can attempt to summon 4d10 dretches or another hezrou with a 35% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 4th-level spell.			* +2 synergy when following tracks ** +2 synergy when binding	

Babau (6)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 7
Str: 22 (+6) Dex: 12 (+1) Con: 20 (+5)	HP: 9d8+45 (85) AC: 19 (+1 dex, +8 natural) Initiative: +1 dex	Speed: 9 Armor: none % fail.: 0%		Check pen.: 0
Int: 14 (+2) Wis: 13 (+1) Cha: 16 (+3)	Ref: +7 (+6 base, +1 dex) For: +11 (+6 base, +5 con) Will: +7 (+6 base, +1 wis)	BAB: +9 Melee: +15 (+9 base, +6 strength) Ranged: +10 (+9 base, +1 dexterity)		Grapple: +15
Attacks 2 claws, +15 melee, damage 1d6+6, and Bite +13 melee, damage 1d6+3, or +1 cold iron spear, +17/+12 melee, damage 1d8+10, crit x3, or +1 cold iron spear, +13 range 6 mt, damage 1d8+7, crit x3			Skills Climb +18 (+12 ranks, +6 str) Disable Device +13 (+11 ranks, +2 int) Disguise +14 (+11 ranks, +3 cha) Escape Artist +12 (+11 ranks, +1 dex) Hide +20 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex) Listen +20 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis) Move Silently +20 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex) Open Lock +12 (+11 ranks, +1 dex) Search +21 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +2 int) Sleight of Hand +12 (+11 ranks, +1 dex) Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*) Use Rope +3 (+1 dex, +2 synergy**)	
Feats and special abilities Feats: Cleave, Multiattack, Power attack, Weapon focus: spear All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned. Sneak attack +2d6, damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 16, telepathy within 30 mt. Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); caster level 9 th . Protective slime (su): any weapon or character touching the babau takes 1d8 damage, ignoring hardness; magic weapon and characters may roll a Reflex save, DC 18, to avoid. Summon 1 babau 1/day with 40% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.			* when following tracks ** when binding someone	
Equipment +1 cold iron spear (damage 1d8+1, crit x3, range increment 6 m)				

When the PCs head towards Broken Reach, they reach the city fairly quickly. As they get near, they see lots of random spiked barricades, trenches and walls, followed by a number of watchtowers. Some are made in stone, some in wood; some are half-destroyed, some still stand. Noone stands guard in most of them, except for maybe five or six towers scattered around the city and manned by tough tiefling or human warriors. Their duty is more to inform the city should a large force come, rather than actually defend it.

The PCs eventually reach the center of the towers complex. They are just in time for a neat show: a big barbarian (half-orc barbarian 6th/Ysgard/chaotic neutral, Independent League) has decided to show off and make himself a reputation by challenging a green-haired elf who, he says, has insulted him.

You reach an area that seems to hold some interest. A wide, low building stands in the middle of the city. Around it, you see several small groups of well-armed humans, tieflings, and some other humanoid chatting or standing guard. As you go around the building to find the entrance, you hear shouting from a larger group of people. You see a tall, muscular half-orc warrior in leather armor, carrying a huge warhammer, making his way through the crowd, followed by a shorter humanoid – an elf it seems, with a strange greenish tinge to his hair. They reach a clear area and then the barbarian bellows “You have mocked me once too many times, pointy-ears! Get ready to meet your maker!”. The elf doesn’t seem too impressed. He just crosses his arms, and states “You are still in time to change your mind...”. This seems to have the only effect of further enraging the half-orc, who raises his weapon and charges his victim. After a minute or so, the elf hasn’t even drawn a weapon, but thanks to his speed and agility he is still not severely wounded.

Then, the green-haired elf stands still for a moment. “Well, this is getting fairly tiresome...”. He extends his fingers, and as he does so, they turn into talons. His hair turns to black strands. His skin becomes gray and leathery, and he becomes taller, though more hunched, looking like a ghoul. The barbarian seems fairly surprised. Then the monster snaps his fingers and the half-orc seems to become paralyzed. It walks closer, and grabs the warhammer. Even if paralyzed, the half-orc is still holding it firmly. The monster lifts the warrior’s arm to its mouth and suddenly throws his head at it, sinking its fangs into the limb, ripping away a large chunk of flesh. The half-orc can’t even scream, but the look of horror and pain on his face more than explains his feelings.

The “elf” is actually a powerful maurezhi named Mobley, a tanar’ri that feeds on its victims to assimilate their minds and become stronger. This particular maurezhi has lived on the Prime for a century or so, during which he has accumulated a ream of knowledge and abilities. Now he has returned to the planes to continue his collection – however, he’s being hunted by a glabrezu who wants to press him into the Blood War. He’s finding shelter in Broken Reach for now, but he won’t miss an occasion for a good meal when it so kindly presents itself.

Mobley		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 12
Str: 29 (+9)	HP: 15d8+75 (142)	Speed: 9, jump 3		
Dex: 16 (+3)	AC: 25 (+3 dex, +12 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 20 (+5)	Initiative: +7 (+3 dex, +4 improved init)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 21 (+5)	Ref: +12 (+9 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +15	Grapple: +24	
Wis: 18 (+4)	For: +14 (+9 base, +5 con)	Melee: +24 (+15 base, +9 strength)		
Cha: 12 (+1)	Will: +13 (+9 base, +4 wis)	Ranged: +18 (+15 base, +3 dexterity)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +24 melee, damage 1d6+9, and		Bluff +19 (+18 ranks, +1 cha)		
Bite, +19 melee, damage 2d4+4, or		Diplomacy +21 (+18 ranks, +1 cha, +2 synergy)		
2 +3 <i>daggers</i> , +22/+22/+17/+12 melee, damage 1d4+9 (1d4+4 with off-hand attack) plus poison, crit 19-20/x2		Disguise +21 (+18 ranks, +1 cha, +2 synergy*)		
Feats and special abilities		Escape Artist +21 (+18 ranks, +3 dex)		
Feats: Dodge, Improved initiative, Two-weapon fighting, Two-weapon defense, Combat expertise, Power attack. Mobley has many other combat feats while in other forms.		Hide +21 (+18 ranks, +3 dex)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Intimidate +3 (+1 cha, +2 synergy)		
Damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 19, telepathy within 30 mt.		Jump +19 (+8 ranks, +9 str)		
Feed (su): Mobley is already at the top of his power. He adds 1d2 to his Intelligence score by feeding on an individual smarter than himself.		Listen +26 (+14 ranks, +8 racial, +4 wis)		
Alter Form (su): He can assume the appearance of his victims at will. Only a <i>true seeing</i> spell or similar magic reveals his identity. The maurezhi can use any of the physical talents his victims possessed, including the use of weapons the victim was proficient in and feats. He can also access any Knowledge skill (even when in its own shape), but not use magical abilities such as spells or some class-related abilities. He can speak while in assumed form and knows all the languages the victim did.		Search +23 (+18 ranks, +5 int)		
Mobley can also assume a variety of identities, skilled in many different combat styles and fields of physical expertise.		Spot +26 (+14 ranks, +8 racial, +4 wis)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>animate dead</i> , <i>blur</i> , <i>cause fear</i> (DC 12), <i>chill touch</i> (DC 12), <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only), <i>hold person</i> (DC 13), <i>invisibility</i> ; 3/day – <i>fear</i> (DC 15); caster level 15 th .		Survival +6 (+4 wis, +2 synergy**)		
Summon 1d4 ghouls 1/day as if through <i>summon monster III</i> ; caster level 15 th .		Use Rope +5 (+3 dex, +2 synergy***)		
Summon 2d4 manes 1/day with 60% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		* when acting in character		
Equipment		** when following tracks		
+3 <i>dagger</i> (poisoned with greenblood oil) (moderate evocation, CL 9)		*** when binding someone		
+3 <i>dagger</i> (poisoned with greenblood oil) (moderate evocation, CL 9)		Assimilated Knowledge skills:		
10 doses of greenblood oil (injury DC 13, primary damage 1 Con, secondary damage 1d2 Con)		Abyss (+20)		
200 merts, 50 jinxes		Arcana (+15)		
		Baator (+13)		
		Carceri (+5)		
		Dungeoneering (+18)		
		Factions and Guilds (+19)		
		Gehenna (+18)		
		Gray Waste (+13)		
		Pandemonium (+12)		
		Mechanus (+13)		
		Mount Celestia (+10)		
		Nature (+16)		
		Nobility and Royalty (+10)		
		Religion (+19)		
		Ysgard (+8).		

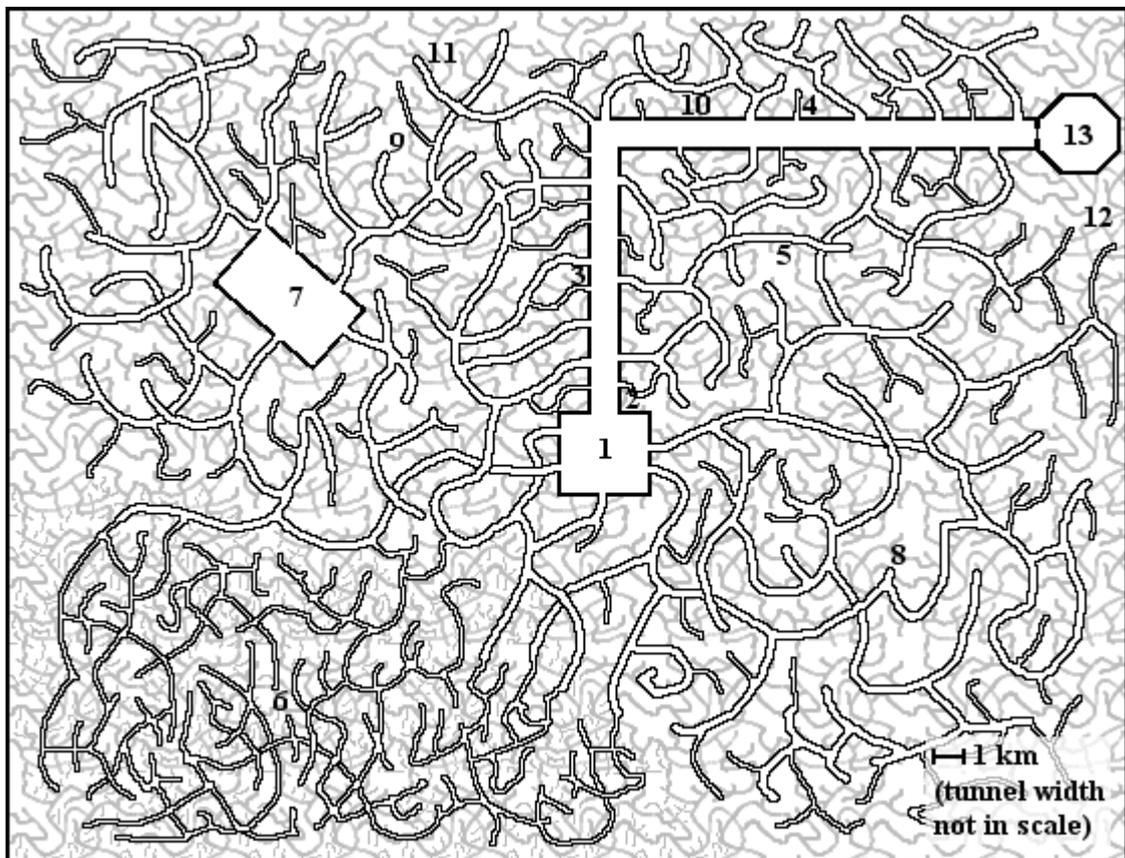
There isn't much the PCs can do. The maurezhi is just showing off, and trying to gain some new knowledge in the process. If they decide to attack him to save the barbarian, no one in the crowd will help them (they might start taking bets, though). The maurezhi will fight just to test their strength, and then he'll flee while invisible, or teleport away. Later, he will remember them and prove more difficult to deal with.

Mobley's alternate forms

Mobley has assimilated a variety of humanoids during his travels on the Prime and planes. He specifically hunts for skilled warriors and wise sages, to add to his impressive array of skills. Here are some of his most used forms. He also has dozens, maybe hundreds of weak forms with no great combat skills, of all humanoid races. Some of them he acquired by devouring wizards and sages, acquiring their knowledge in the process.

- **A green-haired elf.** This form gives Mobley the feats Combat reflexes, Improved feint, Mobility, Weapon finesse, Weapon focus (rapier) and Weapon specialization (rapier). He also has the skills Tumble, Jump, Climb and Swim at +14, and the abilities of a 7th level Duelist. With the incredibly high AC he can reach in this form when not attacking, he often uses it to mock enemies.
- **A big gnoll barbarian.** This form gives Mobley the feats Cleave, Exotic weapon proficiency (bastard sword), Great cleave, Weapon focus (bastard sword) and Improved critical (bastard sword). He also has the skills Jump, Climb, Ride and Swim at +10. He uses this form when confronted by multiple weak enemies, using power attack and great cleave to destroy them quickly.
- **A nimble female halfling.** This form gives Mobley the feats Greater two-weapon fighting, Greater weapon focus (dagger), Greater weapon specialization (dagger), Improved critical (dagger), Improved disarm, Improved feint, Improved initiative, Improved two-weapon fighting, Spring attack, Weapon focus (dagger) and Weapon specialization (dagger). He also has the abilities of a 3rd level rogue, including evasion, trap sense +1, trapfinding and 2d6 sneak attack damage. His full attack becomes: 2 +3 *daggers*, +25/+25/+20/+20/+15/+15 melee, damage 1d4+13 (1d4+8 with off-hand attacks) plus poison, crit 17-20/x2, and his AC improves by 1 due to his small size. This is what he uses when the combat gets tough, his most prized form. It has taken all of his cunning to set a trap for the powerful halfling, kill her in a very unfair combat, and devour her.

Broken Reach



The low stone building which the PCs are facing is the entrance to Broken Reach. The building is empty, except for a wide stairway going down into the rocky ground of the Plain. The stairway goes down a fairly long way, and there are several other people – tough-looking mercenaries, for the most part – climbing it up and down, besides the heroes. Every few meters, there are narrow and dark passages, smaller stairs, and barred doors, leading elsewhere within the underground city of Broken Reach. The wide stairway ends in a large and long cave, dimly lit by some torches, which is what passes for the “main street” of Broken Reach. The fortress-city is relatively busy: people come

and go from its many weapon shops and armories, small crowds of mercenaries talk hushedly near dark alleyways, prostitutes market their “wares” openly and chat among themselves. A few tanar’ri walk the streets – everyone gives way to them. There are no kids, not even street urchins; people don’t come to Broken Reach to set up a family. No beggars, either. Everyone in town – about a thousand souls, and several more people – is either tough enough to defend himself or under the wing of one or more of the various powerful “protectors” which run the town. Or he’s holed up in the Ratholes – just read on.

And the top dog of the town is Red Shroud, the red-haired succubus who has managed to establish Broken Reach as the safest – well, less dangerous – place in the Plains of Infinite Portals. She prevents the Molydei, the tanar’ri press-gang leaders, from coming in to get “volunteers” for the Blood War, she discourages other tanar’ri from rampaging around the place, and she makes sure that rowdy citizens take their business outside. In return, she expects everyone to obey her and help keep order while they are within the fortress town – therefore, there isn’t a fixed guards corp. Several of the mercenaries wandering the Reach’s hallways work for Red, but she also has spies everywhere in town and an impressive assortment of contacts and favors to use for getting rid of any specific troublemaker. Like all tanar’ri, she doesn’t know mercy and kills on a whim.

Many of the Reach’s inhabitants are mercenaries waiting for a good contract. However, thanks to its key position and relative safety, Broken Reach is a trade town as much as a recruitment center; weapons of all kinds, even magical ones, can be found easily and quickly, and Red herself controls a city armory capable of outfitting a small army. Besides weapons, most other basic goods can be found as well, and the city is well stocked with reserves of food and drinks. Red Shroud puts a hefty levy on every good sold within the town, and as a result all prices are tripled. Sometimes, shady deals are made to evade the succubus’ greed, but the risk to get discovered and subsequently drawn and quartered is high.

The PCs are free to do whatever they want in Broken Reach, except getting to the gate to Plague-Mort. A basher needs Red’s permission for that, and she doesn’t give it easily. The gate lies in an underground chamber, and it’s well protected. Apart from getting to the portal, there are many things that the PCs could do, and they could even spend some downtime here to train, create magical items, or just rest from the terrible travel they’ve just finished. For once, they are in no hurry; though the PCs can’t know for sure, it will take Rothakon a long time, maybe months, before he returns to the distant Infestant, and until then he won’t come for them. This part of the adventure is very non-linear, and the DM should be ready to change the events in response to the PCs’ actions.

The most interesting public places of Broken Reach are detailed here. There are lots of things to do and errands to run to keep the PCs busy while they try to figure out how to get out of the plane. The most important thing, however, is getting on the right side of Red Shroud. Right now, there are two missions she needs accomplished, and if the PCs can manage one of them, she’ll grant them access to the portal. This won’t be much use to them, of course, but it’s worth trying. If the PCs can complete both tasks, she will very pleased, considering them as a truly valuable resource worth protecting. She will introduce them to a very special guest who may hold the key to their freedom.

As for the actual tasks... the first one is to kill her own daughter. And the second is to scout Mithrengo. Hey, noone said they were going to be pleasant. More details are in the section about Red’s palace.

1. This room is the only known entrance to Broken Reach.

This is a large room, with walls and floor composed of big stone slabs. The main feature is the huge stairway leading upwards to the surface. Along the stairway, several passages and tunnels lead outward, but at the bottom there is only one wide tunnel: the “main street” of Broken Reach starts from here. Even though there is no day and night, there are times when it is more or less busy, and you seem to have arrived in the equivalent of peak hour. Sparse torches shed a dim light, barely enough to see the tall ceiling, giving to the street the appearance of the main road of a normal town in the night. Groups of armored mercenaries walk up and down the street, slapping each other on

the back, chatting loudly, drinking and laughing. Near corners and alleyways, dozens of prostitutes, mostly (but not only) human or tiefling, wait for the next mercenary to satisfy. They all wear very little clothing, most are bare-breasted, and some are all but naked. On both sides of the tunnel, small reinforced wood or metal doors lead into shops and alehouses, their respective owners on the entrance trying to draw the attention of passers-by. A few peddlers wander the tunnel and try to sell exotic food, special drugs, or cheap spirits. Further away, you can spot a couple of demons; everyone takes care to step out of their way and to avoid looking directly at them.

As the PCs walk around the street, take a look around, and feel overjoyed for being back to something similar to civilization, they hear a muffled cry for help coming from a dark, narrow side cave. A young female voice, it sounds, full of terror. No one else on the street seem to bother about it; a couple of passersby glance in that direction, another shrugs. Another chuckles. Looking into the tunnel, they can see the light of a torch coming from behind a corner.

If the PCs enter the alley, a passage just little more than one meter wide and two meters tall, they eventually turn a corner and see the following scene. A very comely young woman, long blonde hair, terrified blue eyes, wearing common clothes, is being held against the wall by a tall, grinning mercenary, while another one is frantically untying her clothes with a disgusting lustful expression on his face.

If only one or two male PCs intervene, the mercenaries will stop with a surprised look on their faces, glance at the PCs weapons while still holding the girl pinned, sneer and offer them “a good round, after us of course... or just bugger off; either way no one gets hurt”.

Would-be rapists		Al. Chaotic Evil	Human Fighter 6 th (Outlands)	CR: 6
Str: 12 (+1)	HP: 6d10+6 (39)	Speed: 6		
Dex: 11 (+0)	AC: 15 (+5 armor)	Armor: medium		
Con: 13 (+1)	Initiative: +4 improved initiative	% fail.: 30%	Check pen.: -5	
Int: 8 (-1)	Ref: +2 base	BAB: +6/+1	Grapple: +7	
Wis: 11 (+0)	For: +6 (+5 base, +1 con)	Melee: +7/+2 (+6 base, +1 str)		
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: +2 base	Ranged: +6/+1 base		
Attacks			Skills	
Cold iron two handed sword, +8/+3 melee, damage 2d6+3, crit 19-20/x2, or Dagger, +7/+2 melee, damage 1d4+1, crit 19-20/x2			Climb +5 (+9 ranks, +1 strength, -5 armor)	
Feats and special abilities			Intimidate +9 ranks	
Feats: Blind-fight, Cleave, Improved initiative, Lightning reflexes, Power attack, Toughness, Weapon focus: two handed sword, Weapon specialization: two-handed sword.			Jump +5 (+9 ranks, +1 strength, -5 armor)	
Equipment				
Chain mail (AB +5, max dex +2, check penalty -5, arcane failure 30%) (only the tall one is wearing his armor; the second armor is on the floor)				
Cold iron two handed sword (damage 2d6, crit 19-20/x2) (only the tall one can readily draw his two handed sword; the other must use a move-equivalent action to pick it up from the floor, or attack with his dagger)				
Dagger (damage 1d4, crit 19-20/x2)				
2 torches, 30 jinx, 12 stingers, 30 greens.				

If the PCs attack the mercenaries, or if the heroes appear with evidently no intention of parleying, the two fighters will defend themselves as well as they can (for the fight, remember that the tunnel is barely one meter wide), and then flee in the direction opposite of the one where the PCs came from. If the heroes pursue, they’ll find the mercenaries trapped in a dead end and ready to surrender. If the PCs turn them to Red’s patrols, the criminals are as good as dead.

The young woman quickly gets her clothes back on and profusely thanks the PCs. She says she’s named Seranna, she lives in Broken Reach, and if it weren’t for the PCs’ intervention... the girl shivers. Seranna relaxes quickly and is more than willing to talk with the PCs about any topic they want. If asked about her, she explains with a smile and lots of innuendo that she is a prostitute. Before the talk can get into any sort of detail, or before the PCs go away, she beams at the heroes, gets as close as possible

What if...?

If the PCs decide to let the rapists go (maybe stripping them of their gear before), then they will begin getting a reputation as do-gooders.

How this affects their future dealings is left to the DM.

to the nearest one, and, again with lots of innuendo, says that she has only one thing to offer as a reward and that it will be a great pleasure for her to offer it. She's offering sex and she makes it very clear that she hopes at least one of them accepts. In fact, the more the characters look embarrassed, the more extreme her proposals will get – decide yourself what you can get away with without offending the players.

If the PCs still haven't figured that good actions in the Abyss just don't work, maybe this will drive the point.

Seranna		Al. Chaotic Evil	Succubus Sorcerer 1 st (Abyss)	CR: 8
Str: 10 (+0)	HP: 6d8+1d4+7 (36)	Speed: 9, fly 15		
Dex: 15 (+2)	AC: 21 (+2 dex, +9 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 13 (+1)	Initiative: +2 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 17 (+3)	Ref: +7 (+5 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +6	Grapple: +6	
Wis: 14 (+2)	For: +6 (+5 base, +1 con)	Melee: +6 base		
Cha: 26 (+8)	Will: +9 (+7 base, +2 wis)	Ranged: +8 (+6 base, +2 dexterity)		
Attacks			Skills	
2 claws, +6 melee, damage 1d6			Bluff +20 (+10 ranks, +8 cha, +2 persuasive)	
Feats and special abilities			Concentration +10 (+9 ranks, +1 con)	
Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Persuasive			Diplomacy +12 (+2 ranks, +8 cha, +2 synergy)	
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.			Disguise +19 (+9 ranks, +8 cha, +2 synergy*)	
DR 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 18, telepathy within 30 mt, constant <i>tongues</i> .			Escape Artist +11 (+9 ranks, +2 dex)	
Energy drain kiss (su): Seranna can bestow a negative level on a mortal she lures in some act of passion, or with a successful grapple check. Additionally, the victim must save on Will, DC 21, or be under the effect of a <i>suggestion</i> to kiss her again. The DC to remove the negative level is 21.			Gather information +10 (+8 cha, +2 synergy)	
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>charm monster</i> (DC 22), <i>detect good</i> , <i>detect thoughts</i> (DC 20), <i>ethereal jaunt</i> (self plus 22,5 kg of objects only), <i>polymorph</i> (humanoid form only, unlimited duration), <i>suggestion</i> (DC 21), <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); caster level 12 th . The DCs are based on Charisma.			Hide +11 (+9 ranks, +2 dex)	
Summon 1 vrock 1/day with 30% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.			Intimidate +21 (+9 ranks, +8 cha, +2 synergy, +2 persuasive)	
Sorcerer spells known (DC 18 + spell level): 0 th level: <i>detect magic</i> , <i>touch of fatigue</i> , <i>prestidigitation</i> , <i>resistance</i> ; 1 st level: <i>Seranna's magic aura*</i> , <i>ray of enfeeblement</i>			Knowledge (local) +12 (+9 ranks, +3 int)	
* This <i>magic aura</i> spell works on creatures instead of objects.			Listen +19 (+9 ranks, +8 racial, +2 wis)	
Sorcerer spells/day: 5/5, caster level 1.			Move Silently +11 (+9 ranks, +2 dex)	
Equipment			Search +12 (+9 ranks, +3 int)	
Travel clothes, 34 jinx, 12 stingers			Spot +19 (+9 ranks, +8 racial, +2 wis)	
Scroll of <i>Seranna's magic aura</i>			Survival +4 (+2 wis, +2 synergy)**)	
			Use Rope +4 (+2 dex, +2 synergy***)	
			* when acting in character	
			** when following tracks	
			*** when binding someone	

Seranna is the last daughter of Red Shroud. The overlady of Broken Reach kills or sells her children, but Seranna's unusual sorcerous abilities allowed her to escape detection. She is using different forms every day, including male ones, constantly changing location. What's more, she has the mystifying ability to cast *magic aura* on living targets, and she's using it on herself at all times to nullify any magical aura she might have. Often she casts two or more of them, just in case someone uses *dispel magic* on her. It's not paranoia if they really are out to get you.

⊕ THANKS! I THINK THEY WERE GOING TO ABUSE ME...
- SERANNA

Seranna knows Broken Reach very well, but nothing beyond it. As a result, she is still hiding in the city and is unwilling to go elsewhere. Despite her need to lay low, she feels the need to devour one or two souls every now and then, and that's what was going to happen to those two fools before these goody and way more tasty heroes arrived.

...SUCKERS!
- SERANNA,
THINKING TO
HERSELF

Now Seranna is going to try her best to drain as many levels as possible

from as many PCs as possible. She's a smart fiend, she recognized the PCs' skill, and she doesn't think it likely for her to be able to completely drain the party. She will do as much as possible and then teleport away. If no PC will consent to her, she will thank them, go away, and remember them for the next occasion.

2. The Crucible is an inn for travelers. It is a surprisingly normal place, and its patrons are mean psychopaths but at least they aren't fiends. The barkeeper is a fat human (**Patrid/male human expert 6th/Outlands/neutral evil**) and he's cleaning a glass as the heroes enter. Several lanterns give off enough light for the common room, while each of the half dozen rooms upstairs has a single candle. If some PC doesn't pay attention at how he rattles his bone-box, he could easily pick a fight here. Patrid enjoys the show until some of Red's mercs come in and throw the rowdies outside. Then he gets up and demands an exorbitant payment for "damages".

If you want, you can run a small side-quest at the Crucible. One early evening, as the PCs are away, several drunk warriors, back from a tough and well-paid campaign, barge into the inn with several wenches and offer free drinks and food to everyone. Everyone cheers and the night parties on as Patrid gleefully roasts and brings to the tables everything he's got, counting his money and at the same time holding large portions for himself. When the PCs come back, the inn owner belches and tells them that he doesn't have much left, but that he'll heat them up a decent supper as soon as possible.

After they have eaten and most hosts including the PCs are in the common room, chatting and playing cards, one of the patrons who ate the most faints and loudly falls on the table, drawing a round of laughter from everyone else. But this is only the beginning: after a few minutes, several more of the patrons feel very ill. Checking the fainted man reveals a weakening pulse. As worry grows among the patrons, Patrid stumbles out of the kitchen holding his belly and looking chalk-white. He vomits up blood, draws some forced breaths, and then collapses on the floor, dead.

The worry becomes fear. As another couple of patrons faint and die, the fear becomes panic and rage. The bashers around the common room start blaming each other for the poisoning, and begin pulling out blades. A tiefling jumps at the PCs, screaming that they are agents of Mithrengo. Hearing this, another patron lifts an axe and attacks as well.

The Crucible's menu
 Best cooking in the Abyss!

- fried lemure, 1 gp
- fish soup, 2 sp
- stewed fireweed, 5 cp
- tamor tubers, 2 cp
- roast ratatosk, 9 sp
- poached varrangoin eggs, 3 sp
- grilled Abyssal bat, 1 sp
- Trav's larval beer, 1 cp
- Redcastle ale, 3 cp
- viperwine (poisonous), 4 gp
- Stygian mineral water, 4 sp
- fermented boar's blood, 5 gp
- curdled aasimon blood, 200 gp

Enraged Tiefling		Al. Chaotic Evil	Tiefling Barbarian 6 th (Abyss)	CR: 6
Str: 15 (+2)	HP: 6d12+6 (45)	Speed: 9	Check pen.: -4	
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 18 (+5 armor, +1 dex, +2 shield)	Armor: medium		
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +4 improved initiative	% fail.: 30%	Grapple: +8	
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +3 (+2 base, +1 dex)	BAB: +6/+1		
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +6 (+5 base, +1 con)	Melee: +8/+3 (+6 base, +2 str)	Ride +10 (+9 ranks, +1 dex)	
Cha: 7 (-2)	Will: +3 (+2 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +6/+1 base		
Attacks			Skills	
Silvered warhammer +1, +9/+4 melee, damage 1d8+3, crit 20/x3			Bluff +0 (+2 racial, -2 cha)	
Feats and special abilities			Climb +7 (+9 ranks, +2 str, -4 armor)	
Feats: Improved initiative, Power attack, Weapon focus: warhammer.			Hide -1 (+2 racial, +1 dex, -4 armor)	
Darkvision 18m; cold, fire and electricity resistance 5, darkness 1/day.			Intimidate +7 (+9 ranks, -2 cha)	
Fast movement, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2, rage 2/day.			Jump +7 (+9 ranks, +2 str, -4 armor)	
Equipment			Ride +10 (+9 ranks, +1 dex)	
Masterwork chain mail (AB +5, max dex +2, check penalty -4, arcane failure 30%)				
Silvered warhammer +1 (damage 1d8+1, crit 19-20/x2) (faint evocation, CL 3)				
Light Wooden Shield +1 (AB +2, arcane failure 5%) (faint abjuration, CL 3)				
12 stingers				

Enraged Patron		Al. Chaotic Evil	Human Rogue 6 th (Outlands)	CR: 6
Str: 13 (+1)	HP: 6d6+6 (27)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 17 (+3)	AC: 18 (+5 armor, +3 dex)	Armor: light		
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +3 dex	% fail.: 20%	Check pen.: -1	
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +8 (+5 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +4	Grapple: +5	
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +3 (+2 base, +1 con)	Melee: +5 (+4 base, +1 str)		
Cha: 11 (+0)	Will: +2 base	Ranged: +7 (+4 base, +3 dex)		
Attacks		Skills		
<i>Short sword</i> +1, +9 melee, damage 1d8+3, crit 20/x3		Bluff +9 ranks		
Feats and special abilities		Climb +9 (+9 ranks, +1 str, -1 armor)		
Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Weapon finesse, Weapon focus: short sword.		Diplomacy +2 synergy		
Sneak attack +3d6, trapfinding, trap sense +2, evasion, uncanny dodge.		Hide +11 (+9 ranks, +3 dex, -1 armor)		
Equipment		Intimidate +11 (+9 ranks, +2 synergy)		
<i>Chain shirt</i> +1 (AB +5, max dex +4, check penalty -1, arcane failure 20%) (faint abjuration, CL 3)		Jump +9 (+9 ranks, +1 str, -1 armor)		
<i>Short sword</i> +1 (damage 1d6+1, crit 19-20/x2) (faint evocation, CL 3)		Listen +9 ranks		
<i>Potion of invisibility</i> (faint illusion, CL 3)		Move silently +12 (+9 ranks, +3 dex)		
5 jinxes		Spot +9 ranks		
		Swim +9 (+9 ranks, +1 str, -1 armor)		

If the tiefling is defeated by the PCs, the rogue will flee upstairs, where he will bump in a big orc mercenary who, unnerved at the scene, will cut him in two. A big row ensues on the stairs, preventing easy access to the second floor.

The PCs are probably getting worried, since they have eaten the food as well. If a PC has stated that he was eating more than normal, you could have them roll a Fortitude save versus DC 15 or take 1d6 points of Constitution damage. PCs that didn't specifically eat much only have to beat DC 12. Truth is, the poison isn't that dangerous on humanoids; it won't do much more than deal a few points of Constitution damage. The only sods who died from it are those who really gorged themselves, and since the PCs arrived late, this doesn't include any of them.

If the PCs get out of the common room and into the door from which Patrid stumbled in, they see a short corridor leading to two doors to the pantry and kitchen. The doors are both open, and the PCs can see in the pantry a pack of tens of rats, climbing on the shelves and clawing at the bags and crates of food. They aren't common rats – their tiny brain can be seen exposed on the top of their heads. They are cranium rats and most of them are trying to pull down a large jar from the top shelf.

See, Patrid once found an entire bag of beans opened, munched and dirtied by rats, so he cunningly poisoned the rest of the bag to kill off the critters. He didn't know that the rats involved were a colony of cranium rats, who grow more intelligent the more of them are in the same place. The swarm sought revenge in contaminating the inn's food with the same poison. However, as many of them died from the poison they ingested, their collective intelligence quickly dwindled. Now they are trying the same trick, but they can't quite figure out how to pull down the jar from the shelf. When they see the PCs, they stop their work and start chirping and squealing at the PCs. If any of the heroes can talk to animals or communicate with telepathy, they can talk to the rats. The creatures are asking the PCs to help them get the jar (which bears a fairly evident skull-and-crossbones label) in the pantry food. That's not a very smart move on their part – that's because of the fast loss of intelligence they have suffered.

Swarm of Cranium Rats		Al. Neutral Evil	Tiny Magical Beast (Swarm) (Abyss)	CR: 6
Str: 2 (-4)	HP: 6d10 (33)	Speed: 4.5, climb 4.5		
Dex: 15 (+2)	AC: 14 (+2 size, +2 dex)	Armor: none		
Con: 10 (+0)	Initiative: +2 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 6 (-2)	Ref: +7 (+5 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +6	Grapple: -	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +5 base	Melee: +2 (+6 base, -4 str)		
Cha: 6 (-2)	Will: +3 (+2 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +8 (+6 base, +2 dex)		
Attacks		Skills		
Swarm, damage 1d6 + disease		Balance +10 (+8 racial, +2 dex)		
Feats and special abilities		Bluff +0 (+2 ranks, -2 cha)		
Feats: Alertness, Weapon finesse.		Climb +10 (+8 ranks, +2 dex)*		
Disease (ex): Filth fever, Fortitude DC 12, incubation 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con.		Hide +6 (+4 racial, +2 dex)		
Distraction (ex): any living creature that begins its turn with a swarm in its square must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round.		Listen +6 (+3 ranks, +2 alertness, +1 wis)		
Cranium rats have an Intelligence score equal to their Hit Dice. This swarm doesn't have enough Intelligence to have supernatural abilities.		Move silently +6 (+4 racial, +2 dex)		
		Spot +7 (+4 ranks, +2 alertness, +1 wis)		
		Swim +10 (+8 racial, +2 dex)**		
		* can always take 10, uses dex instead of str		
		** can always take 10, uses dex instead of str, can run in a straight line while swimming		

If the PCs kill off the rats and get back into the inn, they can explain to the fighting people in the common room (the combat probably has attracted guards by now) what happened, and restore Broken Reach's relative peace. The inn is left without an owner... it is up to Red Shroud to decide who should take care of it now. If the PCs exercise diplomacy and leverage their role in sedating the row, the whimsical succubus could very well decide to assign it to them. It would be a nice base of operations while they are in Broken Reach.

3. The Stabbity Death is an armory run by a very human-looking tiefling (**Jicky/male human warrior 8th/Outlands/chaotic evil**). He enjoys smoking pipes loaded with the foul stuff from the layer of Sulphanorum, so there's often a hazy fog in the whole place. He also wears a patch on his left eye, but he really only does it for the looks. He can see as well as anyone else, and he often lifts the patch when buying goods, to look at their quality. He is the one who outfitted part of the mercenary company that used to work for Rothakon with cold iron weapons; he recalls a green-striped tiefling girl that was around the place some time ago, recruiting and purchasing equipment.

4. A narrow door leads to an herbalist shop, run by a female orc (**Grondil/female orc expert 7th/Prime Material/chaotic evil**). She's better at business than herbalism, so she is currently looking for a druid or someone who can identify a batch of assorted dried herbs she was sold by a tiefling some days ago. They are practically useless, so she's going to be positively enraged at the cross-trader.

If the PCs are willing, Grondil could hire them to get even with the tiefling. Killing him if possible, but at least getting back her money – 2000 gold coins. In return, she can provide them with a rare good indeed – a spell key, a way to cast Alteration magic without side effects on the entire Plain of Infinite Portals, and maybe on other layers as well. Grondil proudly says that she bought the secret from a planewalker several months ago.

The orc tells the PCs, if they accept, that the tiefling looks like a human, save that he bears two short ram horns on his forehead and his face is a permanent grin. She has no more information, but Broken Reach isn't that big and this should be sufficient. Let the PCs wander the fortress and make Gather Information checks – depending on how well they do, sooner or later they will find this tiefling in a tiny tavern located at the bottom of a narrow cave-alley.

The alehouse consists in a small candlelit room, which contains just a couple of tables and a bar. One of the tables is occupied by several humans. They are wearing battered old clothes, and they are drinking beer without much enthusiasm. The bar owner, a human in his fifties, is standing near them, chatting with them. The other table is more interesting. A tall figure, wearing a reddish-orange tunic and purple cloak, is sitting on a chair near to the wall. With the dim light, his face

can't be seen under the hood, but his hands are gaunt and red-skinned. He's a babau, sitting silent. At the opposite side of the small table, balancing on two legs of his chair, while resting his own legs on the table, sits your quarry. He's wearing some kind of light armor made of chain mail and strips of leather, and carries a dark, wicked-looking spiked chain around his belt. He's smiling at the fiend, chatting in Abyssal about small topics, scratching his forehead between his small horns, and ignoring you.

If the PCs approach the humans, they learn that they are residents of Broken Reach, stuck here for one reason or another, be it business, the will of Red, or simply lack of any place to go. The thought of ending up like them should be enough to give the PCs shivers.

Smiling Sam and the fiend are, in truth, having a telepathic conversation; they are discussing the purchase by the fiend of some magical items without paying Red's taxes. In *truth*, the scammer works for the succubus and is trying to figure out whether the babau works for one of the lords of the near fortresses, and whether he is an agent sent to spy on the Reach's defenses. Layers on layers, that is Smiling Sam's specialty.

The demon is named Balaemoz, and he really is an agent of Mithrengo. Not the brightest of the agents, but still a dangerous enemy. Smiling Sam is almost sure of it, and he knows he's playing a dangerous game. For now, the fiend doesn't know that Sam works for Red.

Smiling Sam		Al. Chaotic Neutral	Tiefling Rogue 6 th (Outlands)	CR: 6
Str: 9 (-1)	HP: 6d6 (21)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 17 (+3)	AC: 17 (+4 armor, +3 dex)	Armor: light		
Con: 10 (+0)	Initiative: +3 dex	% fail.: 20%	Check pen.: -1	
Int: 16 (+3)	Ref: +8 (+5 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +4	Grapple: +3	
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +2 base	Melee: +3 (+4 base, -1 str)		
Cha: 14 (+2)	Will: +3 (+2 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +7 (+4 base, +3 dex)		
Attacks		Skills		
Kyton-possessed spiked chain, +9 melee, damage 2d4+1 reach 3mt, crit 20/x2		Bluff +16 (+9 ranks, +2 cha, +2 racial, +3 skill focus)		
Feats and special abilities		Climb +7 (+9 ranks, -1 str, -1 armor)		
Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency: spiked chain, Skill Focus: bluff, Weapon Finesse.		Diplomacy +13 (+9 ranks, +2 synergy, +2 cha)		
Darkvision 18m; cold, fire and electricity resistance 5, <i>darkness</i> 1/day.		Gather Information +13 (+9 ranks, +2 synergy, +2 cha)		
Sneak attack +3d6, trapfinding, trap sense +2, evasion, uncanny dodge.		Hide +13 (+9 ranks, +3 dex, +2 racial, -1 armor)		
Equipment		Intimidate +2 synergy		
Masterwork chain and leather shirt (AB +4, max dex +4, check penalty -1, arcane failure 20%)		Jump +7 (+9 ranks, -1 str, -1 armor)		
Kyton-possessed spiked chain (+2 unholy spiked chain; once per day it can cause all chains at least 3 meters long within 3 meters to become +1 dancing spiked chains under the control of the wielder for 1 minute; damage 2d4+2, crit x2) (strong conjuration, CL 15)		Knowledge (local) +12 (+9 ranks, +3 int)		
Potion of Expeditious Retreat (faint alteration, CL 5)		Listen +10 (+9 ranks, +1 wis)		
Feather Token (Tree) (moderate conjuration, CL 12)		Move silently +12 (+9 ranks, +3 dex)		
50 jinxes, 198 stingers		Sense motive +10 (+9 ranks, +1 wis)		
		Spot +10 (+9 ranks, +1 wis)		

Balaemoz		Al. Chaotic Evil	Babau barbarian 6 th	CR: 12
Str: 25 (+7)	HP: 7d8+6d12+65 (135)	Speed: 12		
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 19 (+1 dex, +8 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 20 (+5)	Initiative: +1 dex	% fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0		
Int: 12 (+1)	Ref: +8 (+7 base, +1 dex)	BAB: +13/+8/+3		Grapple: +20
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +15 (+10 base, +5 con)	Melee: +20 (+13 base, +7 strength)		
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +8 (+7 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +14 (+13 base, +1 dexterity)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +20 melee, damage 1d8+7, and Bite +18 melee, damage 1d6+3		Climb +23 (+16 ranks, +7 str)		
Feats and special abilities		Disable Device +11 (+10 ranks, +1 int)		
Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Natural Attack (claw), Multiattack, Power attack.		Disguise +13 (+10 ranks, +3 cha)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Escape Artist +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
Fast movement, rage 2/day, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2.		Hide +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Sneak attack +2d6, damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 14, telepathy within 30 mt.		Intimidate +19 (+16 ranks, +3 cha)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); caster level 7 th .		Listen +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis)		
Protective slime (su): any weapon or character touching the babau takes 1d8 damage, ignoring hardness; magic weapon and characters may roll a Reflex save, DC 18, to avoid.		Move Silently +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Summon 1 babau 1/day with 40% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		Open Lock +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
		Search +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 int)		
		Sleight of Hand +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
		Survival +11 (+8 ranks, +1 wis, +2 synergy*)		
		Use Rope +3 (+1 dex, +2 synergy**)		
		* when following tracks		
		** when binding someone		

If the PCs ask the humans about the tiefling, they can easily learn that he's called Smiling Sam, and that he is sometimes seen dealing with tanar'ri around Broken Reach. Noone in the bar has seen the babau before, and noone really wants to know more about him. Some of the patrons here know more about Smiling Sam, but it will take at least a round of free beer before they loose their lips. The tiefling has at the same time the reputation of being an excellent source of rare goods and information, and a professional scammer and knight of the cross-trade. It is widely supposed that if he is still alive, it can only be because he works for Red.

The room is small, and if the PCs aren't careful they will probably be overheard by Sam, Balaemoz the babau, or both. The tiefling and the fiend will suddenly stand up, shake hands (Sam winces at the contact with the babau's acid skin), and head to the door. Before the PCs can react, the tiefling is out, while the babau stands in the middle of the narrow entrance. The fiend turns and says that it's been a pleasure to rest in this fine establishment, that he'll enjoy coming back (the barman gulps), blah blah blah. He's buying seconds for Smiling Sam, counting on the fact that the PCs will hesitate before asking a babau to get out of the way. Balaemoz is smart enough to know that if he starts killing people he will be thrown out of the city, but if they *do* ask him to get out of the way, he will be surprised for a moment, and then angered – this could quickly lead to a nasty fight.

Meanwhile, Smiling Sam is doing his best to disappear. Unless the PCs somehow get out of the tavern in one or two rounds at most, they won't be able to follow him directly, or at all. They shouldn't give up though, and a few more uses of Gather Information should eventually result in a merchant in a crowded hallway pointing out the tiefling for the PCs. As soon as the heroes move towards Sam, he notices them and runs for it. If there are PCs faster than him, he gulps his *potion of expeditious retreat*. He'll try to put some distance between him and the PCs, and then dash into a side cave and hide.

Unless the PCs manage to catch him now (in this case, skip this paragraph), he'll wonder what the hell they want and gather some information of his own. He'll arrange for a message to be delivered to them: "Damn you berks! What in the Abyss do you want of me? Meet me at Roni's foundry, after closure!" The foundry is detailed at location number 4. Smiling Sam has a copy of the keys to the back door. He's going to sneak in after Roni has closed the shop, and wait for the PCs in hiding.

The heroes will have to get in using some other method. The tiefling will make sure to place himself in a place full of chains, where he can use his weapon's power to full effect if need be.

So, the PCs get an occasion to talk with Smiling Sam. The tiefling doesn't care much about the scam he played on the orc herbalist; he did it just to gain some extra cash. Besides, he feels that the orc screws his clients at least as much as he does. If the PCs don't readily agree to leave him alone, or if they attack him, he'll be quick to point out that he works for Red Shroud, and that they should be very careful. 'course, the heroes could be justified in not believing him at this point! Once convinced that the PCs aren't working for Mithrengo's ruler, he will reveal that the babau he was talking with back at the inn is a spy, and that the work he's doing in thwarting the plans of the iron fortress is way more important than the petty revenge of an orc merchant. All the while, he keeps up his grin, even if the PCs threaten his life.

There are several things Sam can do if the negotiations don't go well; he can run, possibly animating the chains, or call for some mercenary guards, or suggest that the PCs get him to Red's palace to verify his story. The last possibility is what Sam hopes can work. If he can get these pesky annoying adventurers before Red, the succubus is going to solve the matter, one way or another. However, as soon as Sam and the PCs get out of the foundry, they are confronted by Balaemoz!

The babau is better at hiding than even Sam, and has a better hearing as well. He followed the tiefling, and overheard the conversation. And now, he's going to smash into the party with a blind rage, and try to kill Sam. If the PCs win the fight and save the tiefling, he's going to be thankful.

The smiling tiefling leans against a wall to catch his breath. He says: "This wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for you. Now they'll send another agent, and I'll have to identify him, approach him, and dupe him... damn! Again, from the beginning!" He hangs his spiked chain around his belt. "What's worse, chances are that the next one won't be so slow-witted. Ah well, could be worse, at least I'm alive. Say what..." Sam seems to make an effort to straight his face – now he looks like having just a vague grin – and tells you that if you went to Red's palace with him you'd risk your lives. He really does work for the succubus, finding out agents from the iron fortresses and feeding them false information, and Red wouldn't think twice about writing you into the dead book if it turns out that you're interfering with the tiefling's work. He looks too wounded and tired to be lying.

There isn't much more that the tiefling can do now. If the PCs make mention of the reward that Grondil promised them, he'll warn them that selling a fake spell key is the easiest scam of the Abyss. Beyond this, it's the heroes' decision.

If the PCs really decide to kill him and bring his head to Grondil, or if they let the tiefling go and fabricate some proof instead, the orc will tell them about the Alteration spell key for the Plains of Infinite Portals. The creepy ritual requires the sacrifice of the caster's blood, 1 hit point per level of the spell, at the moment the magic is cast. If the spell has a touch range, the blood must be smeared on the recipient. Much like metamagic, a wizard has to prepare the spell in advance using the spell key, and a sorcerer has to increase the casting time to 1 full round.

5. Roni's foundry is a huge cavern surrounded by several smaller caves. The main room is a chaos of furnaces, vats of molten metal held by chains, scaffoldings and walkways, counterweights and racks of tools. Lots of the mercenaries that fight in the Blood War are elite troops armed with magical weapon, because only well-trained and well-equipped professionals have any hope of making a contribution and/or surviving. Still, in Broken Reach there is as large a request of cheap, common weapons as anywhere else; lots of demon lords like to equip their troops with metal arms rather than their claws only, and everyone needs a side weapon. This is the place where they get them. Roni and his dozen assistants deal in good, old, cheap steel. He makes weapons, armors, and also tools.

Roni himself (Roni/male half-fiend dwarf expert 7th/Baator/lawful evil) is a rather unusual cutter. Short and tough, he is just a bit taller than the average dwarf, but he presents evident fiendish features. He has short but powerful leathery wings, his skin's tinge is more reddish than most primes,

and he can bare fangs and claws to rival a demon. Rumor has it that his mother was a baatezu, but don't ask Roni about this or he'll fly into a rage worthy of any tanar'ri!

6. The Ratholes is a fairly large area of the city/fortress that mainly consists of low and narrow tunnels, winding around themselves in a twisted maze. It was created by the poor and weak of Broken Reach, whose only chance for survival was to hide in the dark corners of the city and hope to be insignificant enough that noone would bother them. This underground area is rich in sealed-off natural caves, which suited well these poor folks who couldn't afford diggers or magic. They carved tunnels connecting the caves, and then more tunnels connecting the tunnels. Then some of the passageways collapsed, so new ones were dug. The result is an uncharted, labyrinthic, dark mess of carved and natural stone.

The reaction of most of the people here when confronted by the PCs in their shining magical equipment will probably be of sheer panic. In any case, there aren't many interesting friends for the heroes here. Notable features include several shallow natural lake of filthy, toxic water, and a single pool of still filthy but drinkable water, which drips from the cave ceiling after having been filtered by the particular ground above it.

HITITI...? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? OH, DON'T WORRY. I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU!
- ABRETAL, WITH HIS MOST FRIENDLY GRIN

The area doesn't lack danger. A murderous psychopath has recently started killing off the Ratholes' residents. This is a fiendish derro named Abretal, who was born on the Prime from a tiefling derro woman, and who later found his way to the Plains of Infinite Portals. After a few days on the Abyss, his fiendish blood became strong enough that he was no longer capable of controlling his racial madness. Abretal sought to hide in the Ratholes, but he eventually became its nightmare. In his warped mind, he saw with

clarity what he had to do. Make them suffer. Torture them beyond the limits of sanity. Then kill them slowly. And when he would become good enough at it, as good as a demon, he will kill himself. This way, his soul will be forged anew into a demon, and the power of the Abyss would be his to command.

Abretal		Al. Chaotic Evil	Fiendish Derro Barbarian/Rogue 2 nd /3 rd (Abyss)	CR: 10
Str: 13 (+1)	HP: 6d8+2d12+8 (48)	Speed: 9	Armor: light	Check pen.: -1
Dex: 17 (+3)	AC: 19 (+2 nat, +3 dex, +1 size, +3 arm)	% fail.: 15%		
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +3 dex	BAB: +7/+2	Grapple: +4	
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +9 (+6 base, +3 dex)	Melee: +9/+4 (+7 base, +1 str, +1 size)	Ranged: +11/+6 (+7 base, +3 dex, +1 size)	
Wis: 5 (-3)	For: +8 (+7 base, +1 con)			
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +5 (+2 base, +3 cha)			
Attacks Greataxe, +9/+4 melee, damage 1d10+1+poison, crit 20/x3			Skills Bluff +8 (+5 ranks, +3 cha) Diplomacy +5 (+2 synergy, +3 cha) Hide +14 (+4 ranks, +3 dex, +4 racial, +4 size, -1 armor) Intimidate +9 (+4 ranks, +2 synergy, +3 cha) Knowledge (local) +3 ranks Listen +8 (+11 ranks, -3 wis) Move silently +22 (+11 ranks, +3 dex, +4 racial, +5 competence, -1 check penalty) Speak Abyssal	
Feats and special abilities Feats: Aspect of the Tanar'ri*, Blind-fight, Improved Initiative. * due to the feat's requirements, Abretal can only use it while raging. SR 15, insane (uses Charisma instead of Wisdom for Will saves, immune to confusion and insanity), takes 1 point of Con damage per hour spent in sunlight, smite good 1/day (+8 damage vs a good foe), darkvision 12, DR 5/magic, cold and fire resistance 10, poison use, sneak attack +3d6, trapfinding, trap sense +2, evasion, fast movement, rage 1/day, uncanny dodge. At will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>ghost sound</i> . 1/day – <i>daze</i> (DC 13), <i>sound burst</i> (DC 15). Caster level 3 rd .				
Equipment Studded leather armor (AB +3, max dex +5, check penalty -1, arcane failure 15%) Greataxe (damage 1d10, crit 20/x3) poisoned with Abyssal Greenblood Oil. Dagger (damage 1d4, crit 19-20/x2) 4 doses of Abyssal Greenblood Oil (Injury DC 15, primary 1 Con, secondary 1d3 Con) <i>Potion of Nondetection</i> (faint abjuration, CL 5) <i>Boots of Elvenkind</i> (faint transmutation, CL 5)				

Abretal picks a random victim from the Ratholes, knocks him or her out, and then drags the poor sod back to his secluded, hidden cave. There, he inflicts constant torture, torment and mutilation to his prisoner until the victim is too damaged to suffer any more, and then he leaves him or her to die. Then, he goes on to the next one. He's become *very* good at it. It takes several days between a victim and the next one. Sometimes, faint, distant screams can be heard in all the passages of the Ratholes. Abretal is currently convinced that he is very, very close to his goal.

Abretal looks like a beardless, pale dwarf, with long uncombed hair and bulging eyes. He wears an old worker suit, and his face, clothes and hair are all covered in dried blood and other fluids. The awful smell is enough to tip some victims off to his arrival, and as a result there are plenty of scared recounts of the killer's appearance. No two tales are exactly the same, but most agree that he's got to be some kind of horrible undead dwarf.

The fiendish derro's lair is one of the natural caves. It contains one of the poisonous pools; this one causes the skin of humanoids who drink from it to become hypersensitive, so that the slightest contact causes dire pain. Abretal uses it to great effect. The floor and walls of the cave are splattered with blood, and gory remains lie everywhere on the floor. Inch-thick worms can be seen here and there. Not far from the pool, several iron chains are nailed to the ground, and to the chain is bounded the mad dwarf's last victim. He probably was a human, the corpse is too mangled to be sure. Still, an accurate examination can reveal that none of the wounds was lethal by itself, and that the man probably died of infection.

If the PCs look for the murderer, they have to ask around the scared Ratholes' folks, find out the areas where the attacks have been more frequent and carefully follow tracks. Eventually, they'll discover Abretal's cave. The derro is there, busy carving out someone's eyeballs. The cave is shrouded in magical darkness and the victim is covered in cuts and he is choking on blood. As the PCs enter, the dwarf startles, suddenly shaking his dagger. There is a brief gurgle from the man, and then he dies. Abretal snarls and casts *sound burst* at the PCs, then he rages, calling to his inner demon, and charges. When it is clear that he has no hope, he screams in madness and shouts (in Abyssal) "It doesn't matter! It is complete! It must be!", followed by some incoherent roaring. Then, he drives the dagger deep into his heart and dies.

If the heroes have the guts to search the cave, they can find some items, which belonged to the victims. A rusted earring. A chipped mug. A stained bottle cap. An unrecognizable painting. The derro doesn't care about them; he picked up whatever seemed useful for him to capture victims more easily. That isn't much; all the prisoners have been outcasts and homeless, though a couple of them had a minor magical trinket, either as a very prized possession or without knowing its nature. There is a single *bead of force* (moderate evocation, CL 10) which neither the dwarf nor the previous owner had recognized as magical.

But it is not over yet. In the Abyss, good deeds have the worst consequences. Even though most of Abretal's soul is probably bound to become a larva or something, a fraction of it has become trapped in its own evil. When the derro's *darkness* spells expire, the shadows of his cave coalesce in a tall, living shadow, a mass of dark tentacles and incarnate madness.

What if...?

It takes a *wish* or *miracle* to cure a derro. Abretal makes no exception; in fact, he is even more insane than the average derro, because of the demonic blood running through his veins. At the DM's discretion, a Bleaker's faction ability could allow Abretal to be restored to sanity.

He stays Chaotic Evil, though. He won't feel particularly remorseful. Free from the Abyss' influence, he will seek to return to the Prime.

Allip		Al. Neutral Evil	Medium Undead (Incorporeal) (Abyss)	CR: 6
Str: -	HP: 12d12 (78)	Speed: fly 9 (perfect)		
Dex: 20 (+5)	AC: 19 (+4 deflection, +5 dex)	Armor: none		
Con: -	Initiative: +9 (+5 dex, +4 improved init)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: -	
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +11 (+4 base, +5 dex, +2 light ref)	BAB: +6	Grapple: -	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +4 base	Melee: +6 base		
Cha: 24 (+7)	Will: +9 (+8 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +11 (+6 base, +5 dex)		
Attacks			Skills	
Touch, +12 melee incorporeal touch, damage 1d4 wisdom drain			Hide +20 (+15 ranks, +5 dex)	
Feats and special abilities			Intimidate +17 (+10 ranks, +7 cha)	
Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (touch).			Listen +16 (+15 ranks, +1 wis)	
Darkvision 12, incorporeal, undead, +2 turn resistance.			Search +5 ranks	
Babble (su): all sane creatures within 12 meters must save on Will, DC 23, or be affected as if by <i>hypnotism</i> for 2d4 rounds; this is a sonic, mind-affecting compulsion.			Spot +16 (+15 ranks, +1 wis)	
Madness (su): anyone using detect thoughts, mind control or telepathy on an allip takes 1d4 wisdom damage.				
Wisdom drain (su): the allip deals 1d4 wisdom drain on a successful attack, and gains 5 temporary hit points for one hour.				

Abrital's own considerable power, his demonic ancestry, the horrible deeds he committed, and his deep insanity have resulted in a powerful undead whose mere presence can project madness on everyone nearby. This allip will hunt down the PCs and attack them, possibly when they are alone, draining a PC's Wisdom and then retreating. Between an attack and another, it might decide to vent his frustration by driving some Broken Reach sod insane. Only by destroying this monster can the PCs become safe again.

7. This huge cavern (no, it's not in scale on the map, but it's still several hundred meters across) is called Battlefield Courtyard, and is used to gather and train the mercenary troops hired by fiend lords to war against the Baatezu and among themselves. At any moment, there will be between one and three mercenary forces in the hall, either just arrived from some campaign, or gathering to leave, or training. Some of them will be disciplined mercenary companies, but most are just rag-tag ensembles of individual professionals, the only thing in common being the lord that hired them.

Besides these freelancers or small groups, there are currently two mercenary companies in Broken Reach. The first one is the Red Swords; they are a group of psychopaths led by a charismatic minotaur barbarian (**Hruthorg/male minotaur barbarian 15th/Abyss/chaotic evil Fated**) who was born in Baphomet's realm. They have several units with different equipments, but they all wear metal armor, boots, and red leather gloves, belt, scabbards, quivers and shoulder pads. They are noisy, chaotic, troublesome, homicidal, and currently bored, so it's better to keep away from them.

The other company is the Lower Planar Mercenary League. It is led by a yugoloth (**Oshakan/male yagnoloth fighter 8th/Abyss/neutral evil**) and it's far better organized than the Red Swords. It has a few elite units composed of yugoloth, but the bulk of it is made of well-trained mortals. Oshakan pays well but he likes discipline, and these cutters are much saner than Hruthorg's horde. They are currently waiting for an assignment – only Oshakan knows the details – and they can often be found in Battlefield Courtyard practicing maneuvers or training.

If the PCs ask the residents of the surrounding houses, they can learn some information about the mercenaries that were hired by Rothakon. The bulk of their forces entered the Abyss from Pandemonium via the Styx, in order to reach the 76th layer quickly, but many of them were recruited in Broken Reach by the tiefling girl, Lianne. Also, they bought a good number of cold iron weapons in the city-fortress.

8. This area of Broken Reach is home to the city-fortress' high-ups. There are no formal political structures in the town, the only official leader being Red, but some of the smartest folks in town have nevertheless managed to carve up a nice comfy niche for themselves. All of them are as igno-

rant of lawful authority as any Abyssal inhabitant, but none of them dare challenge the succubus' power right now.

Ledi (**Ledi Opalheart/female tiefling rogue 11th/Abyss/chaotic evil**) lives in a house which makes full display of her wealth. She is an ex-Sensate and she's behind all the prostitution business of Broken Reach, taking the lion's share of all earnings and punishing "freelancers" in ways better left unmentioned. Recently, she spends a lot of time alone in her rooms, mostly directing her business through her faithful servant Suleensh (**Suleensh/male incubus/Abyss/chaotic evil**). When she does show herself, she is languid and absent-minded. Her appearance is very comely, and her tiefling traits are manifest in her brightly colored hair, ranging from blue to pink, and her tough and sharp fingernails. She usually wears very loose silken cloths. Noone knows the truth – the servant is actually an incubus, which is basically a succubus whose natural form appears male (this doesn't really make a difference, since both succubi and incubi can *polymorph* at will into whatever race and sex they need). Suleensh keeps Ledi constantly *charmed* and feeds her dozens of *suggestions* in her sleep, effectively directing her thoughts and actions. He plans to use Ledi's resources, position and network to corrupt mortals passing through Broken Reach through lust and decadence, damning their souls to the Abyss forever. Since he (correctly) suspects that Red would object to the presence of another succubus in her town, he hasn't yet killed Ledi, instead using her as a front for his schemes.

Hanatel (**Hanatel/male human cleric of Hiddukel 11th/Prime/neutral evil**) is a worshipper of the Krynnish god of trickery, flung into the Abyss during a freak accident involving a gnomish quasit-powered clock and his attempt to sabotage it. He managed to survive and has slowly established himself in Broken Reach. He's now over 70 years old and still as cunning as ever if not more so. He has a long white beard and a wrinkled face, but the signs of age end there. His step is sure and fast, and noone has ever seen him ill or sick. He is the man to visit in the Reach if you're looking to buy or sell a rare and costly magical item. It is rumored that he is less than accurate in his tax payments to Red, but noone knows how he can get away with it. Other rumors say that he wields incredible powers granted by his god, and that this is the reason for which Red doesn't bug him too much. The truth is, one, that the old blood is an exceptional con artist and his large collection of exotic magical items allow him to fake being a lot more powerful than he actually is, and two, that he has a loose agreement with Red thanks to which he pays reduced levies in exchange for information on persons who would not pay those levies at all. He is now the second richest person in town, after Red Shroud herself.

Mobley the maurezhi, whom the PCs met in front of the fortress' entrance, also lives in a small house in this area. He deals in knowledge, buying and selling the secrets of Broken Reach as if they were sacks of grain. With his ability to learn everything that was known to the victims he devours, he has a major advantage in this field. Mobley knows about Hanatel's agreement with Red; he knows that Suleensh is an incubus; he knows of Smiling Sam's job for Red Shroud; he knows who's killing the homeless in the Ratholes. He hates the succubus, and he knows enough secrets to cause her little reign to crumble, but he can't act, and she knows it. The succubus protects him from the molydei, the Blood War recruiters, who would want Mobley in the front lines against the baatezu. The fiend, however, is working towards overturning this situation. He knows that Red is almost sure that an attack against Broken Reach by the forces of Mithrengo is imminent. Mobley has secretly hired the Lower Planar Mercenary League and is waiting for the assault to commence. When that happens, he will reveal his force, and first use it to help Red repeal the attack, and then turn on the weakened mercenaries hired by the succubus.

In the mean time, the maurezhi can be very useful for the PCs. He knows that Rothakon the half-fiend has passed through Broken Reach just a few hours before the PCs arrived. He stormed into the town as angry as a whole nest of wasps, hired a bunch of escorts, and got out as soon as possible. One of Mobley's agents also discovered that he has hired some of the Reach's worst scum to retrieve a sort of wooden orb from a bunch of guys that sound suspiciously similar to the PCs. Mobley also knows of a secret passage leading from Battlefield Courtyard to the caves where the portal to the Outlands lies. And he knows where the PCs are most likely to find Red Shroud's escaped daughter. And lots more... but all this chant is not free, and the characters aren't likely to have anything that the fiend desires, especially if they angered him when they got into town. Mobley would place great value in the date of Mithrengo's assault on Broken Reach, but what he will try to get from the PCs is another thing entirely. He wants them to capture victims for him to devour. Expecting these mortals to have some kind of moral issue with the proposal, he will indicate targets of proven evil, starting from the Ratholes killer. He isn't much interested in the man and won't value his soul very much, but if the PCs do this task for him he will point them to a not-so-wicked individual... slowly leading the heroes to damnation and increasing his power considerably in the meantime. Make no mistake, knowingly feeding someone to a maurezhi means destroying the victim's soul and is an incredibly evil act no matter what; even doing this to the psychopathic murderer Abretal is more than enough for a paladin to lose his powers, or for a cleric to lose access to some or all of his spells, or for a character who was "on the edge" to make the final transition to evil.

9. This area is fairly deep, and it is where the Reach gets its water supply from. A slow, cold underground river flows through a low cave, touching the excavated tunnels in several points. There are always some people gathering the water here; they are either residents, or they work for a mercenary company, an inn, or for some rich folk.

There are several other places around the tunnels where substantial amounts of water drip from the ceiling, or trickles from some hole; however, it is all tainted. Unless purified by magic, it will not satiate thirst, and it will deal 1 Constitution damage unless the character makes a Fortitude save, DC 13. All locals know this.

10. Rothakon has left Broken Reach, but before going he has hired a bunch of fiends and sellswords to keep an eye on the town for him. He has given them the PCs' descriptions and instructions to kill them and retrieve a small wooden orb.

Unusual parties

If the PCs are so evil that they would have no qualms about capturing people and having their souls devoured by a fiend, Mobley is going to take advantage of their wickedness.

He will soon start giving them less and less useful information in return for their services, only upping the rewards when it seems that they no longer want to serve him.

He will also make sure to never tell them anything that may help them escaping Broken Reach. He doesn't want his new puppets to go away before they have done everything they can for him.

Larkis Methulon		Al. Chaotic Evil	Tiefling Fighter 9 th (Abyss)	CR: 9
Str: 18 (+4)	HP: 9d10+9 (58)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 15 (+2)	AC: 23 (+9 armor, +1 dex, +3 shield)	Armor: heavy		
Con: 13 (+1)	Initiative: +4 improved initiative	% fail.: 50% Check pen.: -7		
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +5 (+3 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +9/+4 Grapple: +13		
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +7 (+6 base, +1 con)	Melee: +13/+8 (+9 base, +4 str)		
Cha: 9 (-1)	Will: +5 (+3 base, +2 iron will)	Ranged: +11/+6 (+9 base, +2 dex)		
Attacks			Skills	
<i>Silvered vicious longsword</i> +1, +16/+11 melee, dam 1d8+2d6+6 and 1d6 to Larkis, crit 19-20/x2, or <i>Composite longbow w/arrows</i> +2, +13/+8 range 33m, damage 1d8+5, crit 20/x3			Bluff +1 (+2 racial, -1 cha) Climb +4 (+7 ranks, +4 str, -7 armor) Hide -3 (+2 racial, +2 dex, -7 armor) Intimidate +8 (+11 ranks, -1 cha) Jump +3 (+6 ranks, +4 str, -7 armor)	
Feats and special abilities				
Feats: Combat reflexes, Dodge, Greater weapon focus: longsword, Improved initiative, Iron Will, Power attack, Precise shot, Weapon focus: longbow, Weapon focus: longsword. Darkvision 18m; cold, fire and electricity resistance 5, <i>darkness</i> 1/day. Fast movement, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2, rage 2/day.				
Equipment				
<i>Full plate</i> +1 (AB +9, max dex +1, check penalty -5, arcane failure 35%) (faint abjuration, CL 3) <i>Silvered vicious longsword</i> +1 (damage 1d8+2d6+1 and 1d6 to wielder, crit 19-20/x2) (moderate necromancy, CL 9) Composite longbow (+4 Strength bonus) (damage 1d8, crit 20/x3) Quiver, 30 <i>arrows</i> +2 (moderate evocation, CL 6) 2 <i>exploding arrows</i> +1 (<i>fireball</i> on impact) (faint evocation, CL 5) <i>Heavy Steel Shield</i> +1 (AB +3, arcane failure 15%, check penalty -2) (faint abjuration, CL 3) <i>Boots of Striding</i> (+3 base land speed) (faint transmutation, CL 3) 7 fury leaves (see page 15) 400 jinx, 12 stingers				

Larkis, an average-looking cutter except for his odd-looking hands, is a freelance mercenary. He works for Rothakon because he was paid one half of a very large sum up front, and he'd like to get the other one. He needs money because he is addicted to fury leaves – he will eat one right before the ambush begins, in fact. However, he values his life a lot more, and will not hesitate to flee or beg for mercy if the tide of the battle does not swing in his favor. Despite having only four fingers per hand, he's good with a longsword and with a bow, and is trained to use either as need be.

UH... LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS...
 - LARKIS METHULON,
 WHEN THE BATTLE GOES WRONG

Groskel Hathanax	Al. Neutral Evil (Fated)	Human Wizard 9 th (Outlands)	CR: 9
Str: 7 (-2) Dex: 9 (-1) Con: 14 (+2) Int: 18 (+4) Wis: 12 (+1) Cha: 11 (+0)	HP: 8d4+16 (36) AC: 9 (-1 dex) Initiative: -1 dex Ref: +2 (+3 base, -1 dex) For: +7 (+3 base, +2 con, +2 lit reflexes) Will: +7 (+6 base, +1 wis)	Speed: 9 Armor: none % fail.: 0% BAB: +4 Melee: +2 (+4 base, -2 str) Ranged: +3 (+4 base, -1 dex)	Check pen.: - Grapple: +2
Attacks Dagger, +2 melee, damage 1d4-2, crit 19-20/x2		Skills Bluff +4 ranks Concentration +14 (+12 ranks, +2 con) Diplomacy +3 (+5 ranks, -2 cape of shadows) Intimidate +2 (+2 cape of shadows) Knowledge (Abyss) +17 (+5 ranks, +8 synergy, +4 int) Knowledge (Arcana) +10 (+6 ranks, +4 int) Knowledge (Gehenna) +17 (+5 ranks, +8 synergy, +4 int) Knowledge (Carceri) +17 (+5 ranks, +8 synergy, +4 int) Knowledge (Gray waste) +17 (+5 ranks, +8 synergy, +4 int) Knowledge (Baator) +17 (+5 ranks, +8 synergy, +4 int) Sense motive +6 (+5 ranks, +1 wis) Spellcraft +16 (+12 ranks, +4 int) Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*) Speak abyssal, infernal, yugoloth	
Feats and special abilities Feats: Energy substitution: acid, Great fortitude, Quicken spell, Scribe scroll, Self-reliance, Spell focus: evocation, Spell focus: necromancy. Wizard spells/day: 4/5/5/4/3/1			
Equipment Spellbook (0 th level: all core; 1 st level: Protection from evil, Protection from good, Shield, Cause fear, Mage armor, Identify, Magic missile, Expeditious retreat, Obscuring mist; 2 nd level: See invisibility, Summon swarm, Invisibility, Touch of idiocy, Scorching ray; 3 rd level: Fireball, Tiny hut, Hold person, Dispel magic, Vampiric touch, Rage; 4 th level: Animate dead, Dimensional anchor, Black tentacles, Summon monster IV, Bestow curse, Greater invisibility, Scourge of brimstone*, Dimension door; 5 th level: Permanency, Dominate person, Nightmare; 6 th level: Circle of death) <i>Scroll of vampiric touch</i> (medium necromancy, CL 8) <i>Scroll of animate dead</i> (medium necromancy, CL 7) <i>Scroll of summon monster IV</i> (medium conjuration, CL 7) <i>Scroll of tiny hut</i> (medium conjuration, CL 8) <i>Scroll of identify</i> (faint divination, CL 1) <i>Scroll of dimension door</i> (medium conjuration, CL 8) <i>Brooch of shielding</i> (can still absorb 54 damage) (faint abjuration, CL 1) <i>Cape of shadows</i> (dimension door 1/day at night or underground, +2 circumstance bonus to intimidate, -2 to diplomacy) (moderate conjuration, CL 9) Silver dagger, cold iron dagger. 130 jink, 34 stingers.			

Prepared spells:

0th level: Detect magic, Dancing lights, Detect magic, Touch of fatigue

1st level: Protection from good, Magic missile, Magic missile, Expeditious retreat, Cause fear

2nd level: See invisibility, Invisibility, **Acid** Scorching ray, Scorching ray, Arcane lock

3rd level: Fireball, Rage, Dispel magic, **Acid** Fireball

4th level: Bestow curse, Black tentacles, Greater invisibility

5th level: **Quickened** cause fear

Scourge of brimstone

Conjuration [Evil, Fire]

Level: Sor/Wiz 4, Clr 3

Components: V, S, M

Range: close (7,5 mt + 1,5 mt/level)

Effect: flaming evil skull

This spell is similar to Spiritual Weapon, with the following differences. Instead of creating a weapon of force, it creates a flaming flying skull, which moves and attacks in the way described by the Spiritual Weapon spell. It uses the caster's spellcasting stat (Intelligence, Charisma or Wisdom) as a bonus to hit, instead of Wisdom. Once created the skull isn't limited by the spell range; it can keep following the target for as long as the caster can see him or her. Each hit deals 1d8 fire damage, plus 1 point of vile damage every three levels. Vile damage cannot be resisted, and it can only be healed by magic, and only in a consecrated or hallowed place. Finally, the skull is vulnerable to physical attack in addition to the vulnerabilities of a spiritual weapon. It has an AC of 17 (10, +2 for being Tiny, +5 deflection), hardness 5 and 10 hit points. Other attacks do not affect it.

Groskel Hathanax is a planar human in his thirties, born in Sigil, and out on the planes to grab power by the horns. He wears a shortened scholar robe, a leather belt with several pouches, and a black cloak that seems to cover his entire figure in shadow – the effect is pretty unsettling. He has traveled the lower planes looking for secrets and magic, and has struck a deal with Rothakon for several scrolls of tanar'ri battle spells in return for the Selthian Orb. He is more motivated than Larkis, but still he will place his survival above all.

In combat, Groskel likes it when he can take his enemies by surprise. He starts the combat under the effect of *greater invisibility* and *expeditious retreat* and keeps casting offensive spells while moving, staying in open spaces to prevent his foes from finding out where he is. If someone gets too close, he *dimension doors* away. In case any of his comrades falls under a mind control spell, he keeps a *protection from good* ready. If he has time, he'll also make Nukauth invisible.

Nukauth	Al. Chaotic Evil	Babau Fighter 3 rd (Abyss)	CR: 9
Str: 22 (+6) Dex: 14 (+2) Con: 20 (+5) Int: 14 (+2) Wis: 13 (+1) Cha: 16 (+3)	HP: 7d8+3d10+50 (98) AC: 26 (+2 dex, +8 natural, +6 armor) Initiative: +6 (+2 dex, +4 impr. init) Ref: +7 (+5 base, +2 dex) For: +10 (+5 base, +5 con) Will: +6 (+5 base, +1 wis)	Speed: 6 Armor: medium % fail.: 25% Check pen.: -3 BAB: +10/+5 Grapple: +16 Melee: +17/+12 (+11 base, +6 strength) Ranged: +12/+7 (+10 base, +2 dexterity)	
Attacks Cold iron greatsword +19/+14 melee, damage 2d6+9, crit 17-20/x2, or 2 claws, +12 melee, damage 1d6+5, and Bite +10 melee, damage 1d6+2		Skills Climb +12 (+10 ranks, +5 str, -3 armor) Disable Device +12 (+10 ranks, +2 int) Disguise +13 (+10 ranks, +3 cha) Escape Artist +12 (+10 ranks, +2 dex) Hide +17 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +2 dex, -3 armor) Intimidate +15 (+12 ranks, +3 cha) Listen +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis) Move Silently +17 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +2 dex, -3 armor) Open Lock +12 (+10 ranks, +2 dex) Search +20 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +2 int) Sleight of Hand +12 (+10 ranks, +2 dex) Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*) Use Rope +4 (+2 dex, +2 synergy**)	
Feats and special abilities Feats: Cleave, Improved critical: greatsword, Improved initiative, Multiattack, Power attack, Weapon focus: greatsword. All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned. Sneak attack +2d6, damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 14, telepathy within 30 mt. Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>greater teleport</i> ; caster level 7 th . Protective slime (su): any weapon or character touching the babau takes 1d8 damage, ignoring hardness; magic weapon and characters may roll a Reflex save, DC 18, to avoid. Summon 1 babau 1/day with 40% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.			
Equipment <i>Scale mail</i> +2 (AB +6, max dex +3, check penalty -3, arcane failure 25%) (moderate abjuration, CL 3) Masterwork cold iron greatsword (damage 2d6, crit 19-20/x2) 1083 jinx, 12 green.			

Nukauth convinced Ruxekoz to desert a battle, and now he and the bulezau are waiting in the relative safety of Broken Reach until they can be sure that their former master is no longer looking for them. Nukauth is the brains of the two, but like all tanar'ri he doesn't have much of a planning skill. He doesn't know or care about what they should do a week from today. However, the money that Rothakon handed them to put some berks into the dead-book is a very good point to start.

Unlike many other tanar'ri, Nukauth doesn't have many compunctions about using his summoning ability as early and as often as needed. While using this ability normally leaves the demon in debt towards the summoned one, Nukauth is already on the death list of his former master, so he's not planning on upholding his part of the deal.

During the fight, if Groskel can make him invisible, he'll find some safe place and ready actions to counterspell (though the armor he's wearing may prove a problem there).

Ruxekoz		Al. Chaotic Evil	Bulezau Barbarian 3 rd (Abyss)	CR: 9
Str: 22 (+6)	HP: 7d8+3d12+33 (88)	Speed: 12		
Dex: 18 (+4)	AC: 24 (-1 size, +4 dex, +11 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 16 (+3)	Initiative: +4 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 7 (-2)	Ref: +10 (+6 base, +4 dex)	BAB: +10/+5	Grapple: +20	
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +11 (+8 base, +3 con)	Melee: +15 (+10 base, +6 strength, -1 size)		
Cha: 11 (+0)	Will: +6 base	Ranged: +13 (+10 base, +4 dexterity, -1 size)		
Attacks			Skills	
+1 keen huge greataxe +17/+12 melee reach 3m, damage 3d6+10, crit 19-20/x3, or 2 claws, +15 melee reach 3m, damage 1d4+6, and Head butt +13 melee reach 3m, damage 2d8+3, and Tail slap +13 melee reach 3m, damage 1d3+3			Climb +16 (+10 ranks, +6 str)	
Feats and special abilities			Intimidate +12 ranks	
Feats: Improved bull rush, Multiattack, Power attack, Weapon focus: greataxe. All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned. Damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 14. Awesome blow with the head butt, as the feat. Rage 1/day, fast movement, uncanny dodge, trap sense +1. Bulezau rage (ex): 25% chance per round of combat, 75% in rounds during which it was damaged but didn't hit a foe. Rage lasts until all opponents are dead or until 5 rounds pass without combat. This doesn't stack with barbarian rage! Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>cause fear</i> , <i>command</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>wall of fog</i> ; 1/day – <i>shout</i> . Caster level 7 th . Summon 1-3 rutterkin (40%) or 3-12 dretches (60%) babau 1/day with 25% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.			Jump +17 (+10 ranks, +6 str)	
Equipment			Listen +11 ranks	
+1 keen huge greataxe (damage 3d6+1, crit 19-20/x3) (moderate transmutation, CL 10)			Search +8 (+10 ranks, -2 int)	
			Spot +11 ranks	
			Survival +12 (+10 ranks, +2 synergy*)	
			Swim +17 (+10 ranks, +6 str)	
			* when following tracks	

Ruxekoz works as a freelance mercenary, together with Nukauth. The two of them have deserted some tanar'ri lord in the middle of a battle, and are taking shelter in Broken Reach until they can be sure that noone is looking for them. Ruxekoz is a large, tall but sickly thin fiendish minotaur, his gaunt appearance hiding an impressive strength. When he's calm, he does what Nukauth tells him to do, but in combat he instantly becomes a frothing, raging engine of destruction and there's nothing that can stop him.

One day, after the PCs have been around for a while, and these agents have had time to take a look at them and decide that they have found their targets, the heroes are going to get attacked. The hired thugs are going to be well prepared, and will attack the PCs in the point marked as **10** on the map. They will pop up from an alley and strike quickly; their hope is to finish off the PCs before Red's "security forces" can intervene. They know that if they don't succeed immediately, they are going to have a hard time hiding from the succubus' revenge; Red Shroud doesn't take kindly to strangers messing up the semblance of peace she has built in Broken Reach.

If the PCs realize this, they could escape relatively easy by stalling the fight somehow. After some minutes, a bunch of the bashers Red employs for peacekeeping will show up and try to stop the fight (in the case of the bulezau, this might mean killing him). If the PCs stop attacking, the thugs will be forced to comply. The town mercenaries will tell everyone that if they want to settle something, they will have to do it out of the fortress. The PCs are free to refuse this of course, in which case the agents will have no choice but to wait until the heroes get out of the city. If they are lucky, they may be able to catch the PCs in a city section where there is no danger of being seen by anyone of importance,

More of the dark

In case the PCs manage to capture, *charm* or *dominate* one of the assailants, and wish to question him, they all know about the same about their employer.

They know that Rothakon is a half-fiend; he looked pretty furious as he stormed into town, toured some inns and other "recruitment centers", hired them and left.

They were given detailed descriptions of several people – the PCs, plus any other person that was recently imprisoned in castle Maldithar. Their instructions are to capture them, and to search for a small wooden orb; once the item is found, the prisoner's lives have no more value.

Rothakon said that he would send someone in one or two months, to pick up the item and complete their payment.

such as the Ratholes. A modicum of care on the heroes' side should prevent this.

If the PCs so desire, they can actually accept to fight outside Broken Reach. This gives them time to prepare and probably makes the combat's outcome fairly obvious. The bunch of mercenaries know that they'll lose their edge; if they've been impressed enough by the heroes' combat skills they may decide to pass this "opportunity" themselves! If a fight does occur, though, the locals will treat it as some kind of entertainment, flock around the combat site, and start taking bets.

11. This end of the city has been taken over by a bunch of Red's best bashers. Not long ago, while digging for a new housing area, someone struck a vein of valuable abyssal red iron. The owner was "gently" persuaded by Red Shroud to hand over control of the mine to her. The wide tunnel coming from the main street ends on a wide portcullis, guarded by several human and tiefling mercenaries. Inside, a small mine has been set up, and a dozen of slaves extract the mineral under the merciless supervision of a vrock. The slaves are eight dwarves and four gnomes; they are part of a bunch that was captured during a raid on the Prime Material many years ago. They are the only survivors; the other fifty or so prisoners have died under an endless series of cruel masters.

The mine consists of three excavated tunnels, one of which has been enlarged and is being used as a dormitory for the slaves and temporary storage for the ore. The slightly poisonous mineral isn't exactly beneficial to the health of the slaves, but none of their owners seem to be concerned with this.

The red iron produced here is very impure, but it can still fetch between 2 and 3 gold coins per kilogram. Someone capable of refining and forging it – not an easy task – could create weapons which have a +1 enhancement bonus to damage, and can overcome damage reduction as if it was cold iron. A weapon made from abyssal red iron costs 500 gold more than its normal counterpart. Further, any magical enhancement costs 2000 additional jinx. Red iron is otherwise the same as normal iron.

12. The chamber containing the portal to the Outlands lies under Red's palace. It is a wide cave, about ten meters across, with a low ceiling. Two pillars, chiseled to resemble pillars of skulls, enclose the shimmering surface of the portal. Braziers near the walls provide a modicum of illumination.

The access to this cave is within Red's palace, and it is well guarded. However, within the chamber itself there is only a single chasme tanar'ri. This somewhat uncommon fiend looks like a 2 meters long fly, with a roughly human head. Its eyes are wide and round, and its nose is long and thin.

The chasme is hiding on the ceiling (it can climb as well as any fly), and the entire area is shrouded in *darkness*. Further, the entire cave is always under the effect of *desecrate*; entering it really gives the shivers. The fiend is almost always (90% of the time) keeping a *see invisibility* spell active. Its job is to check on anyone who enters the portal, and telepathically inform the fiends up in the palace. Like many chasmes, it doesn't like being with other fiends, and this solitary job suits him well.

Besides the stairs coming down from the palace, there is another access to this room. It is a secret passage, leading to a tunnel that snakes all the way to Battlefield Square. The passage is very well concealed – it takes a 35 Search check to notice it. Few people know of it; one is Red, another is the chasme guarding the place. If anyone enters from the secret passage, its instructions are to kill the intruder before it can escape through the portal. It is worth noting, though, that the passage is barely large enough for a Medium creature to pass through; if the intruders retreat through it, the fiend won't be able to follow (it will, however, try to summon a bunch of dretches to send after the unwanted visitors).

What if...?

Only very good, or very stupid, parties would decide to try and free the slaves here. It means risking their lives, and ruining any chance they have of getting help from Red. In fact, they'll likely have to flee from the city if they want to avoid the killers she'll certainly send after them.

Also, the ex-slaves would have nowhere to go; unless the PCs can find a way out for them, they will be killed or recaptured quite soon.

If the leatherheads try this trick, do not be afraid to throw the consequences at them.

Chasme		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Outsider (Chaotic, Evil) (Abyss)	CR: 11
Str: 18 (+4)	HP: 7d8+21 (52)	Speed: 6, climb 6, fly 12 (good)		
Dex: 15 (+2)	AC: 22 (-1 size, +2 dex, +11 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 17 (+3)	Initiative: +2 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 12 (+1)	Ref: +7 (+5 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +7	Grapple: +15	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +8 (+5 base, +3 con)	Melee: +10 (+7 base, +4 strength, -1 size)		
Cha: 12 (+1)	Will: +6 (+5 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +8 (+7 base, +2 dexterity, -1 size)		
Attacks			Skills	
2 claws, +10 melee, damage 2d4+4+wound, and bite +8 melee, damage 1d8+2			Climb +14 (+10 ranks, +4 str)	
Feats and special abilities			Concentration +13 (+10 ranks, +3 con)	
Feats: Multiattack, Power attack			Hide +7 (+10 ranks, +1 dex, -4 size)	
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.			Listen +19 (+10 ranks, +1 wis, +8 racial)	
Damage reduction 10/cold iron and good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 19, telepathy (can communicate with any creature within 30 meters that has a language).			Move silently +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)	
Wounding (ex): a successful claw attack opens a wound that bleeds for 1 point of damage per round, in addition to normal damage, until stopped by application of the Heal skill (DC 15) or any magical healing. Multiple wounds are cumulative.			Search +11 (+10 ranks, +1 int)	
Sleep drone (su): a chasme can buzz and drone as a free action. All creatures within 9 meters that hear it must succeed at a Will save (DC 16) or fall asleep for 2d4 hours. A sleeping creature can be awakened by vigorous stimuli. A creature that makes its save is immune to the drone of that chasme for one day. The DC is based on Charisma.			Sense motive +11 (+10 ranks, +1 int)	
Fear aura (su): anyone within 9 meters that is viewing the chasme must succeed at a Will save (DC 16) or be affected as by a <i>fear</i> spell, caster level 8 th . A creature that makes its save is immune to the aura of that chasme for one day. The DC is based on Charisma. Tanar'ri are immune.			Spot +19 (+10 ranks, +1 wis, +8 racial)	
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>desecrate</i> , <i>detect good</i> , <i>detect magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>telekinesis</i> and <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22,5 kg of objects only). Caster level 7 th . DCs are Charisma-based.			Spellcraft +11 (+10 ranks, +1 int)	
Summon 2-16 dretches or another chasme 1/day with 35% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.			Spot +19 (+10 ranks, +1 wis, +8 racial)	

13. Two wide bronze doors allow access to Red Shroud's palace. The entrance is guarded at all times by between three and five mercenaries, each between the 5th and 8th level of experience. Beyond the doors, a corridor lined with doors leads to the succubus' "throne room".

This is a large room, about 10x10 meters. The tall ceiling is sustained by four thick marble columns; the walls are covered in marble as well. There's a thin reddish haze in the area, and a faint smell of wilting roses. The floor is covered in wall-to-wall carpet, several cushions are strewn about, and more guards stand discreetly on the sides. Red sits on a comfortable throne made of wood, gold and luxurious cushions. The throne was evidently made for a Large creature, and the beautiful succubus makes use of the extra room by staying sprawled in a most languid manner on the cushioned couch. Her smooth red hair flows along her body all the way to her legs. She wears expensive, sexy and beautiful clothing, favoring green silk or red velvet, but unlike most of her kind, her clothes aren't excessively revealing. Red Shroud has no need or desire to have every male in Broken Reach lusting after her. Plus, it's easier to conceal a dagger in decent clothing – you never know.

SHUT UP BERK, IF I
WANTED YOU TO HAVE AN
OPINION, I WOULD HAVE
GIVEN YOU ONE.
- RED SHROUD

Sometimes, especially when she is seeing potentially dangerous cutters, her current consort (Ygrax the Skullbiter/male nalfeshnee/Abyss/chaotic evil) stands at her side, but he does little more than gaze at any newcomer and occasionally snarl. Chant is that, after being wounded in the head by a goristro, Ygrax is not exactly the sharpest pencil in the box. A powerful and stupid servant is exactly what Red enjoys the most. It is worth noting that nalfeshnees have continuous *true seeing*, so using illusions when Ygrax is present is useless.

Red Shroud		Al. Chaotic Evil	Succubus Rogue 7 th (Abyss)	CR: 17
Str: 13 (+1)	HP: 12d8+7d6+76 (154)	Speed: 9, fly 15		
Dex: 13 (+1)	AC: 24 (+1 dex, +9 natural, +4 deflection)	Armor: none		
Con: 18 (+4)	Initiative: +1 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 18 (+4)	Ref: +14 (+13 base, +1 dex)	BAB: +17	Grapple: +18	
Wis: 16 (+3)	For: +12 (+10 base, +2 con)	Melee: +18 (+17 base, +1 strength)		
Cha: 32 (+11)	Will: +15 (+10 base, +3 wis, +2 iron will)	Ranged: +18 (+17 base, +1 dexterity)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +18 melee, damage 1d6+1, or <i>Fiendstinger</i> , +20/+20/+15/+10 melee, damage 1d4+2, crit 17-20/x2		Appraise +9 (+5 ranks, +4 int)		
Feats and special abilities		Bluff +35 (+22 ranks, +11 cha, +2 persuasive)		
Feats: Ability focus (energy drain kiss), Dodge, Improved critical (dagger), Iron will, Mobility, Persuasive, Quicken spell-like ability (greater teleport).		Concentration +19 (+15 ranks, +4 con)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Diplomacy +35 (+22 ranks, +11 cha, +2 synergy)		
DR 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 18, telepathy within 30 mt, constant <i>tongues</i> , sneak attack +4d6, trapfinding, evasion, uncanny dodge, trap sense +2.		Disguise +23 (+10 ranks, +11 cha, +2 synergy*)		
Energy drain kiss (su): Red can bestow a negative level on a mortal she lures in some act of passion, or with a successful grapple check. Additionally, the victim must save on Will, DC 26, or be under the effect of a <i>suggestion</i> to kiss her again. The DC to remove the negative level is 26.		Escape Artist +10 (+9 ranks, +1 dex)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>charm monster</i> (DC 25), <i>detect good</i> , <i>detect thoughts</i> (DC 23), <i>ethereal jaunt</i> (self plus 22,5 kg of objects only), <i>polymorph</i> (humanoid form only, unlimited duration), <i>suggestion</i> (DC 24), <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); caster level 12 th . The DCs are based on Charisma.		Gather information +32 (+22 ranks, +8 cha, +2 synergy)		
Summon 1 vrock 1/day with 30% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		Hide +13 (+12 ranks, +1 dex)		
Equipment		Intimidate +32 (+17 ranks, +11 cha, +2 synergy, +2 persuasive)		
<i>Fiendstinger</i> (+2 evil outsiders bane dagger of speed) (damage 1d4+2, +2d6 vs evil outsiders, crit 19-20/x2) (moderate conjuration/transmutation)		Knowledge (local) +26 (+22 ranks, +4 int)		
<i>Ring of protection</i> +4		Listen +29 (+18 ranks, +8 racial, +3 wis)		
<i>Ring of mind shielding</i>		Move Silently +15 (+12 ranks, +1 dex)		
<i>Amulet of health</i> +4		Search +15 (+11 ranks, +4 int)		
Expensive clothing and some tasteful jewelry		Sense motive +25 (+22 ranks, +3 wis)		
		Spot +29 (+18 ranks, +8 racial, +3 wis)		
		Survival +5 (+3 wis, +2 synergy**)		
		Use Magic Device +31 (+20 ranks, +11 cha)		
		Use Rope +8 (+5 ranks, +1 dex, +2 synergy***)		
		* when acting in character		
		** when following tracks		
		*** when binding someone		

Red Shroud is fairly reasonable for a tanar'ri. She appreciates it when powerful cutters coming to her town pay her a visit; this way she can make sure that they aren't going to cause trouble. She smiles and talks with courtesy, presenting her demands as reasonable and natural. However, she is also temperamental and prone to flying into a rage over petty things. In those moments, it's better to be as far as possible; she doesn't like getting dirty but she does like ordering executions.

When the PCs meet her, she is in a good mood.

“Guards. Leave us”. The assorted mercenaries around the room hesitate for only a moment before leaving through one of the side doors. After they are gone, the succubus shifts position in her throne as she leans towards you. “I could grant you access to the Outlands portal. However, I am currently keeping it sealed and guarded, because of the city’s... situation”. Red’s eyes go dark for a moment. “This chant isn’t going to leave this room, understood?”

“From my many informants, I am certain that the lord of the fortress of Mithrengo is planning an attack on Broken Reach. His spies are in town even as we speak, and for each of them that I discover and uproot, two more take the berk’s place. I cannot afford to let people come and go through a portal right in the middle of the Reach. Anyone could be working for the enemy! I have heard that you have fled here after giving the laugh to a blood named Rothakon”.

Red Shroud smiles, showing her perfect teeth. “I know about him. He apparently believes that you have something of his. Some kind of mystical artefact”. She rests her back against the large throne, and continues: “We will have more opportunities to talk about this. What matter is that I don’t

think you are spies. I want us to be friends! For now, I'm giving you a nice dark as a present: four tough bashers are in town, with your descriptions, and orders to get that item and your heads. I suspect that Rothakon doesn't care too much about the rest of your bodies".

"Now, as much as I look well placed and comfortable here in my little hole, I also have a bunch of problems. One I have already mentioned. Another is my wayward daughter". The fiend sighs, and her beautiful voice is full of irony. "Aren't kids always a source of problems? She has escaped her loving mother, and her unusual magical skills allow her to stay undetected". Red Shroud's voice takes on a sharper note. "Normally, I deliver these children to the molydei for ... military service, in return for some favors. But Seranna has been naughty and must be punished".

"I want her head".

"Naturally, I don't care too much about the rest of her body".

While paladins and the like have fun thinking about whether killing the fiendish daughter of a fiend for the fiend herself is a good action or not, quick-thinking PCs may wonder whether offering to find Mithrengo's spies wouldn't be a better idea instead. This way, they'll do Red a favor and she'll be able to let them access the portal with no worries. The problem here is that the story about spies and paranoia and not wanting anyone to use the portal is just an excuse; Red sees a bunch of tough and relatively trustworthy cutters and wants them to do as many dirty jobs for her as possible. The heroes *can* convince her but it will take some skill. In this case, the DM can have Red propose the job again later, when the PCs will be again in Broken Reach. Or just drop it.

Red Shroud has an enticing reward for the PCs if they accept: she has the names and descriptions of the four killers who are on their heels (they are the bashers described at location **10**). Further, she is willing to help the PCs get rid of them by setting up an appropriate ambush. The succubus assures the heroes that they really don't want to meet these bashers in a fair fight, though this is not entirely true. Red doesn't have a good assessment of the party's strength, but she thinks that the killers would have a hard time taking them out.

The succubus' grand prize for the PCs, which she will keep secret for now, hoping to be able to get them to do both of the tasks she needs done, is the tiefling Lianne. Even when she decides to reveal her prisoner, Red Shroud isn't going to tell the PCs how she captured Rothakon's daughter or why, but she can guarantee them that the tiefling has vital information about their... problem.

Assuming that the PCs accept, she can give some help. She suggests that Seranna will still be in town, because it's the only place she knows and she is afraid of being pressed into the Blood War if she gets out. The danger isn't *that* big, but Red Shroud makes sure to cultivate a healthy fear of the outside in her spawn. The young succubus will probably be going with a different name, and a different shape (if the PCs mention that they have encountered her and she still called herself Seranna, Red is surprised and comments that mistakes like this one will make the mission easier).

What if...?

There's a moral quandry here. Even though they are both fiends, some good parties might decide that helping a mother killing her own daughter is a too much, and the reward isn't essential.

If Red can't convince the PCs, she'll fly into a rage, stand in front of the throne, and shout at them to leave her presence immediately. Her guards quickly enter the room and throw the PCs out. She won't take any more action, though. She hopes that the PCs will become "more reasonable" after they have taken the attack of the four mercenaries.

In addition to that, the DM may wish to have Seranna do something horrible to one of the NPCs that got to Broken Reach with the heroes, if any. Their refusal to kill the fiend has only brought more suffering.

Unusual parties

If noone in the party is capable of casting *dimensional anchor*, it will be very difficult for them to catch the succubus. Seranna doesn't want to fight if she can help it, and she will teleport away at the first chance whenever she spots a threat.

By searching Broken Reach's market, the PCs could find a pair of *shifter's manacles* for sale at the fair price of 6000 gold. Whoever wears these handcuffs is unable to teleport or plane shift, and will take 1d10 damage if he tries to do so. They still need to find a way to get them on her, of course.

If they have an arcane caster but not the spell, they can find a scroll of *dimensional anchor* instead.

Red Shroud usually finds escaped children by sending out people with *detect magic* spells to find who has the aura of a *polymorphed* body. However, this hasn't worked with Seranna. She seems to have the innate ability of masking magical auras on people. This means that they'll have to find some other way; the succubus gives them a pointer by mentioning the name of Mobley. The maurezhi owes her a favor, and if the PCs go to his house and mention this he will help them. Red Shroud's final advice is to keep a *dimensional anchor* spell or two at the ready, unless they want their prey to slip through their clutches.

Hunt the Young

Mobley (see page XXX), the maurezhi that the PCs met in front of the entrance to Broken Reach, lives in a small house in the "noble district" of the city-fortress. Unless the heroes have already managed to piss him off, he will behave very friendly towards them. Always on the lookout for people who can increase his power one way or another, the maurezhi is an amiable guest as long as he still has to figure out whether to eat you or to hire you. The PCs have an ace in their sleeves though: when they remind the fiend of his debit towards Red Shroud, the ghoulish monster is going to snarl for a bit but he'll eventually accept to help them "but remember to tell miss pretty hair that after this one, we are even. Despite everything, I'm not here to serve her".

WELCOME. WOULD
YOU LIKE TO HAVE
DINNER? I HOPE YOU
LIKE MEAT...
- MOBLEY

The fiend claims that he is sure that Seranna is still in town; he still gets reports of encounters with her on a regular basis. She never sleeps in the same place twice in a row, but he is fairly confident that the heroes have their best chances at finding her if they search the Ratholes (location number 6 on the map). Apparently, she often goes there in the shape of a beggar or bubber, where she is relatively safe from the fortress' guards. She doesn't usually "hunt" there, though, finding the Ratholes' inhabitants generally filthy and disgusting (which isn't too far from the truth). Mobley isn't going to mention Abrital for now, since he doesn't think it's relevant to the PCs' task.

Since the sods in the Ratholes are mortally afraid of anyone who doesn't look as desperate as they are, the PCs are going to have some problems in getting useful information from them. Many people have heard about a beautiful lady wandering the narrow tunnels and caves, but lots of them think it is just some kind of new urban legend. She only appears very rarely (Seranna spends most of her time *polymorphed*), and few people have actually seen her. A Gather Information check, DC 18, can provide them with one of those persons. He's a human (Jomas/male human expert 6th/Outlands/neutral) and he claims that the mysterious lady has taken away his son Lakeos not more than fourteen days ago. Jomas, a 35-years old man who looks twice his age, is a first-class bubber and for most of the time he's drunk on a sort of disgusting mushroom beer he produces in his cavern, so he's not exactly considered a reliable source of information. In this particular case, though, he looks sincere. He's taken to drinking even more, hoping to drown out the sorrow for the loss of Lakeos and the hatred towards the person who he believes has killed him.

Here's the bubber's tale: one day, this old beggar lady he had never seen before came to his place and asked for some beer. While he was filling up a jug, his 20-years old son Lakeos entered the cavern; after seeing him, the crone muttered an excuse and shuffled out of the cave through a side passage. Just moments later, a beautiful woman entered from that same passage, and asked Lakeos for help in looking for her mother. Though Jomas was very dubious (and, indeed, believed that it was an alcohol-induced hallucination), the young man followed her with a dreamy gaze. That was the last time Jomas saw the woman, the crone, or his son.

Lakeos was last seen in a cave some ten kilometers away from where Jomas is now, where a couple of sods said that he and the woman were having sex; the father searched for him to no avail. While some of the other people in the Ratholes think he may be still alive, and many more believe that he and the woman fell victim to the mysterious murderer which prowls the area, Jomas is convinced that the lady has killed his son – or maybe the woman *is* the mysterious murderer. This conflicts

with all other recounts of the killer's appearance, but the old bubber also thinks that the old crone and the beautiful woman were the same person, so maybe she can change shape.

Few would pay attention to the words of a drunkard from the Ratholes, but the PCs have no other clue for now. Jomas can point them towards the cave where his son was last seen.

Lakeos was indeed killed by Seranna. The succubus *charmed* him in Jomas' cave and then brought him to a distant tunnel. There, after a couple of *suggestions*, some good kissing and a few minutes of lust, Lakeos was dead from energy drain. Seranna hid the corpse and went away without a second thought. And, as it often happens in these cases, the victim rose as a wight after 24 hours. The undead Lakeos now prowls the area within a hundred meters or so from the cave where he died. As the PCs get close, they will meet with two hobos – a blind gnome (Nigsh/male gnome rogue 4th/Prime/chaotic neutral) and a deaf gnome (Shnig/male gnome rogue 2nd/expert 3rd/Prime/chaotic neutral). The two weirdos will flee screaming upon seeing the PCs, like most Ratholes bubbers do, but after watching the heroes head towards the cave, they will whisper to them from the shadows.

Hiding behind a rock, one of the two gnomes peeks out and whispers towards your direction: "Shirs! Shirs! Don't g'ther! Ther's monstah!" He doesn't sound like he can speak very well, and he seems to be ignoring whatever you say. From behind another rock, you can hear the voice of another gnome, saying with a trembling voice: "That stupid idiotic Shnig is dumb like a bell, sirs! Please don't smite him! There's a monster that way!"

If the PCs stop and reassure the gnomes, and tell them who they are looking for, they can get valuable information. These are the same two hobos who told Jomas about his son and the woman.

After reassuring them that you are not going to kill them, the two gnomes (Shnig, who is dumb, and Nigsh, who is blind), try to tell you about this monster. Shnig says: "Oi whas leadeen' mah fren here" – he stops for a moment to make a rude gesture towards the unseeing Nigsh – trough tha cavesh, and..."

The blind one starts speaking, and after some overlap he says: "I distinctly heard voices from a cave not a hundred yards from here in that direction. Sounded like someone having some real fun, if you catch my drift. And..."

The deaf gnome resumes talking. "So oi go alohng the passhage and hear I shtumble on your' Lakeosh an' thish pretty wensh who where..." Nigsh talks over his friend (cousin? Brother?) again, explaining that they went away quietly. "Despite all you hear about gnomes, we respect privacy! Got that, tall guys?"

After that, they've never seen Lakeos or the woman again, but what they did meet between one and two days later, after they told Jomas what they'd seen and heard in the cave, was a horrible creature stalking the passages. The deaf gnome manages to say that this monster was about the same height and build as Lakeos, and its features were reminiscing of him too, but they were distorted in a wicked grin. Its flesh was pale and grayish, and its clothes were in tatters. The blind one says that he heard the creature howl the name of Jomas, and that he heard it a half dozen times afterwards, proving that it is still around these caves. Neither of the gnomes has had the heart to tell Jomas about this. They think that the creature, who may or may not be Lakeos, has already killed five people who happened to get near the cave. The gnomes urge you to go somewhere else.

The corridor which the PCs were following proceed for a hundred meters or so, before opening in a 15-meters wide natural cave. Darkish water drips from stalactites on the ceiling, and the ground is mostly made of soft, wet sand. Several other passages, both excavated and natural, lead out from the cavern. There are no light, save for what the PCs brought with them, making the shadows flicker and dance behind every boulder and stalagmite.

A minute or so after the heroes have arrived (if they don't spot the wights before), a low, echoing voice is heard through the air. "Have you come to destroy me?" says Lakeos. At the same time, from all the corners of the cavern, more hissing voices are heard, muttering nonsense.

Lakeos		Al. Lawful Evil	Wight (Abyss)	CR: 4
Str: 12 (+1)	HP: 8d12 (52)	Speed: 9		Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0
Dex: 13 (+1)	AC: 15 (+1 dex, +4 natural)	BAB: +4 Grapple: +5		
Con: -	Initiative: +1 dex	Melee: +5 (+4 base, +1 strength)		Ranged: +5 (+4 base, +1 dexterity)
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +3 (+2 base, +1 dex)	Will: +8 (+6 base, +2 wis)		
Wis: 14 (+2)	For: +2 base	Attacks		
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +8 (+6 base, +2 wis)	Slam, +5 melee, damage 1d4+1+energy drain		
Feats and special abilities		Skills		
Feats: Alertness, Blind-fight, Turn resistance (TR 4).		Hide +12 (+11 ranks, +1 dex)		
Darkvision 18 mt, undead.		Listen +12 (+11 ranks, +1 wis)		
Create spawn (su): creatures slain rise as wights under his control within 1d4 rounds.		Move Silently +12 (+11 ranks, +1 dex)		
Energy drain (su): slam attack causes one negative level (DC to remove is 17); Lakeos gains 5 temporary hit points.		Spot +12 (+11 ranks, +1 wis)		

Wight (5)		Al. Lawful Evil	Wight (Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: 12 (+1)	HP: 4d12 (26)	Speed: 9		Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 15 (+1 dex, +4 natural)	BAB: +2 Grapple: +3		
Con: -	Initiative: +1 dex	Melee: +3 (+2 base, +1 strength)		Ranged: +3 (+2 base, +1 dexterity)
Int: 10 (+0)	Ref: +2 (+1 base, +1 dex)	Will: +5 (+4 base, +1 wis)		
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +1 base	Attacks		
Cha: 15 (+2)	Will: +5 (+4 base, +1 wis)	Slam, +3 melee, damage 1d4+1+energy drain		
Feats and special abilities		Skills		
Feats: Alertness, Blind-fight.		Hide +8 (+7 ranks, +1 dex)		
Darkvision 18 mt, undead.		Listen +8 (+7 ranks, +1 wis)		
Create spawn (su): creatures slain rise as wights under his control within 1d4 rounds.		Move Silently +8 (+7 ranks, +1 dex)		
Energy drain (su): slam attack causes one negative level (DC to remove is 14); the wight gains 5 temporary hit points.		Spot +8 (+7 ranks, +1 wis)		

The wights and Lakeos are hiding in the shadows; it takes a Spot check, DC 22, to notice Lakeos (DC 18 to notice the other wights). They aren't doing anything not to be heard, though. Lakeos has noticed that these people who have just arrived are not ordinary tramps. He has decided not to attack; though for some unknown reason he has risen as an unusually powerful wight, his mortal habits of being careful around people who look like trouble has not faded yet.

The heroes may talk with Lakeos. The rest of the wights will not talk or attack unless Lakeos orders them to. The wight has a lot to tell to the PCs, if they won't attack him. One of the five creatures that are now his minions used to be an agent of Red Shroud, sent to investigate the whereabouts of her daughter. He was directed to Lakeos, who killed him after a brief fight. Now, the wight knows almost everything about the situation, he knows who killed him, and he has his plans. Lakeos wants to raise an army of wights to attack Seranna, his murderer, and get his revenge. And he knows he can do it, because after being energy drained to death by Seranna, he has some sort of mystical connection to her, that will enable him to recognize her in any form and through any disguise. Right now, though, he wants the PCs to go away; he won't reveal this plan unless forced to.

If the heroes manage to extort this precious information from the undead monster, they have the opportunity to offer their help. After all, this is going to make the search much easier. And, though they'll probably not say this aloud, they can kill off the undead afterwards. While this *is* indeed the

best plan from a tactical point of view, Good PCs may object to associating with dark monsters that have already murdered and turned to undead five people, and Lawful PCs may object to backstabbing them immediately after. Point is, in the Abyss the Chaotic Evil way *is* the easiest one, and

LIFE IS
⊕VERRATED,
REALLY
- LAKE⊕S

there are no gods or karma that are going to punish you for it, either. Except for maybe your conscience.

Alternatives are harder. There is no convincing Lakeos that he'd be better off dead; in fact, after destroying Seranna, he plans on getting public in Broken Reach, turning his servant army into a mercenary force, and eventually moving out. After death, he found that he can think in a much more *clear* fashion, his body and instincts no longer derailing his thoughts, and he's starting to find the cluttered nature of his home town rather irritating. First, though, he must have his revenge. The lust for revenge is the only raging passion he still has.

There *is* another way, though; now that the PCs know that the succubus' victims may come back as wights, they may spend some days searching the city for undead appearances. There are various undead inhabitants of Broken Reach, which have nothing to do with the succubus or the heroes, but after a Gather Information check (DC 24), the PCs can finally stumble on some good chant. It looks like the bashers who compose the unofficial city guard of Broken Reach have recently had to deal with more insane wights than usual, and what the PCs find out is that many of these unliving sods were seen in the companionship of some new hooker just before their demise. It looks like Seranna is taking the appearance of a prostitute to lure victims to her. Reasonably enough, she isn't using the same form twice, but if the PCs meet Ledi Opalheart (see page XXX) they may be able to get a (admittedly inaccurate) list of the "official" prostitutes of Broken Reach. Given enough detective job, they can figure a way to spring a trap on Seranna this way.

Assuming that they strike some kind of deal with Lakeos, the wight is all too willing to help the PCs localize and kill the succubus. He'd rather bring his five servants with him, but the heroes can convince him otherwise relatively easy (after all, disguising six undead horrors is harder than disguising one undead horror). The group only has to tour the tunnels of the Ratholes, or the streets of Broken Reach, for no more than one day before Lakeos freezes and discreetly points at a woman in a crowd, suppressing a snarl.

What happens afterwards depends on how smart the heroes are. Seranna is going to teleport away as soon as she knows she's under attack. Make no mistake, she is a coward, she doesn't like fighting at all, and she is smart enough to know that even if she wants these berks dead, she will have better chances when she isn't being ambushed. If the PCs are going to use *dimensional anchor*, they should cast it first thing and then attack. If they are going the *shifter's manacles* route... well, it's going to be harder. They can always pretend being interested in some extreme sex, though. The use of manacles wouldn't seem too much out of place, and it'd have the added bonus of restricting her physical movement as well. Don't laugh, it's the most perverse way and therefore the easiest one (at least on this plane). Seranna has lived a relatively sheltered life until recently, and while succubi have a natural gift for weaving lies and deceit, they aren't too good at resisting them. The succubus is, naturally, going to use *charm* and *suggestion* even if she doesn't know she's being set up – but hopefully the party can arrange the surprise smartly enough to prevent these problems.

Once Seranna is found and prevented from teleporting, she is basically defeated. When she understands that she's in the PCs' power, she is going to break. She will fall to her knees, cry, beg, offer her servitude, whatever it takes to survive. Apart from the Blood War and the dead-book, there is no place she would not go to right now. If the PCs still decide to kill her or give her to Red Shroud (the two actions are largely equivalent), they should be able to overpower her without too much trouble.

What if...?

If the PCs are moved by the young succubus, well, they are stupid.

More to the point, though, they will have to decide what to do with her (since she obviously will resume killing people if they leave her alone), and what to tell Red Shroud.

The ruler of Broken Reach is not easily fooled, whatever stunt the heroes, try to pull. She also holds what could very well be the key to their liberation. If the PCs try to cross her and fail, their lives may suddenly become very interesting (albeit short).

Even if they *do* give Red the laugh, they are now without a clue as to how to get out of the Abyss. The DM should let them somehow find that Red is holding Lianne prisoner, and then the PCs may mount a daring raid to rescue the tiefling. Which is going to be exceedingly difficult (Red's nalfeshnee consort could destroy them by himself if they get spotted). But since they wanted to be heroes, they'll have to be heroes.

Red Shroud is true to her word with the reward (not that she places any weight on her word, but the PCs are useful for now). Whatever the PCs managed to bargain for, they got it.

If they asked for access to the portal, they are led by Red herself to the underground chamber. They are greeted by darkness and the buzzing of its chasme guardian (see page XXX). The portal stands, dark, in the middle of the room. The succubus steps aside to let the heroes pass, and watches them. Unfortunately, the tanar'ri lord's curse is as strong as ever; characters that try to step through the portal take 3d10 damage as unnatural energy crackles through their bodies. Red shows signs of surprise, and makes a mental note to investigate these berks further.

If they asked for details about the killers that are after them, they receive everything Red knows – the mercenaries' identities, descriptions and main abilities (see page XXX) as well as their current location, a house not far from Battlefield Courtyard. The succubus graciously gives the PCs permission to deal with these hirelings as they see fit. If the heroes remind her that she promised help in setting up an ambush, her flawless face darkens briefly. She says she doesn't remember promising that, and that the PCs have received enough information to deal with the mercenaries themselves. That is precious help indeed, and they should be grateful.

Red Shroud invites the PCs to come back to her after they've dealt with the four bashers. She has more work for them, and they still need her help.

Covert Operation

The... other task: Red Shroud wants the PCs to discover the list of spies within Broken Reach.

"I want you to recover a list of all of Mithrengo's agents in this fair town. Before you tell me to pike it, let me show you another of my guests, a common friend of ours". The succubus snaps her fingers, and a guard comes out from behind a corner, pulling a chain behind him. A second later, you see that the chain is tied to a familiar figure. Lianne is there before you, gagged and chained, prisoner to the succubus. Red keeps talking: "She didn't elect to make herself useful to me. How convenient that you have been more reasonable. If you perform this task for me, she is yours to do as you wish. We've had occasion to chat, and I know that she has been through a lot since your last encounter. You will find her chant valuable, I think".

"I have a plan, but it's dangerous and there isn't too much time. You have to join up the lord of Mithrengo as mercenaries, so as to gain access to the fortress, and then find the information and get back to Broken Reach". Before you can open mouth to protest, she waves with her hand and says: "This is not as barmy as it sounds. You have been in town for a relatively short time, and I have my own spies and guardians, thanks to which I have managed to considerably slow down the passing of information to the dark fortress. I am certain that, even if they have picked up some chant about you, they have not yet been able to deliver it to Mithrengo". The succubus picks up a bunch of grapes from a plate resting near her throne. "Well, fairly certain".

"I also have an additional plan to give you more time. May I introduce you to my ... other daughters?"

After Red Shroud has said this, two doors in the back of the room open silently, and you come in. No, wait – people just like you come in. Before you can recover from the surprise, an identical copy of your party stands in front of you, just behind Red Shroud's throne. You can easily spot many subtle differences in posture and equipment, but someone who isn't familiar with you could be fooled rather easily. And these impostors look more... evil. Well, at least that certainly won't look out of place.

Unusual Parties

If any PC is not humanoid and Red Shroud can't find an easy way to duplicate him or her, she will simply ignore the problem.

The creatures are immature succubi tanar'ri. They have used their *polymorph* ability to assume the heroes' shapes, and skilled artisans have provided good enough (nonmagical) duplicates of their equipment. Red explains that the party will leave Broken Reach in secret, and these substitutes will

fool any spy into believing that they are still in town. It's not a perfect idea, but it will give the heroes more time. Red reassures the PCs that she will ensure that her daughters behave.

As Red Shroud will make sure to make clear, the PCs will have to play this smooth, or die. Mithrengo is full of soldiers and fiends as seldom it has been before, and if they are discovered, they will have no hope of escaping alive. Luckily, the lord of the fortress still feels in need of more troops, and he will not turn away capable mercenaries that can stand to fiends in combat.

Red Shroud doesn't have anything more to tell the PCs. They will leave Broken Reach through a secret passage which leads from the palace to a deserted watchtower near the town's outskirts on the outside. From there, they are to approach Mithrengo, and claim that they are mercenaries looking for employment with the fortress' army. Hopefully, they will be let in. At that point, they have to find out the identity of all the spies in Broken Reach. When they have this information, they will return to the city, report to Red Shroud, and pick up their tiefling friend.

Red's last piece of advice is that the Lord of Mithrengo is capable of seeing through any illusion, so they must be careful in their choice of magic during this mission. The succubus personally leads them through her palace, to the secret passage. There are no guards in front of the passage – a section of wall, apparently similar to any other wall, which noiselessly slides aside to reveal a dark staircase spiralling downwards. After the heroes have entered, Red Shroud closes the passage, leaving them in the dark. The staircase only goes down a few meters, and then ends in an approximately straight corridor, which bends very slightly upwards. The long tunnel proceeds for maybe two kilometers and ends in another spiral stairway, which ends in a stone trapdoor. Lifting the slab, the heroes find themselves on the lower floor of a stone watchtower, out of Broken Reach.

As they walk on the blasted plain towards Mithrengo, which is a faint outline on the horizon currently, the PCs will sooner or later be intercepted by a patrol similar to the one described on page XXX. Since the heroes' arrival several days ago, Mithrengo's soldier have been getting more nervous, especially with regards to people coming from the direction of Broken Reach. When the heroes mention that they are mercenaries looking for employment, the demon leading the patrol says that they have no room for weaklings. As soon as the PCs start protesting, the fiend makes a gesture towards one of the babaus, who jumps on the PCs in a surprise attack!

Unusual Parties

If the PCs don't have anyone with decent Bluff and Diplomacy skills, you may consider having Red Shroud give them some non-permanent skill boosting magic items. The PCs can't afford being discovered while in Mithrengo.

More of the Dark

Red Shroud – much more scheming than the average tanar'ri – does not want to kill the spies. Rather, she wants to know who they are and what they are doing, so that she is able to feed them fals information. Besides, killing the spies would only result in the Lord of Mithrengo sending new ones, ones that she wouldn't know.

What if...?

If the heroes don't want to leave immediately, but they'd rather rest or do something else, that's not a problem for Red. A nice idea would be to go to Mobley's house and see if the maurezhi has more information. However, the price may be too high...

Babau		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 7
Str: 22 (+6)	HP: 9d8+45 (85)	Speed: 9	Armor: none	
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 19 (+1 dex, +8 natural)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Con: 20 (+5)	Initiative: +1 dex	BAB: +9	Grapple: +15	
Int: 14 (+2)	Ref: +7 (+6 base, +1 dex)	Melee: +15 (+9 base, +6 strength)	Ranged: +10 (+9 base, +1 dexterity)	
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +11 (+6 base, +5 con)			
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +7 (+6 base, +1 wis)			
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +15 melee, damage 1d6+6, and		Climb +18 (+12 ranks, +6 str)		
Bite +13 melee, damage 1d6+3, or		Disable Device +13 (+11 ranks, +2 int)		
+1 cold iron spear, +17/+12 melee, damage 1d8+10, crit x3, or		Disguise +14 (+11 ranks, +3 cha)		
+1 cold iron spear, +13 range 6 mt, damage 1d8+7, crit x3		Escape Artist +12 (+11 ranks, +1 dex)		
Feats and special abilities		Hide +20 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Feats: Cleave, Multiattack, Power attack, Weapon focus: spear		Listen +20 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Move Silently +20 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Sneak attack +2d6, damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18		Open Lock +12 (+11 ranks, +1 dex)		
mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire		Search +21 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +2 int)		
10, spell resistance 16, telepathy within 30 mt.		Sleight of Hand +12 (+11 ranks, +1 dex)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> ,		Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*)		
<i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); caster level 9 th .		Use Rope +3 (+1 dex, +2 synergy**)		
Protective slime (su): any weapon or character touching the babau takes		* when following tracks		
1d8 damage, ignoring hardness; magic weapon and characters may		** when binding someone		
roll a Reflex save, DC 18, to avoid.				
Summon 1 babau 1/day with 40% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.				
Equipment				
+1 cold iron spear (damage 1d6+1, crit x3) (faint evocation, CL 3)				

None of the other patrol members interfere in the combat. When the PCs have disposed of the fiend, the leader grins and says that maybe Mithrengo can find a use for them. The heroes are led towards the dark fortress.

Mithrengo

Mithrengo is a chaotic building, made of stone and metal, which stands together thanks to sheer mass and strength more than any sort of architectural cunning. The fortress squats on the reddish plains as an iron toad. Black towers manned by fiends jut out at random angles and directions, metal plates cover dark stone, and gates forged from solid adamantium bar the entrance. Even the inside walls are made from thick slabs of hewn stone, and every single door is made of wrought iron, engraved with scenes of victory in the Blood War. *Everburning torches* give off a diffuse red light, which veers to purple here and there. The ceilings are at least seven meters tall in all rooms, and all passages are wide enough to accommodate a Huge creature.

The fortress' floors aren't terribly well-defined. Rooms have been built at various heights, stairs go up and down, but the overall height is about twenty to thirty meters. Some of the towers are much higher, up to seventy meters tall; there are no stairs going up to these towers, so that only tanar'ri (with *greater teleport*) can go up there.

The whole fortress has been covered in *unhallow* spells (with a caster level of 20). This means that the entire place is a *magic circle against good* (all creatures have a +2 deflection bonus to AC and +2 resistance to saves against good creatures; possession, charm and similar effects are suppressed, and good summoned creatures can't enter unless their SR is higher than 1d20+20), attempts to turn undead suffer a –4 penalty, and attempts to rebuke undead have a +4 profane bonus.

Most rooms in Mithrengo have been converted to dormitories for the mercenaries and storing rooms for weapons, spell components and supplies. The PCs will be assigned beds in one of the sleeping rooms, and will be told that the wage for them is two hundred gold pieces per week, which may increase if they prove their worthiness in battle and don't cause trouble. This isn't too interesting for the heroes (who hopefully aren't going to stay here for weeks); what they want is to find the list as soon as possible. Luckily, they are allowed to wander around as much as they like, and they can ask around if they need to know where a certain place is or how to get somewhere.

There are lots of fiends wandering around in the fortress. Most of them are babau, but there's also a sizeable amount of bar'lgura – apelike demons covered in red-brown fur and armed with fearsome claws and tusks.

Bar'lgura		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 7
Str: 17 (+3)	HP: 6d8+12 (39)	Speed: 9, climb 9		
Dex: 13 (+1)	AC: 20 (+1 dex, +9 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 15 (+2)	Initiative: +1 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 10 (+0)	Ref: +6 (+5 base, +1 dex)	BAB: +6	Grapple: +9	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +7 (+5 base, +2 con)	Melee: +9 (+6 base, +3 strength)		
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: +6 (+5 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +7 (+6 base, +1 dexterity)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +9 melee, damage 1d4+3, and		Climb +12 (+9 ranks, +3 str)		
Bite +4 melee, damage 1d6+1		Concentration +11 (+9 ranks, +2 con)		
Feats and special abilities		Hide +22 (+9 ranks, +12 racial, +1 dex)		
Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Spring attack.		Move Silently +20 (+9 ranks, +1 dex)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Listen +20 (+9 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 17, telepathy within 30 mt. Spring attack is a bonus feat.		Search +9 ranks		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>desecrate</i> , <i>detect good</i> , <i>detect thoughts</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>entangle</i> , <i>fear</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>telekinesis</i> , <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); 2/day – <i>change self</i> , <i>invisibility</i> , <i>spectral hand</i> . Caster level 8 th .		Sense motive +10 (+9 ranks, +1 wis)		
Chameleon (ex): a bar'lgura can change its color to match its surroundings as a free action. This gives it a +12 racial bonus to Hide checks.		Spot +20 (+9 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Summon 1d6 babau 1/day with 35% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*)		
		* when following tracks		

Occasionally, the PCs can spot a froglike hezrou or a tauric bulezau coming back from a patrol; these demons don't look very content of having to do patrol duty, and the PCs should leave them alone. Every now and then, the gates open wide and one of the patrols pushes in a horde of manes. These creatures are barely considered tanar'ri at all; they are petitioner spirits of the chaotic evil dead, and they look like revolting humanoids about one meter tall, with white eyes that ooze a thick yellowish fluid, clawed hands, and sparse dirty hair. They are mindless and have no free will. The fiends routinely use them as cannon fodder in their wars; manes can't easily be killed since even if they are destroyed, they will reform in 24 hours.

Manes		Al. Chaotic Evil	Small Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 1
Str: 10 (+0)	HP: 1d8+45 (85)	Speed: 6		
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 12 (+1 size, +1 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 10 (+0)	Initiative: +0	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 2 (-4)	Ref: +2 base	BAB: +1	Grapple: -3	
Wis: 4 (-3)	For: +2 base	Melee: +2 (+1 base, +1 size)		
Cha: 6 (-2)	Will: +0 (+2 base, -2 wis)	Ranged: +2 (+1 base, +1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +2 melee, damage 1d4, and		Hide +8 (+4 ranks, +4 size)		
Bite +0 melee, damage 1d4		Listen +2 (+4 ranks, -2 wis)		
Feats and special abilities		Move silently +4 ranks		
Feats: Multiattack		Spot +3 (+4 ranks, -2 wis)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.				
Damage reduction 5/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 5.				
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); caster level 9 th .				
Acid cloud (ex): when killed, a manes dissipates in an acid cloud. Those within 3 meters must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 10) or take 1d6 acid damage.				
Mindless (ex): immune to mind-influencing effects.				
Reformation (su): when slain, a manes will reform in one day. Demon lords and creatures of similar power can devour a manes to permanently destroy it.				

Besides dormitories and warehouses, here are other interesting places within Mithrengo:

1. The courtyard is relatively small compared to the fortress' size, and rather cramped too. At all moments, there are several dozens of mercenaries here, training. Ten or so babaus stand guard around – they are supposed to make sure that noone kills each other, but they are more inclined to point and laugh. Clumps of reddish sand mark the points where “accidents” have occurred. If the PCs stay here for any length of time, they may be challenged by some mercenaries to a sparring match.

2. This area comprises a small unholy chapel and the living quarters of Father Smirk, a gnoll priest of Yeenoghu who provides some magical healing and much, mostly unrequested, religious advice for the Lord of Mithrengo. The two don't really like each other; however, Father Smirk doesn't leave or act against the Lord because he hopes that he can extend his influence to Broken Reach should the attack be successful. In turn, the Lord doesn't kill the gnoll because he finds his priestly magic useful.

The chapel is dominated by a large statue of Yeenoghu the gnoll demon god: a gaunt, almost skeletal humanoid, with a hyena's face and wielding a three-headed flail. Father Smirk has two personal bodyguards; the two massive gnolls stand guard in the chapel almost constantly. They don't speak the common tongue, only Gnoll, and if someone comes in they'll just growl at him until Father Smirk comes to the chapel.

The gnoll priest is an elderly gnoll, his hair going white on his head and along his back, wearing a leather armor made from demon hide. Whenever he's in public, he is holding a flail in his hand, a perfect replica of the one the statue is wielding. Father Smirk (is that a name or a nickname?) wears a hyena-like grin on his face at all times, and has a condescending, patronizing attitude that grates on the nerves of anyone he's talking to. Unsurprisingly, he hasn't had too much success in his quest to gain converts. If the heroes don't mind receiving the blessings of a dark god, Smirk can heal them for standard PHB fares (70 gold per spell level, CL 7). Not many people come to the chapel, and the area is generally deserted except for the gnolls.

Father Smirk		Al. Chaotic Evil	Gnoll Cleric 7 th (Abyss)	CR: 5
Str: 13 (+1)	HP: 2d8+7d8+9 (49)	Speed: 6	Armor: medium	
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 16 (+3 armor, +1 natural, +2 shield)	% fail.: 25%	Check pen.: -5	
Con: 12 (+1)	Initiative: +4 improved initiative	BAB: +5	Grapple: +6	
Int: 8 (-1)	Ref: +4 (+2 base, +2 lightning reflexes)	Melee: +6 (+5 base, +1 strength)	Ranged: +5 base	
Wis: 16 (+3)	For: +9 (+7 base, +2 con)			
Cha: 9 (-1)	Will: +8 (+5 base, +3 wis)			
Attacks			Skills	
+1 cold iron flail, +7 melee, damage 1d8+2, crit x2			Concentration +4 (+3 ranks, +1 con)	
Feats and special abilities			Listen +5 (+2 ranks, +3 wis)	
Feats: Combat casting, Craft magic arms and armor, Lightning reflexes, Power attack, Weapon focus: flail			Spellcraft +3 (+4 ranks, -1 int)	
Darkvision 18 mt.			Spot +6 (+3 ranks, +3 wis)	
Evil Domain (evil spells cast at +1 CL); War Domain (proficiency and Weapon Focus: flail), rebuke undead.				
Cleric spells/day: 6/5+1/4+1/3+1/1+1				
Cleric spells prepared: 0 th – <i>create water, cure minor wounds, cure minor wounds, detect magic, read magic, guidance</i> ; 1 st – <i>cause fear, cure light wounds, cure light wounds, magic weapon, protection from good, sanctuary</i> ; 2 nd – <i>bear's endurance, cure moderate wounds, cure moderate wounds, hold person, spiritual weapon</i> ; 3 rd – <i>animate dead, cure serious wounds, invisibility purge, magic circle against good</i> ; 4 th – <i>divine power, poison</i> .				
Equipment				
+2 demon hide armor (equivalent to a masterwork scale mail armor, AB +6, max dex +3, check penalty -3, spell failure 25%) (moderate abjuration, CL 6)				
+1 cold iron flail (damage 1d8+1, crit x2) (faint evocation, CL 3)				
Bag of spell components including 2 onyxes worth 300 GP.				

Gnoll bodyguards		Al. Chaotic Evil	Gnoll Warrior 4 th (Abyss)	CR: 5
Str: 16 (+3)	HP: 2d8+4d10+12 (43)	Speed: 6	Armor: medium	
Dex: 11 (+0)	AC: 16 (+3 armor, +1 natural, +2 shield)	% fail.: 35%	Check pen.: -5	
Con: 14 (+2)	Initiative: +4 improved initiative	BAB: +5	Grapple: +8	
Int: 8 (-1)	Ref: +1 base	Melee: +8 (+5 base, +3 strength)	Ranged: +5 base	
Wis: 11 (+0)	For: +9 (+7 base, +2 con)			
Cha: 8 (-1)	Will: +1 base			
Attacks		Skills		
+1 <i>battleaxe</i> , +10 melee, damage 1d8+4, crit x3		Intimidate +3 (+4 ranks, -1 cha)		
Feats and special abilities		Listen +2 ranks		
Feats: Improved initiative, Power attack, Weapon focus: <i>battleaxe</i>		Spot +3 ranks		
Darkvision 18 mt.				
Equipment				
+1 <i>battleaxe</i> (damage 1d8+1, crit x3) (faint evocation, CL 3)				
Heavy wooden shield (AB +2, check penalty -2, spell failure 15%)				
Hide armor (AB +3, max dex +4, check penalty -3, spell failure 20%)				

If, for any reason, a fight occurs and the priest gets killed, the heroes can get away with it surprisingly easy. The gnoll wasn't liked at all, and no serious investigation will be done.

The priest's quarters consist of a bedroom and a filthy privy that probably hasn't been cleaned since it was built. The bedroom contains a large bed and several furniture items, mostly empty. Searching carefully, the PCs may find 230 gold coins and 100 stingers in a drawer and a *scroll of break enchantment* (CL 9) in another.

3. The fortress' treasury is a heavily guarded room, with walls made of steel and granite. The only entrance is a small adamantine door, guarded at all times by two hezrous and four bulezaus. Additionally, a spellcasting guard (**male tiefling wizard 7th/Abyss/chaotic evil**) with a *ring of invisibility* is watching nearby, silently. The inside of the vault is covered by a *dimensional lock* spell (CL 15). The Lord of Mithrengo has spent considerable resources in securing this place, and it is pretty much impregnable. The money, gems and precious items it contains are worth more than two million gold pieces.

4. The throne room of Mithrengo is not seeing much use in these days. The Lord spends most of his time secluded in his rooms, studying plans and assembling intelligence. The throne is carved within the wall opposing the entrance, so that noone can be behind the ruler, and the rest of the room is covered in expensive, if a bit damaged, red and black carpets. Randomly scattered columns of marble sustain the high ceiling.

Unbeknown to anyone within the fortress – with the possible exception of the Lord himself – a seldom-used secret passage leads from here to the Lord's tower. A secret switch on the throne can cause it to quickly rotate and leave its occupant to a dark tunnel between the walls, which leads up to the tower's second floor. The mechanism only works if at least 500 kg of weight are resting on the throne, making it suitable for use by a nalfeshnee or similar creature. The tunnel is in fact just barely wide enough for a Huge creature to cross it. However, lack of use and maintenance have damaged the device, and if it is used there is a 25% chance that it will break down for good.

5. Mithrengo's dungeons are a single level extending underneath the entire fortress. They mostly contain spacious torture rooms and prisons, but the prisons are now being used to herd many hundreds, maybe thousands, of dretches and manes. The horde amassed here is nothing when compared to the armies of millions that fight in the Blood War, but it is a striking sight – made even more impressive by the cramped space. The lowly fiends are thrown together in the cells, packed together so tight that they are actually one on the other most of the time.

Fairly often, a fiend here dies from the horrible conditions it has to endure. This most often happens to the smaller and less powerful manes, it will evaporate in a cloud of acid vapor, and reform some time later. The acrid smell is everpresent in the dungeons, overpowering the stench of the fiends themselves. A side-effect of these events is that dead manes sometimes reform outside of the cell – an unorthodox way of escaping, but fairly effective.

If the PCs wander in the dungeons, they may encounter a group of hostile manes (the creatures instinctively band together). The little fiends attack without fear or intelligence until they are all destroyed. Shortly after, they will notice that the smell of acid comes particularly strong from a corridor nearby. If they investigate, they find the half-corroded corpse of another mercenary, who probably wandered here and was attacked by the manes just minutes before. The corpse is surrounded by a thick acid cloud as a result of the many dead manes and the narrow environment; unless the PCs wait at least ten minutes for it to dissipate, they take 1 acid damage per round while searching the corpse. The dead mercenary had 300 jinx, a gem worth 50 gold coins, and a curious ring made in some elastic gum-like material (it's a *ring of jumping*, faint transmutation, CL 2).

6. The guard towers have no stairs between their floors. The PCs enter in a circular room, manned by a couple babaus, with no other exits. The tanar'ri use their *greater teleport* power to move between the levels of each tower.

7. The area around this tower, which stands in the middle of a small internal courtyard, is deserted; if the PCs ask around, they are told that it is said to be infested, and that bad stuff happens to those that tried to go inside. The iron door leading into this tower is barred shut – from the inside, as if to keep people out. If the PCs make a Gather Information check, DC 15, they learn that eventually, a fiend closed the door from the inside and teleported out. If they beat DC 20, they can actually locate the fiend; he is a hezrou who will at first snarl an order the party to leave the tower alone, and then offer chant about its content in return for 500 jinx in gems or jewelry.

If the PCs are willing to offer that kind of bribe, the hezrou tells them that the tower contains a bodak. The undead monster doesn't go out of the tower, maybe because it is afraid of the light, but it is all too willing to kill anyone going in. The hezrou tells the PCs (not without some malevolent glee) that before he locked the door, a whole bunch of people went in, and when he entered there were at least ten bodaks hiding there. He killed most of them, sealed the rest in the upper levels, barred the door and teleported out. He doesn't know how many are left, certainly at least two but no more than six, and he doesn't care. The hezrou tells the PCs that they should not enter, "even though, and this should be very clear, the possessions of most of the berks who went up there are still somewhere in the tower". The grinning tanar'ri has nothing else to tell the PCs.

Should the PCs decide to challenge the bodaks, they first need to find a way to pass the barred door. If they manage that, they find that each level of the tower is a single circular room, with stairs leading to the next one. The torches have long since burned out, and there are no windows, so each room is shrouded in darkness. The first level is empty except for the skeletons of five unlucky berks. The door to the second room is locked with an adamantium padlock (DC 30 to pick, hardness 20, 40 hit points).

The second room looks empty. The next door is open. However, PCs that can beat DC 20 on a Listen check can hear shuffling from above. After one minute, two bodaks enter from the third room.

Bodak (5)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Undead (Abyss)	CR: 8
Str: 13 (+1)	HP: 9d12 (58)	Speed: 6	Armor: none	
Dex: 15 (+2)	AC: 20 (+2 dex, +8 natural)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Con: -	Initiative: +6 (+4 improved init, +2 dex)	BAB: +4	Grapple: +5	
Int: 6 (-2)	Ref: +5 (+3 base, +2 dex)	Melee: +5 (+4 base, +1 str)	Ranged: +6 (+4 base, +2 dex)	
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +3 base			
Cha: 12 (+1)	Will: +7 (+6 base, +1 wis)			
Attacks		Skills		
Slam, +6 melee, damage 1d8+1		Listen +11 (+8 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Feats and special abilities		Move silently +10 (+8 ranks, +2 dex)		
Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Improved initiative, Weapon focus (slam).		Spot +11 (+8 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Damage reduction 5/cold iron, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity, resistance to acid and fire 10, undead.				
Vulnerability to sunlight (1 damage/round).				
Death gaze (su): range 9 meters, Fortitude DC 15 negates. Humanoids slain by this attack become bodaks in 24 hours.				

After one round, a third bodak enters. After another round, a fourth bodak enters. After yet another round, the fifth and last bodak joins the fight. This is a potentially lethal combat, but if the PCs have prepared themselves carefully, they can manage to get out of this alive. If they talked to the hezrou and knew what to expect, the party cleric should have prepared lots of *death wards*. This spell cast on each member of the party makes bodaks practically harmless for tough heroes like the PCs. On the other hand, don't forget that the area is *unhallowed* and all attempts to turn undead have a -4 penalty (evil clerics can rebuke with a +4 profane bonus, though). Basically, the fight is very nasty but it becomes very easy with the right preparation; another example of how information is the most powerful of weapons.

If the PCs can defeat all the bodaks, they are free to search the tower. There are a total of five rooms; the second one (where the fight takes place) looks empty but it actually contains 123 gold coins scattered around. If the party searches it, multiply the result of their Search roll by 4 to find out how many coins they find (obviously, no more than 123). The third room contains old dried blood stains everywhere and some smashed furniture, all covered in a thin layer of dust. Searching the room, the PCs can find a *scroll of detect thoughts* (CL 3, faint divination) and (if they beat Search DC 30 or scan the room with *detect magic*) a single *bead of force* (CL 10, moderate evocation). There are also some heavily damaged leather armor, and a couple of rusted swords. The fourth room is similar to the previous one; a discarded and torn wizardly robe contains a *wand of color spray* (CL 1, faint illusion, 47 charges) and a *chain of holding* (CL 3, faint enchantment). This last item is a short length of iron chain, just three links long, which can cast *hold person*. Every time it is used, a link is removed, so it has three "charges" left.

The fourth room of the tower is empty; a corner, however, is covered in a large cobweb. If the PCs search it, they don't find anything special, but they risk being bitten by an Abyssal poisonous spider. The spider – just an inch long – attacks at +5 and draws an attack of opportunity when doing so, but will probably get the surprise. Its poison has DC 13 and deals 1d6 Strength damage as primary and secondary damage. Any damage will squish it.

The final room is empty, and there are large observation windows looking out (the bodaks probably never went here). A corpse is resting on a wall, wearing half plate armor and a beautiful steel shield, engraved with multiple geometrical patterns in gold and copper. The shield is a *heavy steel shield* +2 (moderate abjuration, CL 6). A leather bag near the poor sod's side contains 580 jinx. The tower gives a good look to all sides of the fortress; the only higher tower is the tower of the Lord. Inside the tallest room, the PCs can see the light of a lantern, and a massive shape moving around.

If the PCs clear the tower, the news will get known very quickly. After one day or so (less if they tell someone about their exploit), they will hear rumors that the Lord has heard about their deed and is becoming interested in them. Thought the Lord will not contact them directly, he will be willing to talk if the PCs seek him. He'll mention that he liked to use the tower as a lure to eliminate loudmouths and braggards out of his army, but he's nevertheless satisfied that it has been taken care of.

Unusual Parties

Without a spellcaster capable of casting *death ward*, this encounter is much, much more dangerous. The PCs can still come up with some clever plan, but the solution won't be so obvious.

What if...?

If the PCs barge in unprepared, they deserve to die. A door barred from the inside, another one locked with adamantium, no one coming anywhere close to the tower, and they don't think about gathering information before entering?

But if you're feeling merciful, delay the entrance of the rest of the bodaks, so that the heroes can deal with them one at a time.

A Cutter with Potential

If a PC gets killed by a bodak, you might consider the idea of letting him be raised as a bodak himself.

Apart from the obvious advantage of allowing the player to keep his character, such an event has ample opportunities for good roleplaying and it is an awesome evolution for the character.

If you have *Savage Species* by Wizards of the Coast, you can easily create a bodak monstrous class which keeps the game balanced. You may "spread" the death gaze ability over several levels by having it start as a "fatigue gaze", then an "exhaustion gaze" and finally gain its full power at the last bodak level.

He'll double the PCs' wages as a plus. Smart PCs may use this as their occasion to search his tower, if they can find a way to keep him out of it long enough.

8. The tower of the Lord is the tallest one in the building. It is composed of eight levels, connected by massive stone stairs running along the walls. In front of the main door to the tower, which is closed and made of adamantium but is not locked, two hezrous stand guard. Each floor is lavishly furnished with expensive couches and chairs, gold-plated tables, jewelled mirrors, statues and paintings depicting victorious tanar'ri lords, and other valuable objects of art. The second-to-last floor contains a massive bed, built in steel, gold and platinum, and sporting a deva-skin mattress.

The current Lord of Mithrengo is a powerful nalfeshnee tanar'ri. He looks like a six meters tall bloated humanoid, with a goat's head, apelike arms and two small feathery wings on his back. His greenish skin is tensed and covered in warts. The Lord of Mithrengo wears lots of jewelry, but it doesn't do much to improve his appearance. He holds creatures below his station in great disdain, and practically never talks to his troops or servants. When he does talk with someone, he often mentions that he has so much work to do sorting out intelligence that he has no time to cheer up the soldiers, and that the attack is imminent. The Lord of Mithrengo always speaks in a slow, measured tone, designed to impress the listener and express self-confidence.

He has claimed Mithrengo for himself after a party of Prime heroes stormed the fortress and killed its previous occupant. It is said that Red Shroud had something to do with that... and the nalfeshnee knows that the succubus is his primary threat – not to count that the city of Broken Reach would be a great prize in itself. It has taken him many decades to gather the resources needed for an attack, and now he has a formidable army, much more powerful than Red's little militia. He's planning to use his mortal troops to storm the barricades and towers, and then send his hordes of manes down the tunnels, where they'll be killed in droves and hopefully fill the caves with acidic gas; when the gas dissipates, he'll send in his most powerful troops and hopefully avoid a long guerrilla warfare. However, the Reach is an extremely defensible position. The only known entrance is protected by dozens of watch towers and fortifications. And that's only the beginning – the town itself is a huge maze of tunnels which his troops don't know well, and where his army would be bled to destruction.

The Lord of Mithrengo		Al. Chaotic Evil	Huge Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 15
Str: 25 (+7)	HP: 16d8+160 (232)	Speed: 9, fly 12 (poor)		
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 29 (+1 dex, +18 nat, -2 size, +2 def)	Armor: none		
Con: 29 (+9)	Initiative: +1 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 23 (+6)	Ref: +11 (+10 base, +1 dex)	BAB: +16	Grapple: +31	
Wis: 23 (+6)	For: +18 (+10 base, +8 con)	Melee: +21 (+16 base, +7 strength, -2 size)		
Cha: 20 (+5)	Will: +16 (+10 base, +6 wis)	Ranged: +17 (+16 base, +1 dexterity, -2 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
Bite, +22 melee, damage 2d8+7, and 2 claws, +19 melee, damage 1d8+3		Bluff +24 (+19 ranks, +5 cha)		
Feats and special abilities		Concentration +27 (+19 ranks, +8 con)		
Feats: Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite).		Diplomacy +26 (+19 ranks, +5 cha, +2 synergy)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Disguise +7 (+5 cha, +2 synergy****)		
Damage reduction 10/good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 22, telepathy within 30 mt, constant <i>true seeing</i> .		Hide +12 (+19 ranks, +1 dex, -8 size)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>call lightning</i> (DC 18), <i>feeblemind</i> (DC 20), <i>greater dispel magic</i> , <i>slow</i> (DC 18), <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only), <i>unholy aura</i> (DC 23); caster level 12 th .		Intimidate +26 (+19 ranks, +5 cha, +2 synergy)		
Smite (su): 3/day can create a nimbus of light; on the following round, it bursts and any creature within 18 meters must save on Will (DC 23) or be dazed for 1d10 rounds from visions of its worst fears. Tanar'ri are immune.		Knowledge (arcana) +25 (+19 ranks, +6 int)		
2/day summon 1d4 vrocks, 1d4 hezrous, or 1 glabrezu with 50% success, or a nalfeshnee with 20% success. Equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		Knowledge (Abyss) +25 (+19 ranks, +6 int)		
Equipment		Listen +33 (+19 ranks, +8 racial, +6 wis)		
Lots of nonmagical jewels, for a combined value of 5000 jinx.		Move Silently +20 (+19 ranks, +1 dex)		
<i>Ring of major elemental resistance (fire)</i> (fire resistance 20) (moderate abjuration, CL 7)		Search +25 (+19 ranks, +6 int)		
<i>Ring of protection</i> +2 (moderate abjuration, CL 6)		Sense motive +25 (+19 ranks, +6 wis)		
<i>Golembane scarab</i> (moderate divination, CL 8)		Spellcraft +28 (+19 ranks, +7 int, +2 synergy***)		
<i>Amulet of health</i> +2 (moderate transmutation, CL 8)		Spot +33 (+19 ranks, +8 racial, +6 wis)		
		Survival +10 (+6 wis, +2 synergy*, +2 synergy**)		
		Use magic device +26 (+19 ranks, +5 cha, +2 synergy****)		
		* when following tracks		
		** on the Abyss		
		*** with scrolls		
		**** when acting in character		

For this reason, he has sent a large number of spies and agents into the town, with instructions to report on every strange occurrence and to keep close track of Red Shroud's military capabilities. He knows that the succubus is a master of deception, and he's personally conducting a very patient job of piecing together the chant he gathers, confronting reports and cross-referencing information, in the hope of reaching reliable data on the Reach. The highest room of the tower is devoted to this task. It is full of huge iron tables and bookshelves, and hundreds of reports and documents are strewn everywhere. Lots of them come from Broken Reach, but not all; the Lord of Mithrengo is keeping a close eye on every neighbouring power. The demon spends most of his time here. If the PCs can get him out somehow, they can search the room and eventually find a list of the spies in Mithrengo, complete with names, race, false identity and wage. The problem is, it will take them no less than one hour of searching before they can locate the list, and even if they can get past the hezrou guards (hint: they don't see invisible things), they still have to find a way to distract the Lord of Mithrengo, possibly without raising suspicion. And, as a nalfeshnee, he does see invisible things very well.

Chant gathering at its finest

When the heroes finally return to Red Shroud with the list of spies, she is certainly glad to see them. The succubus will order Lianne's release, and a servant will drag her from the dungeons, bound with chains, and hand her to the heroes.

The prompt payment doesn't mean that the succubus has somehow turned honorable overnight. Rather, she has other intentions. Red Shroud has no further use for the PCs, and she has reasons to want them out of town for good. At the very least, they are powerful and have powerful enemies, and may be used by someone else against her, in a moment which is already hard for her city. It'd

be much better if they got killed, but the succubus must not appear to be connected to this – if they survive, they must not consider her another enemy.

Depending on the agreements they got with Red Shroud, the four killers may still be alive. If this is the case, Red will discreetly and through several intermediaries warn the bashers that the PCs know them and are going to get them. Otherwise, she will put someone on their tails and wait for an occasion to lend their enemies a bit of covert help. Who knows, this may even earn her another ally.

Lianne is in a very bad position and it will not be hard to get her to reveal everything she knows. After the mess in Sigil, she tried to stay out of the Abyss for good. However, for a woman born and raised by demons, adapting to a more orderly social life proved too hard. While stealing from a Lady's Ward house, she put a rich merchant who spotted her and insulted her into the dead-book. This placed her on the Harmonium's wanted list, so she killed a couple of patrol guards – soon enough, she couldn't walk down the street for fear of being recognized. Instead of making her feared and respected, as it should be, killing people only led to being targeted for scragging at all costs.

After some weeks of this, she just couldn't take it any more. She stepped through the portal in the slags to Castle Maldithar and found it in chaos. Apparently, a baatezu army was invading from underground, the orb she stole was nowhere to be found, and half of the mercenary force was in rout. Her father Rothakon was furious and getting ready to leave. Lianne went to him and explained what happened – and was furiously attacked by the angered half-fiend. She escaped with the certainty that only by recovering the Selthian Orb she could reenter her family's graces.

Disguising herself carefully among the mercenaries, Lianne left without meeting her father again. She camped not far from the fortress, staying well hidden from the creatures of darkness, and watched the castle fall and the baatezu retreat before the Worm. Then, she left. She was very careful on the dark plains surrounding Maldithar, and reached the portal several days after the PCs. There, she successfully bluffed the demons still guarding it to believe that she had orders from her father and that they must let them pass or suffer the wrath of Rothakon.

Once in Broken Reach, though, her luck was over. Somehow, Red Shroud got wind of her and decided to scrag her. Though the tiefling cannot know this, one of the weapon merchants recognized her and when the chant reached the succubus, she decided that the tiefling would be a good bargain item with the PCs.

Lianne has learned something more during her brief stay in Maldithar. Her grandfather, the demon lord Ithla-Sathlo, has placed a powerful curse on the portal leading from Sigil to Maldithar, which traps everyone passing through in the Abyss. The aim of the curse was to capture the Selthian Orb. Lianne doesn't know what Ithla-Sathlo wanted to do with the Orb; the only thing she knows is that the artefact seems to be lost. When the retriever arrived, Rothakon was busy elsewhere and there was a bit of confusion. Then, the PCs arrived, were captured, and escaped; then all hell broke loose. With the knowledge that the heroes were after the Orb in Sigil, Rothakon convinced himself that they had somehow stolen it when they escaped from their cells; however, by that time it was way too late to look for them in the blazing castle (besides, they could very well have escaped from the fortress entirely).

Now for the future. Lianne wants the Orb, and the PCs want to get out of the Abyss. She is trapped here too, having used the portal, but she doesn't care much about it. After the experience in Sigil, she doesn't wish to leave the plane any time soon. She too suspects that the PCs have the Orb, but (like her father) she doesn't have the foggiest idea of how they could have taken it. In fact, while they interrogate her, she will often try to make this question. In any case, unless the PCs are overtly hostile, she will

More of the Dark

How could Rothakon miss the fact that the Orb never arrived to Maldithar in the first place? The answer lies in the innate treachery of Abyssal creatures.

The fiend who was responsible for securing the artefact after the retriever's arrival decided to lie to his master and tell him that the Orb was safe and locked away. This lie was undiscovered and it eventually led to Rothakon blaming the PCs.

Since that particular fiend died in the subsequent battle, only the powers know this bit of chant right now.

try to stay with them since they look like her best chance to get the Orb. If they want to break the curse, she can help.

Lianne knows that the tools Ithla-Sathlo used to craft the spell were still in Maldithar when she left. In the confusion, noone brought them away, and they are very likely still there. Examining them might provide vital clues as to how to break it. Further, Lianne has watched the Baatezu fighting the Worm outside Maldithar, and the strategy they used, and she thinks she has figured a way to get in without being killed by the beast. A big number of sacrificeable troops will draw the monster away for some time. All they need is a hundred or so manes, which can be gathered on the Plain of Infinite Portals or bought from one of the other warlords. They will be left loose near Castle Maldithar, while the party enters from the opposite point.

The manes won't last forever, but if they are scattered enough they will keep the beast busy for long enough to enter, find information on what's going on, and get the hell out of there. 100 manes, adequately scattered, can keep the Worm running around for hours. Wealthy PCs might decide to get more – remember, manes can regenerate in one day; being devoured by the Worm will prevent this, but the Worm doesn't always eat its victims.

However, the PCs will be unable to find any manes in Broken Reach or the surrounding plains. They have all been bought or gathered by Red Shroud or the Lord of Mithrengo, in preparation for their war. So, the heroes have to leave Broken Reach (Red will be happy with this and let them go).

Leaving the Abyssal city on the verge of a war, a new part of their travel begins.

<i>Encounter</i>	<i>EL</i>
Defeating a crocodile of darkness	3
Defeating a giant crocodile of darkness	5
Surviving a storm on the 76 th layer	6
Defeating the dire bats of darkness	8
Defeating the fiendish will'o'wisp	8
Defeating the dire boars of darkness	8
Defeating a dretch	2
Defeating a babau	6
Defeating a vrock	9
Defeating the team of 1 vrock, 3 babaus and 6 dretches	11
Defeating Mithrengo's patrol team of 1 hezrou and 6 babaus	13
Preventing Mobley from devouring the barbarian	9
Defeating the would-be rapists	8
Avoiding Seranna	4
Defeating Seranna	8
Defeating the enraged patrons at the inn	8
Defeating the cranium rats	6
Catching Smiling Sam	6
Defeating Balaemoz	12
Defeating Abretal	10
Defeating Abretal's allip form	6

<i>Encounter</i>	<i>EL</i>
Defeating the four mercenaries hired by Rothakon	13
Defeating the chasme guarding the portal	11
Destroying Lakeos and his wights	8
Getting the information about the four killers from Red Shroud	8
Getting access to the Outlands portal from Red Shroud	8
Defeating the babau, proving the party's strength to Mithrengo's patrol	7
Defeating Father Smirk and his bodyguards	8
Killing a hezrou	11
Defeating the bodaks in the abandoned tower	13
Stealing partial information from the Lord of Mithrengo	11
Stealing the spy list from the Lord of Mithrengo	13
Getting Lianne from Red Shroud	11

CHAPTER IV

In which the Heroes return where they arrived, hoping to learn the dark of their curse

Manes Ranchers

Once they're out of the Broken Reach underground, the PCs can notice that the town is getting more heavily fortified. Almost all guard towers are now manned, and most of the people chatting and trading outside the underground entrance are fully armed mercenaries. Patrol groups, armed with heterogeneous equipment and weaponry, wander around the outside area of Broken Reach, and warn everyone they meet that it is now forbidden to leave the city. However, if everything has gone smoothly, they have been instructed to make an exception for the PCs, so there should be no problem there.

The party can easily find out that the closest place on the Plains of Infinite Portals where they can hope to buy some manes is the barracks city of Styros. The bad news is that it lies on the banks of the Styx, at 12 good days of travel on the blasted abyssal plains from Broken Reach. The alternative is jumping through a portal to a deeper layer; but all of the layers that can be reached in a reasonable time from the PCs' location are very dangerous.

Luckily, though, a night hag trader is travelling towards Broken Reach with a load of 30 manes in this very moment. Not quite enough, but it's a starter. The PCs can find this information if they ask around the town before leaving and roll a 25 in Gather Information. The hag's name is Amanitis; she's a smart and powerful fiend, and she's been trading in souls, magic and larvae for centuries. If the heroes don't hear about the hag, the general advice will be to get to Styros. The road to the barracks city leaves Broken Reach in the opposite direction from the one leading towards Mithrengo, so the heroes shouldn't have to worry about patrols from the dark fortress.

If the PCs wish to get to Amanitis as soon as possible, they can leave town to meet her. She's coming in from Styros; the PCs will even meet her if they leave for the barracks city. Before that, though, they have to travel for two days in the Plains of Infinite Portals. The environment itself is unpleasant but relatively harmless. The ground is rocky and jagged, composed of small and large rocks shading from red to grey. There are plenty of short hills, rich with caves and fissures where the characters may opt to hide. The sky is red, with yellow sulphuric clouds, and it emanates a constant ambient light. Sickly emanations from the ground cloud patches of the plains in a mildly irritating fog. There are some short bushes here and there, and occasional razorvine patches. The most common risk here is being pressed into Blood War service, or being asked for some kind of "toll", generally made up on the moment by whatever tanar'ri happens to meet the PCs.

Press gangs tend to be composed of a couple vrock, or one vrock and some ground-based troops. The first one the PCs will meet, though, is just a single vrock who is patrolling alone hoping to find some pushovers he can recruit for his personal service. The flying fiend scans the blasted plains from the sky, and then close in to speak, while staying high enough to be outside of melee range. Many recruiters behave very arrogant and haughty when talking to mortals, "proposing" them to join the Blood War when in fact it's more of a demand. If the PCs piss the vrock off and seem to be too tough for a fight, the fiend will laugh, say that he's going to call for Maheros, and teleport away. Maheros is a molydeus, who happens to be supervising the recruiting in a wide area including Broken Reach and Styros. Lianne (assuming she's with the party) doesn't know this specific molydeus, but she knows how things work with tanar'ri recruiting. As soon as the

What if...?

The PCs may decide to take a risky gamble. If they actively seek to be recruited as Blood Warriors, they might be able to get sent to Styros with a heavily-armed caravan instead of going by themselves, though they'll have to do some good talking if they want to retain their equipment.

The fiendish caravan drivers know the ground much better than the PCs and they'll be able to get to the barracks city faster and safer. Once there, the PCs might be able to slip away and search for the manes they need. It's a risky, risky business, though.

fiend is gone, she shouts at the party to run away and (unless restrained somehow) bolts for the closest hill. It would be a good idea for the PCs to do the same; after one minute or so, the vrock is back in the same spot together with a hulking monster – Maheros. The large, muscular fiend has a jackal’s head and a serpent’s head, short dark fur, and an aura of palpable fear surrounds him.

Hopefully, the PCs have hidden somewhere in the hill. When Maheros fails to see them around, he orders the vrock to fly around and search for the party. Now, the PCs can easily hide in a cave; best of all would be to cover the entrance with some kind of illusion for a while. Let the heroes get away this time; if you feel like showing off, let the molydeus demolish the vrock for having wasted his time. From this experience, the heroes should learn the three big lessons of traveling in the Plains of Infinite Portals without an army. First, the plains are, well, plains – flying demons can spot you very, very easily from great distances. Smart PCs will find a way to travel unseen, or make sure that they have quick means of escape such as *teleport*. Second, tanar’ri can teleport too and know the ground well. This means that they can call for overwhelming reinforcements in a matter of rounds or minutes at best, if they decide to do so, even without using their summoning power. They just have to teleport to their home fortress, find some more warriors, and get to the battleground together in a moment. This isn’t too common, since the called fiends will generally ask for some kind of payment later, but some fiends actually have instructions to patrol an area and call for help if they meet resistance. Third, there are plenty of hiding places among the cracks and fissures of the tormented ground and a good cover can generally be found in minutes. Most of these holes are not very deep, though, and if the fiends really want to get you, they will. It’s just a matter of time. Using illusions to cover up the hiding place is a good move.

Amanitis is traveling on a covered carriage built from heavy, dark wood and pulled by a single fiery-hooved nightmare steed. The carriage’s content can’t be seen; the cover is tied rather tightly at the sides. The hag herself looks like a dark-skinned, very old woman. Her skin is wrinkled and she has warts all over her face. She wears a simple black dress and gown – the many folds offer a nice hiding place for her magical trinkets.

Amanitis talks in an unexpectedly pleasant way. She loves to make mortals uneasy in her presence, and to this end she assumes a “nice old lady” style of speaking with a flirtatious twist. Considering the horrible appearance of the night hag, this is more than enough to give anyone the shivers. Dealing with her is especially hard because she *always* looks as if she’s lying, even when saying that two and two is four. Amanitis carries 30 manes in her carriage; the heavy cover includes a *silence* spell to keep them quiet.

The night hag expected to sell them to Mithrengo for 15 jinx each; if the PCs show interest, she’ll try to sell them for 20 each, hinting at a discount if the payment is made in magic rather than gold. What’s more, she can procure up to two hundred more from her reserves in the Gray Waste in just three days if the PCs wish, for the fair price of 4000 jinx... maybe 3600 if they pay in magic, souls, or slaves. Smart PCs will make sure not to give the entire payment in advance. Depending on how nasty the DM feels, the hag may decide to just keep it and never be seen again.

The agreement includes four sturdy carriages to transport the little demons, and eight fiendish horses to pull them. If the heroes accept, Amanitis can deliver the goods at any point in the Plains close to Broken Reach. The night hag is also a big trader of magical items; she doesn’t have much on her right now but the PCs can make deals now and complete them when she gets back with the manes if they want. The price is high, but it can get low if the payment is made in the three goods of the hags – magic, souls, or slaves. Finally, there’s one further service Amanitis can offer (though she won’t mention the possibility unless directly asked). Thanks to her innate magic and vast experience in the field of magical items, she can *identify* items just by examining them for a moment, and she’s willing to identify the party’s possessions for as little as 100 gold per item; however, the payment must be made in other magic. And, though she won’t say this, if she spots a powerful item

What if...?

If the PCs somehow miss the hag entirely, the nearest place where they can get manes is in fact Styros, at 12 days of hard abyssal travel from Broken Reach.

Styros is detailed later, in chapter XXX.

she'd like to have, she may decide to lie on its abilities to try and get the PCs to give it to her in payment for the manes. Buyers beware!

Once the deal is done, while the PCs are slowly taking the four carriages to the dark hole leading back into the 76th layer, there is one final nasty surprise by Mithrengo. A two-vrocks patrol has spotted the caravan and has decided to steal it. They'll fly down on the PCs and demand that they hand over the carriages and their content immediately, in the name of the Lord of Mithrengo. One of the vrocks will try to move aside the cover and see what's in the carriages. Once they know that they are chock full of manes, they'll attack the PCs unless they give them the small fiends immediately. As soon as the combat looks bad, one or both the vrocks will teleport away to warn Mithrengo.

This is the PCs' cue to start running. They are very close to the portal; just ten minutes will do it. Unfortunately, a big tanar'ri patrol (just like the one on page XXX) is going to teleport in a few minutes later, together with any remaining vrocks. Lianne (who seems to have a phobia of being attacked by fiends appearing from nowhere) urgently suggests to get behind a hill instead of heading directly for the portal. This is going to take a bit longer, but it will hide the party from view from the place where the vrocks disappeared.

If the party follows her advice, they turn around the hill just moments before the fiends appear. The tanar'ri start looking for them immediately, though. If there is a vrock in the group, it will be able to spot the caravan from above as it nears the portal. The PCs will have to fight at least for a couple minutes while the carriages enter the hole. If there are no vrocks among the tanar'ris, the PCs can escape unharmed.

If the party chooses to keep going, ignoring Lianne, the tanar'ri will appear when they are midway to the portal, and then teleport closer to attack. Unless the party can kill them all, the situation is bleak. There is one trick they can try, though – leave one carriage behind, and let the horses carry it away in a random direction. On the jagged ground of the Plains, it is only a matter of moments before it topples, sending manes flying everywhere. When the tanar'ri group sees this, at least part of the chaotic fiends will try to recover the manes instead of fighting the PCs, seeing that it is rather easier and safer. This will cost the party full 50 of the critters, though.

Back to the Palace

The PCs will eventually manage to reach the dark 76th layer again. Remember: no teleport, no passwall. The clearing around the portal is silent. There are no tanar'ri guards, though a careful search may reveal a few demonic skeletons in the clearing as well as in the surrounding forest. The tanar'ri here have been killed, or they have left. The forest now only contains the fiendish will'o'wisps and the creatures of darkness.

The PCs can make the trip to Maldithar without too much danger, if they are decently organized. If they are sloppy, though, they may have problems. First of all, the manes are noisy; they constantly shout, gargle and moan, and there are dozens of them. The carriages' cover prevents the noise from getting out, but they are easily damaged and a small hole is enough to break the cheap, fragile magic that the hag got on them. If the PCs are unable to keep the fiends silent, they will be attacked by creatures of darkness just about constantly.

The vast majority of the black monsters are no threat to the heroes, but they may decide to attack the horses. This can be prevented by a good PC formation, but if a horse does get killed, they will be forced to slow down considerably. Traveling on the river is a bad idea. It is full of crocodiles of darkness, including giant ones (except for the area which is controlled by the Worm, see below).

What if...?

If the PCs asked Amanitis to deliver the manes directly to the portal for the 76th layer, the hag will deal with the vrocks instead of the heroes. She's more than capable of easily taking one out; the other will teleport away.

Assuming that the PCs are near the portal when this happens, they will witness the scene from a distance and likely run towards their precious cargo as fast as they can.

The hag will hand over the reigns, after taking any final payment, and then suggest the heroes to start driving to their destination very, very fast. Mithrengo's reinforcements will come in just a few minutes.

Finally, the storms are as dangerous as ever. The manes are immune to lightning, but the carriages aren't; if the heroes leave them out, they risk finding themselves with damaged vehicles and covers.

Even if they run everything by the book, lots of creatures of darkness are going to attack the party anyway; with those carriages, they are a big target. You don't have to run every single combat, especially because the PCs can kill most of these creatures in one blow. Just tell them that they kill a bunch of creatures every day and use some healing spells. Don't make the trip too easy, though! A few of the creatures – especially the dire animals of darkness – are dangerous enough to be a challenge for the party, and they can attack the PCs at any moment. Such monsters are rare, and they are invariably heralded by a short period of peace as the other creatures flee the area. If the PCs can defeat a big and powerful creature of darkness, the rest will stay clear of the PCs for several hours. Hopefully, they have learnt enough tactics to kill this:

Tyrannosaur of darkness		Al. Chaotic Evil	Huge Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 12
Str: 30 (+10)	HP: 27d8+144 (265)	Speed: 18		
Dex: 16 (+3)	AC: 16 (-2 size, +3 dex, +5 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 21 (+5)	Initiative: +3 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 3 (-4)	Ref: +18 (+15 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +20	Grapple: +38	
Wis: 15 (+2)	For: +20 (+15 base, +5 con)	Melee: +28 (+20 base, +10 str, -2 size)		
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: +11 (+9 base, +2 wis)	Ranged: +21 (+20 base, +3 dex, -2 size)		
Attacks			Skills	
Bite, +29 melee, damage 3d6+15			Hide +12 (+9 ranks, +3 dex, -8 size, +8 racial)	
Feats and special abilities			Listen +14 (+10 ranks, +2 wis, +2 alertness)	
Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Improved natural attack (bite), Mobility, Power attack, Run, Toughness (x3), Track, Weapon focus (bite)			Move silently +12 (+1 ranks, +3 dex, +8 racial)	
Improved grab (bite): up to Large size.			Spot +14 (+10 ranks, +2 wis, +2 alertness)	
Swallow Whole (Ex): Can swallow a grabbed opponent with a successful grapple check. The victim takes 2d8+10 points of bludgeoning damage and 8 points of acid damage per round. The victim can cut its way out by dealing 25 points of slashing or piercing damage (AC 12). It can hold 2 Medium, 8 Small, 32 Tiny, or 128 Diminutive or smaller opponents.				
Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, darkvision 18 mt, blindsight 36 mt, scent.				

Dinosaurs of darkness are exceedingly rare, but they do exist; they are the most fearsome creatures that the 76th layer can spawn. This monstrosity is always hungry and always on the hunt, even more so than “normal” creatures of darkness. The PCs will be left alone for at least two days after defeating this, partly because of the fear the feat will inspire in the other creatures, but also because the tyrannosaur has eaten most of the monsters around the place where the encounter takes place.

The PCs will meet the first real problem at about 60 kilometers from the palace. That's about the radius in which the Worm has spread its gooey secretions. The ground is covered in thick, semi-transparent slime. Assuming that the PCs aren't traveling blind, it will take a Spot check, DC 16, to notice it before the horses step on it. While the slime isn't dangerous by itself, the Worm can sense anything that touches its slime, anywhere on the layer. If the PCs mess with the goo, the monster will start going towards them. Luckily, it can be heard from quite a distance, but a moment of carelessness now is enough to force the PCs to drop the carriages and start running.

The players now have to devise a plan to distract the Worm while they travel the remaining 60 kilometers to the palace. A hundred manes risk not being enough to keep the monster amused for two days or so. Lianne will worriedly admit that she didn't think the Worm could cover that much area in goo. The heroes can still make it if they position the fiends and themselves carefully, or they may choose another way. The river is a smart idea now. There are almost no creatures of darkness in the area where the Worm roams; they either get eaten or don't like the sticky soil. There are also no crocodiles in the river, and as long as they don't touch the shores, the PCs can sail on a makeshift raft or something without alerting the Worm. This way, they can reach the fortress with relative ease.

The trip on the river will be faster if they start from the south end; the current flows towards the forest. Coupled with the manes, this strategy will make sure that they reach the fortress Maldithar without encountering the Worm. That doesn't mean that the trip will be uneventful, though.

Dire eagles of darkness (6)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: 16 (+3)	HP: 4d8+12 (30)	Speed: 9, fly 30 (average)		
Dex: 29 (+9)	AC: 24 (+9 dex, +5 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 16 (+3)	Initiative: +9 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 3 (-4)	Ref: +13 (+4 base, +9 dex)	BAB: +3	Grapple: +6	
Wis: 14 (+2)	For: +7 (+4 base, +3 con)	Melee: +6 (+3 base, +3 strength)		
Cha: 6 (-2)	Will: +3 (+1 base, +2 wis)	Ranged: +12 (+3 base, +9 dexterity)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 talons, +12 melee, damage 2d4+3, and		Hide +19 (+2 ranks, +8 racial, +9 dex)		
Bite, +7 melee, damage 1d6+1		Listen +6 (+2 ranks, +2 wis, +2 alertness)		
Feats and special abilities		Move silently +19 (+2 ranks, +8 racial, +9 dex)		
Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse, Mobility		Spot +13 (+1 ranks, +2 wis, +2 alertness, +8 racial)		
Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, darkvision 18 mt, blindsight 36 mt, scent.				

Flying creatures can avoid the muck and the Worm with relative ease (that is, they don't get killed very fast because the Worm can only spit at them). A half dozen dire eagles of darkness are going to attack the PCs. Alternatively, you may choose any other flying animal.

Eventually, the heroes will reach Maldithar. The fortress isn't a dark and silent place as the PCs might expect. Since they fled, there was some evolution in the situation here. First of all, a bunch of tanar'ri have remained here when Rothakon fled, and they have claimed the fortress for themselves. Not the smartest move, granted; they have no easy way to get out of the fortress without being eaten by the Worm and the fortress in its current state is no longer a useful strategic point. But they remained nonetheless; during the following days, almost half of the group died to infighting over who got to rule what.

The fighting ceased after a couple of weeks or so, when the portal from Sigil flared open. Right in the middle of the remaining tanar'ri, several tough warriors appeared and started attacking the fiends. These warriors are an elite team of the Mercykiller faction, led by a Justiciar named Coriolis. The Mercykiller high-up has taken on himself the grand task of capturing the individual responsible for sending a Retriever through the Hive Ward of Sigil, causing widespread destruction therein. Coriolis, a powerful blood in his own right, has requisitioned some expert bashers of his faction for a trip to the Abyss and started making preparations; this caught everyone by surprise since it was assumed that noone would be barmy enough to try and arrest a tanar'ri lord. Factol Sarin of the Harmonium, worried that the cagers would start wondering why the Red Death was doing the Hardheads' work, decided to send a Harmonium representative (a paladin named Joseph) together with the expedition, mainly to save appearances but also to try and take the team out when the plan would start coming apart.

Of course, the plan went apart in the exact moment when they entered the portal. Like the PCs, they were stunned upon entering and surrounded by tanar'ri. Unlike the PCs, they had enough forces to get out on their feet. The team, reduced to twenty-two members, retreated to a defensible area of the fortress and set up fortifications. After the initial assault, the Mercykiller force – much better organized than the fiends – started taking the upper hand and securing more and more rooms of Maldithar.

About one week before the PCs return to the castle, another person entered the cursed portal (this place ain't ever seen this much traffic!). While the PCs were away, the Gardener could do nothing but stare at his plants as they died. The tuladhara, not a person to succumb to desperation, started slowly rebuilding his greenhouse. Some friends and clients helped him, and after some weeks he got over the loss, psychologically if not financially, and looked like he could resume his life. Then, ten days before the PCs reach the fortress, he abruptly disappeared without leaving a trace.

Unbeknownst to everyone involved, though, the Gardener was not without powerful allies. A plumach, one of his own unknown ancestors, was secretly looking over him. Plumachs are a part of the race known as rilmani, the exemplars of true neutrality and the mysterious overseers of the Outlands. The rilmani are keepers, guardians and upholders of neutrality everywhere on the Planes.

Among them, plumachs are the least powerful and those with the greatest tendency towards neutrality as apathy. Plumachs never interfere, never act, and they generally spend their lives as common people, artisans and professionals.

This particular plumach, however, was an exceptional member of his species. While he, too, believed in not interfering with the events of the planes, his chosen profession was that of the wizard. During the centuries, he got quite good at that, and his search for knowledge led him to places and actions not usually seen by other plumachs. Or even other rilmani in general. He married a mortal sorceress, and lived with her for several decades before she died of old age. The single son they had was a half-rilmani, and his (very few) descendants were tuladhara. Saintrii, this the name of the plumach wizard, kept an eye on his offspring, but at the same time felt compelled not to reveal himself to them or act in their favor, due to his neutral essence. His line gradually died out; tuladhara are virtually infertile and the normal dangers of life on the Planes did the rest. After years and centuries, the only remaining one was the Gardener, who didn't know anything more than he had some rilmani blood. Saintrii covertly watched over him but never did anything, even when he spotted fiendish involvement in his life. It looked like his grand-grandson could get over the event, but then the Gardener vanished. The loss of his last remaining descendant was enough to finally prompt him into action.

Maybe in some years' time, his tale will be recounted by the rilmani as an example of why neutrality should not be betrayed.

Saintrii entered the portal in the Slags to look for the Gardener, and suffered the same dire effects as everyone else. He was stunned and he got pummeled by the tanar'ri; as soon as he recovered, he attempted to teleport away and promptly passed out from the damage. The fiends kept him alive, recognizing a chance to reconquer Maldithar. Just for fun, they tortured him for a day. Then, they forced him to use his magic against the Mercykillers, threatening to kill him if he didn't obey. Saintrii offered to summon help; he called several mephits and, speaking in their tongue, instructed them to warn the Mercykillers. The tanar'ri didn't realize this until the mephits were out. Luckily for them, though, the Mercykillers believed the mephits to be an attack from the fiends, and killed them before even hearing what they wanted to say. As a punishment, the fiends tortured Saintrii for another day, and then they forced him to summon help with the scroll of *greater planar binding* he was carrying. During the summoning, the bulezau's axe would be on his neck: attempts to call celestials or other help for him would result in his immediate death. But rather than calling a tanar'ri as his captors wanted, he called an arcanaloth named Tarlikin, assuring the fiends that this was the best thing to do.

This was a particularly foolish move since the wizard lacked access to an adequate circle of protection. Saintrii tried to bargain with the yugoloth; Tarlikin offered to not only free him from the demons, but also stay and help uncover the secrets of the fortress. Knowing that he was going to be screwed, but also desperate enough, the plumach accepted. The arcanaloth got out of the circle and immediately killed Saintrii, surprising the demons (who nervously expected the yugoloth to either work for them, or attack them). He then proceeded to take control of the astonished tanar'ri troupe. The demons only obey strength, and Tarlikin just displayed more than enough of it.

Even though, between himself and the demons, he has enough power to overwhelm the Mercykillers, it would be a tough battle and he risks taking damage and losing his servants. Besides, keeping the factioneers in check is enough for now: Tarlikin is busy trying to gain access to the laboratory on the third floor.

While all of these events were going on, another prisoner escaped from Maldithar. Sort of. When the Worm escaped, the magical seals holding the Demontree were broken. During the past month or so, it has steadily grown in size and now occupies almost one third of the fortress. Its trunk rises from one of the inner courtyards, and the ground, floors and walls around it are covered in writhing tendrils that lash out at anything approaching. The tentacles can be considered as creatures with the following stats:

Demontree Tendrils		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Plant (Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: 20 (+5)	HP: 4d8+12 (30)	Speed: 0		
Dex: 11 (+0)	AC: 14 (+5 natural, -1 size)	Armor: none		
Con: 16 (+3)	Initiative: +0	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: -	Ref: +1 base	BAB: +3	Grapple: +12	
Wis: 14 (+2)	For: +7 (+4 base, +3 con)	Melee: +7 (+3 base, +5 strength, -1 size)		
Cha: 6 (-2)	Will: +3 (+1 base, +2 wis)	Ranged: +2 (+3 base, -1 size)		
Attacks				
Touch, +7 melee touch reach 3 mt, damage 1d6 Strength				
Feats and special abilities				
Low-light vision, mindless. Immune to poison, paralysis, polymorph, stunning. Not subject to critical hits.				
Improved grab (touch). A creature does not starve while grappled by demontree tendrils, but it loses one experience level per year unless he's first level already. If the victim dies of old age, it is transformed into a bodak but it does not regain its Strength until freed.				
Since they are not really a single creature, demontree tendrils are immune to any attempt to magically control them.				
Acid, cold and lightning resistance 5.				

Even though they are Large sized, four tendrils can fit in a single 1,5 meters square. Their shape means that they occupy a much smaller volume than their length would suggest, and the demontree is capable of coordinating them so perfectly that they don't get entangled. If they can get to someone, as many tendrils as possible will grapple him or her, until it is drained of Strength.

Luckily, the tendrils cannot move; they sprout from the floor and are physically part of the demontree. Unluckily, the fiendish plant has more surprises in stock. It has somehow been able to create shambling mounds infused with fiendish essence. Unlike normal half-fiends, these have no wings and cannot fly.

Half-Fiend Shambling Mound		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Outsider (Abyss)	CR: 8
Str: 25 (+7)	HP: 8d8+32 (68)	Speed: 6, swim 6		
Dex: 14 (+2)	AC: 23 (+12 natural, +2 dex, -1 size)	Armor: none		
Con: 19 (+4)	Initiative: +2 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 9 (-1)	Ref: +4 (+2 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +6	Grapple: +17	
Wis: 10 (+0)	For: +10 (+6 base, +4 con)	Melee: +12 (+6 base, +7 str, -1 size)		
Cha: 11 (+0)	Will: +4 (+2 base, +2 iron will)	Ranged: +7 (+6 base, +2 dex, -1 size)		
Attacks			Skills	
2 slams, +13 melee reach 3 mt, damage 2d6+7, and			Climb +12 (+5.5 ranks, +7 str)	
Bite, +7 melee reach 3 mt, damage 1d8+3			Hide +13 (+11 ranks, +4 racial*, -4 size, +2 dex)	
Feats and special abilities			Jump +12 (+5.5 ranks, +7 str)	
Feats: Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam). Smite good (su): once per day it can make a normal melee attack to deal 8 extra damage to a good foe.			Listen +15 (+11 ranks, +4 racial)	
Spell-like abilities: <i>darkness</i> 3/day, <i>desecrate</i> 1/day, <i>poison</i> 3/day, <i>unholy blight</i> 1/day.			Move Silently +16 (+11 ranks, +4 racial, +2 dex)	
Improved grab (slam): if it hits with both slams, it can grapple and constrict. Constrict 2d6+10.			Search +6 (+5.5 ranks, -1 int)	
Immune to electricity: any electrical damage grants 1d4 points of Constitution instead. These points are lost at the rate of one per hour.			Spot +5 (+5.5 ranks)	
Darkvision 18 mt. Immune to poison. Acid, cold, fire resistance 10. DR 5/magic. Its natural weapons are treated as magic for the purpose of overcoming damage reduction. SR 18.			* +12 in swamps	

These monsters love to use *poison* before or while grappling. There aren't too many of them around, but they are quite dangerous. Fortunately, they are not part of the demontree and their touch doesn't share its powers. They don't wander far from the tree, either. If the demontree is angry at something, it can produce a *lot* of these very quickly – up to twenty, in fact, and one more per day. If the PCs try to stay for long in its area, they will be attacked by a horde of monsters until they are driven away.

Both the Mercykillers and the fiends are ignoring the demontree right now. While the plant poses no immediate threat (it seems that the lack of light is slowing its growth), there is no doubt that it will keep growing indefinitely and eventually engulf the whole castle. The Worm is also slowly expanded the mucus-covered area. Both these threats should make evident to the tanar'ri that *noone* is

going to become the lord of Maldithar for a long time. Apparently, they just don't have the foresight to notice that – or maybe they think they can destroy the demontree.

Someone else isn't so foolish, though. Hayazeikanatzeras, the reclusive lord of the 76th layer, has sensed the double threat growing in his domain and has taken steps to put an end to it. A massive army of several millions creatures of darkness is moving towards Maldithar. Hayazeikanatzeras himself is leading it; no one else is capable of controlling the monsters. His plan is to storm the fortress and destroy the plant before it grows so much that the trunk becomes unreachable. If possible, he'll also try to take on the Worm, though he doesn't know how to permanently kill it. The only certain thing is that Maldithar will be razed and that the PCs, the Mercykillers, the yugoloth and the tanar'ri are all going to get killed if they are here when the bulk of the army arrives.

The exact moment of the army's arrival should be determined by the DM. The main purpose of this event is to place some time pressure on the PCs, and to make it clear that they must do all the research they need before the army arrives, because they will be unable to return to the layer afterwards. The PCs can learn this information from the scrying mirror in the Mercykiller-controlled area of the fortress, but even if they don't immediately use the device they will soon enough get the full chant.

Hayazeikanatzeras has been scrying on Maldithar every day for almost two weeks, in preparation for the assault. Upon seeing the PCs, he understands that they have been in the castle before and that they probably have valuable information on the creatures he wishes to destroy. Besides, he'd like to get an estimate of their strength, in case he has to fight them. The archfiend doesn't know everything that happened in Maldithar, and for what he knows they may have been the ones to route the tanar'ri from the fortress. That would mean they are quite powerful and potentially dangerous, even to himself. Therefore, he will try to contact them as soon as they get to sleep.

See, Hayazeikanatzeras, maybe because of his connection to darkness, has a powerful ability to infiltrate people's dreams as they sleep. That night, everyone in the party (except those that don't sleep or are immune to mind effects) "wakes up" in a very realistic dream. They don't automatically realize that it is a dream, though many things will be off somewhat. They cannot be awoken from the outside until the dream is over, unless someone deals them damage. Companions and cohorts aren't present, but familiars and other creatures which are linked to the character's own soul are (if the familiar would be immune, the creature in the dream is a projection of the PCs' knowledge of its friend).

The affected PCs find themselves on a cold stone floor. They are in utter darkness, but they can see up to 18 meters away as if they had darkvision. They can't see walls or a ceiling in any direction, save for some thick, tall stone columns which lose themselves in the darkness above. Those that pass a Spot check, DC 22, can see shadows moving behind the pillars, though they go away when they get close, to reappear behind the next column. The PCs can easily realize that they aren't in any place they've already been to. Odd enough, all spellcasters have their full complement of spells as if they had prepared them.

In this dream-reality, the PCs' choices are limited; many of their actions simply won't work for no apparent reason if the lord of the layer doesn't approve of them. The PCs are in a square room, about one hundred meters wide and thirty meters tall with vaulted ceilings sustained by hundreds of thick columns. One end of the room features a huge gate in the middle of the wall. The gate is made in reinforced wood, covered in inscriptions. The characters cannot read the inscriptions, though if a PC has a supernatural ability to read or understand languages then he can figure out that it's Abyssal. The heroes cannot damage or open the gate in any way, and if they try to do so, two shadows jump out of the pillars at them.

Shadow (2)	Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Undead (Incorporeal) (Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: -	HP: 3d12 (19)	Speed: fly 12	
Dex: 14 (+2)	AC: 13 (+2 dex, +1 deflection)	Armor: none	
Con: -	Initiative: +2 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0
Int: 6 (-2)	Ref: +3 (+1 base, +2 dex)	BAB: +1	Grapple: -
Wis: 12 (+1)	For: +1 base	Melee: +1 base	
Cha: 13 (+1)	Will: +4 (+3 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +3 (+1 base, +2 dex)	
Attacks		Skills	
Incorporeal touch, +3 melee, damage 1d6 Strength		Hide +12 (+6 ranks, +2 dex, +4 racial*)	
Feats and special abilities		Listen +7 (+2 ranks, +2 alertness, +2 racial, +1 wis)	
Feats: Alertness, Dodge.		Search +4 (+2 ranks, +4 racial, -2 int)	
Strength damage (su): 1d6 Strength damage by touch; creatures reduced to 0 die. This is a negative energy effect.		Spot +7 (+2 ranks, +2 alertness, +2 racial, +1 wis)	
Create spawn (su): humanoids killed by a shadow through its touch become shadows under its control within 1d4 rounds.		* in areas of shadowy illumination	

On the other side of the room, the walls open to reveal a stone stairway leading upwards towards a smaller room. If some characters remain in the big room, the small room seems to be empty. It contains a stone throne, four pillars in the corners, and nothing else. If everyone enters the small room, they see the following scene.

You see a stone throne near the bottom of the room. At first, you think that an empty suit of full plate armor is sitting on the throne – then, you realize that it is actually a slim humanoid figure. His face and hands are jet black, while the armor seems to be made from mithral – it takes a second or so to adjust to the contrast. The humanoid is holding a greatsword in his lap; it is made from white mithral as well. At the man’s sides, two great figures made from living shadow stand, flexing their claws. You can only see their eyes clearly, and they are focused on you. In front of the throne, a big and feral black wolf lies like a dog before its master. Looking at it carefully, you recognize it is one of the dark creatures of this layer.

The humanoid speaks: “Intruders. I am Hayazeikanatzeras. I am your liege, as long as you are on this realm, for I am the lord of the layer!” His voice seems to rise in anger for a moment here. “I have brought you here because I want you to answer my questions. Know that I am coming to Maldithar!” Again, the sudden vehement increase.

Hayazeikanatzeras keeps on talking, with more occasional displays of barely-suppressed rage. “I am coming to raze that place to the ground! Two great creatures have been let loose in my realm, and they are killing my pets, my precious creatures of darkness! They are killing them by the score. I have tolerated the presence of Maldithar for very, very long, but my patience is now extinguished”.

“I am coming with an army of my servants, and the realm of Tenebra will suffer no more Maldithar, nor anyone within!”

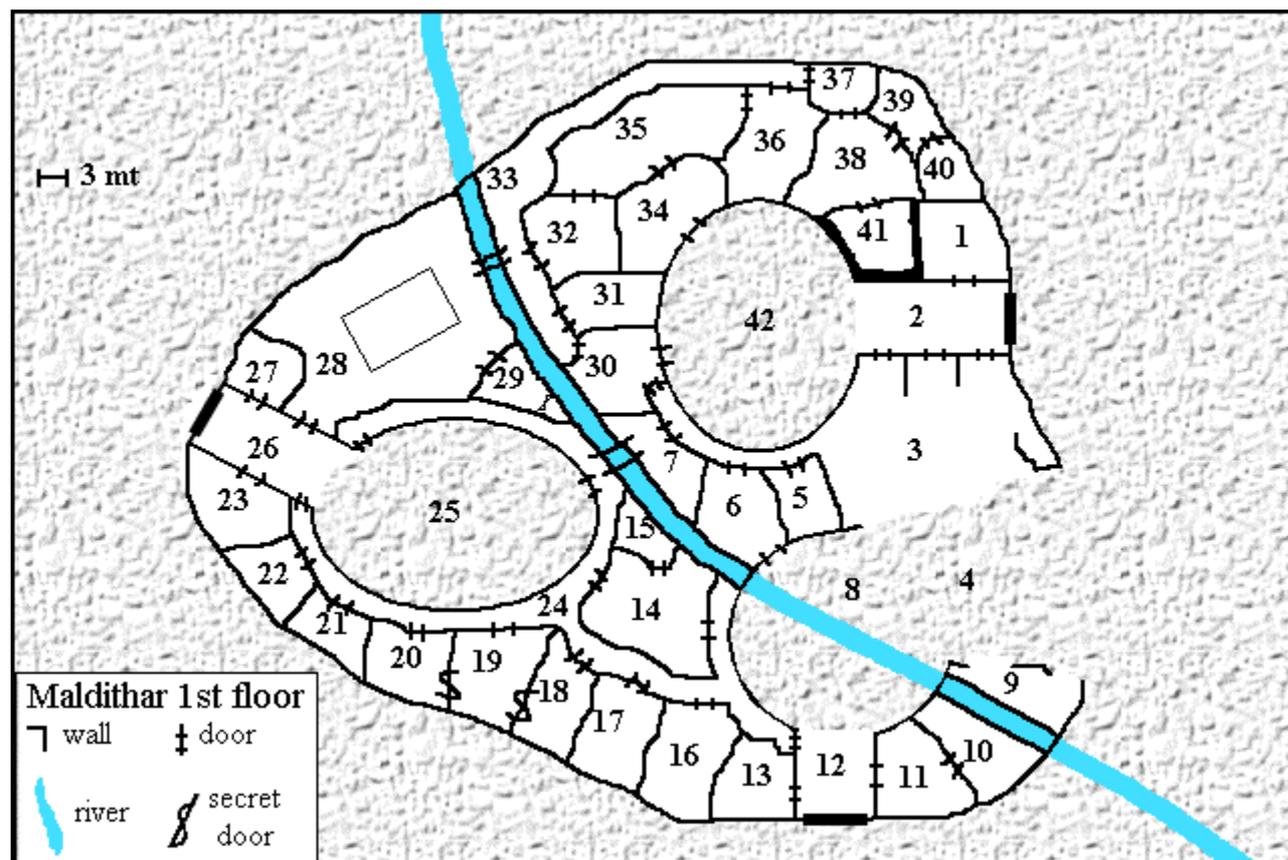
The demon lord starts asking questions about the two creatures and about the PCs’ travels, though he is only interested in what they did on this layer, which he calls “Tenebra”. He looks ready to explode at any moment, frequently raising his voice, tapping on his greatsword, and briefly standing up before the throne when he feels really angry. Hayazeikanatzeras can’t hurt the PCs in the dream, but if they prove to be annoying or uninformative, he will cause the vision to end and the PCs to wake up. Since the PCs probably also want to learn as much as possible about this new threat, they’d better not make him angrier than he already is.

Hayazeikanatzeras is ancient, smart, cunning, powerful, and it is unlikely that any of the PCs would be able to lie to him and not be discovered. When he is satisfied, he concludes that the PCs are unable to defeat the two great monsters and certainly unable to oppose him. Satisfied, he ends the dream, and the heroes wake up.

The tanar’ri lord will not contact them or anyone else again, and certainly not in this fashion. The use of this powerful ability is very taxing on him, and he only uses it when he wants to impress an

adversary of unknown power. If the PCs warn Coriolis and Joseph about the impending threat, the Mercykiller leader reacts by saying that they need to get the information they are looking for, right now. His plan is to attack the fiends – tomorrow.

Maldithar 1st floor



The first floor has seen the most combat of all. The corpses of mercenaries and tanar'ri, as well as the occasional baatezu, are scattered among the rooms and corridors. Most of them have been thoroughly searched by either of the groups that currently occupy Maldithar, and the Mercykillers have cleared out their area of most of the bodies. Still, even there, the PCs can smell a lingering scent of decay which just won't go away.

A section of Maldithar has collapsed, but even in the standing parts many walls are scorched or otherwise damaged by the combat and the spells that were unleashed upon them. Luckily, the tanar'ri built the fortress with thick stones and metal, and the standing section isn't in danger of collapsing any time soon. Of course, Hayazeikanatzeras will see to that unless the PCs get out quickly.

Most of the internal doors of Maldithar are made from heavy wooden doors (hardness 5, 15 HP, break DC 23), but some are made from iron (hardness 10, 60 HP, break DC 28). Most of the rooms are dimly lit by a single *continual light* spell, sometimes with a reddish or blueish tinge.

The river that crosses the fortress can be accessed at several points. Two bridges used to connect the two halves of Maldithar, but one of them has collapsed during the combats. Another access is behind a secret passage in room 29. The river is also exposed in the internal courtyard 8, but it is infested by demontree tendrils there. Steel grates where the walls intersect the river make sure that it can't be used for an escape.

The river flows from the south to the north, which is just good since it prevents anyone falling in from the bridges from ending up as demontree fodder. However, Hayazeikanatzeras has the ability to reverse the river's direction at will – he hasn't done so in recent times, but since his interest has been focusing on Maldithar again, he may do so in the close future.

Lots of fiends and mercenaries have fallen into the river and died or drowned during the fight. The bottom of the water is covered in corpses, and it will take several hours to search the river carefully. If the PCs do so, though, they can recover 2103 gold coins, 132 silver coins, three *potions of cure light wounds* (faint conjuration; CL 1), a *strand of prayer beads* (moderate transmutation; CL 9; only the bead of karma remains), a *+1 breastplate* (faint abjuration; CL 3; armor bonus +6, max dex +3, check penalty -3, arcane spell failure 25%), a *+1 cold iron glaive* (faint evocation; CL 3; damage 1d10+1, crit x3, reach 3m), and a *+2 dagger* (.

1. This used to be a guard room. Now, it is occupied by two bored babau tanar'ris. They playing some game using cards made from petitioner skin. A spiral staircase made from iron leads upwards to room 2 of the second floor.

Babau (2)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Medium Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 6
Str: 21 (+5)	HP: 7d8+35 (66)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 19 (+1 dex, +8 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 20 (+5)	Initiative: +1 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 14 (+2)	Ref: +6 (+5 base, +1 dex)	BAB: +7	Grapple: +12	
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +10 (+5 base, +5 con)	Melee: +12 (+7 base, +5 strength)		
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +6 (+5 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +8 (+7 base, +1 dexterity)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 claws, +12 melee, damage 1d6+5, and		Climb +15 (+10 ranks, +5 str)		
Bite +10 melee, damage 1d6+2		Disable Device +12 (+10 ranks, +2 int)		
Feats and special abilities		Disguise +13 (+10 ranks, +3 cha)		
Feats: Cleave, Multiattack, Power attack		Escape Artist +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.		Hide +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Sneak attack +2d6, damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 14, telepathy within 30 mt.		Listen +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis)		
Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); caster level 7 th .		Move Silently +19 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex)		
Protective slime (any weapon or character touching the babau takes 1d8 damage, ignoring hardness; magic weapon and characters may roll a Reflex save, DC 18, to avoid)		Open Lock +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
Summon 1 babau 1/day with 40% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		Search +20 (+10 ranks, +8 racial, +2 int)		
		Sleight of Hand +11 (+10 ranks, +1 dex)		
		Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*)		
		Use Rope +3 (+1 dex, +2 synergy**)		
		* when following tracks		
		** when binding someone		

2. This is one of the three entrances to Maldithar. The door to room 1 is open, allowing the fiends there to look at anyone who may pass through here, though they obviously don't expect an attack from this side. Light can be seen coming from the internal courtyard in room 42.

3. This area is mostly collapsed. Rubble and large slabs of stone are scattered everywhere. In the southern part of the area, there are demontree tendrils jutting out of the rocks almost everywhere, and any given square is threatened by one or two of them. Still, a basher could walk from the western corridor to the northern doors without danger... if it weren't for the two half-fiend shambling mounds. The monsters are hiding among the debris, and they will try to attack by surprise anyone who enters this area.

A small section of corridor near the eastern wall is still standing. It is a dead end, but there is the corpse of a dead mercenary, still wearing his equipment. The poor berk, a dark-haired and dark-skinned tiefling, has a masterwork banded mail (armor bonus +6, max dex +1, check penalty -5, arcane spell failure 35%), a *+1 sword* (faint evocation, CL 3, damage 1d8, crit 19-20/x2), a heavy steel shield (armor bonus +2, check penalty -2, arcane spell failure 15%), and a pouch with 50 gold pieces.

In the southern part of this area, a babau is standing, grappled by three demontree tendrils. It has been long since reduced to 0 Strength and is immobile. If it sees anyone, it will beg for help with a feeble voice. Helping him, however, is very dangerous; the PCs have to cross about ten meters of tendril-infested ground. If the heroes do free the babau, it will try to get them to restore his Strength,

swearing whatever it takes to get help, and then attempt to flee back to the tanar'ri controlled section at the first occasion.

4. This area is entirely collapsed. The ground is fully covered with debris from the destruction of the upper levels, halving the movement of anyone walking on it as they are forced to climb slabs of stone and deal with unstable footing. A gaping hole in the ground, the one from which the PCs escaped, is now almost entirely covered by the demontree's trunk, and tendrils cover the whole area so that any square is threatened by three to five of them.

Walking here is virtually suicide, but even flying characters have something to fear. The demontree can jut out a tendril from its trunk to a range of 18 meters – which means that it covers the entire area, and many characters who rely on darkvision won't even see it until it's too late. The tree itself, on the other hand, has blindsight in any area which can be reached by any of its tendrils, whether they sprout from the ground or are directly attached to the trunk. Luckily, these tendrils work the same as the rest instead of using the tree's BAB. The tree, however, can also use them for slam attacks within 9 meters – these hurt.

The tree itself can be attacked, but if the PCs harm it, it will start spewing out half-fiend shambling mounds from the base of the trunk at a rate of 1 every 1d4 rounds. It can produce up to 20 of them before exhausting its resources for now.

The Demontree		Al. Chaotic Evil	Colossal Plant (Abyss)	CR: 35
Str: 40 (+15)	HP: 90d8+2700 (3105)	Speed: 0		
Dex: 1 (-5)	AC: 17 (+20 natural, -8 size, -5 dex)	Armor: none		
Con: 70 (+30)	Initiative: -1 (+4 improved init, -5 dex)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 10 (+0)	Ref: +25 (+30 base, -5 dex)	BAB: +67	Grapple: -	
Wis: 19 (+4)	For: +77 (+47 base, +30 con)	Melee: +74 (+67 base, +15 str, -8 size)		
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +36 (+30 base, +4 wis, +2 iron will)	Ranged: +54 (+67 base, -8 size, -5 dex)		
Attacks				Skills
8 slams, +75 melee range 9 mt, damage 2d6+15 and 1d6 Strength, crit 19-20/x2				Listen +97
Feats and special abilities				(+93 ranks, +4 wis)
Feats: Awesome blow, Cleave, Damage Reduction (x6), Energy resistance (acid), Energy resistance (cold), Energy resistance (sonic) (x2), Fast Healing (x12), Great cleave, Improved bull rush, Improved critical (slam), Improved initiative, Iron will, Power attack, Weapon focus (slam).				Spot +97
All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned.				(+93 ranks, +4 wis)
Immune to fire and electricity. Resistance to acid and cold 40. Resistance to sonic 20. DR 20/lawful and good. DR 18/-. Fast healing 40. SR 40. Blindsight 18 meters, low-light vision, darkvision 120 meters.				
Immunity to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, polymorph, stunning, energy drain and death effects. Not subject to critical hits.				
The Demontree can create one demontree tendril per round, which can attack anyone within 18 meters of the trunk.				
The Demontree can create one half-fiend shambling mound every day and store it within itself. It can release one of them every 1d4 rounds.				

If the PCs somehow manage to search this area (unlikely), they can find lots of dead fiends and mercenaries, most of them with their equipment. This includes three *+1 swords* (faint evocation, CL 3, damage 1d8+1, crit 19-20/x2), a *+1 falchion* (faint evocation, CL 3, damage 2d4+1, crit 18-20/x2), a *+2 greatsword* (moderate evocation, CL 6, damage 2d6+2, crit 19-20/x2), several non-magical weapons, a masterwork full plate (armor bonus +8, max dex +1, check penalty -5, arcane spell failure 35%), two *+1 heavy steel shields* (faint abjuration, CL 3, armor bonus +3, check penalty -1, arcane spell failure 15%), a *+1 breastplate* made from permanent ironwood (moderate transmutation, CL 11, armor bonus +6, max dex +3, check penalty -3), several nonmagical armors, five *potions of cure light wounds* (faint conjuration, CL 1), a *potion of bull's strength* (faint transmutation, CL 3), a *potion of fly* (faint transmutation, CL 3), an *oil of keen edge* (faint transmutation, CL 5), a *wand of fireball* (faint evocation, CL 5, 29 charges left), an *amulet of natural armor +2* (faint transmutation, CL 6), and a total of 532 gold pieces and 43 silver pieces.

5. This room was converted to a sleeping area for Rothakon's mercenaries. It contains ten bunk beds and a few crates containing 43 gold coins. However, it is also occupied by four demontree tendrils.

6. This room, too, was used by Rothakon to house his mercenaries. It is guarded by one hezrou and one babau; all the beds have been piled up against the southern door, which is made in iron.

7. This room is guarded by one babau. The door leading to the river is made from iron; the bridge has collapsed entirely some time ago. There have been no strikes around here since then; bashing down the door without the bridge would be too difficult for the Mercykillers, and the fiends have been on the defensive for a while. The room itself is empty. The walls have been painted with pictures of fiendish sea creatures.

8. This used to be one of the three internal courtyards. Now, the ceiling has collapsed, destroying the spells which used to project light on it. It is dark like everything else, and infested by demontree tendrils. Every square is threatened by one or two of them. The river itself is even more infested; a web of tentacles writhes under the water, and there are three corpses entangled in it. Anyone within the river is subject to attacks from four tendrils in any square. At the north and south ends of this room, two steel grates prevent anyone from swimming in or out.

9. This half-collapsed room used to be another sleeping quarter. Right now, though, it contains a monstrous sight. Demontree tendrils come out of the floor, ceiling and standing walls, and they wrap around an immobile carrion crawler. The insectoid creature is suspended about one meter from the floor by the tentacles, and it looks motionless. At a closer inspection, though, it seems to pulsate irregularly, as if something was moving inside it.

The tendrils' poison is interacting with the carrion crawler in a weird way, transforming it into something else. This particular crawler is currently alive but innocuous, but it is not the first which the demontree has captured.

10. *This* is the first carrion crawler which the demontree has captured. It is lurking on the ceiling of the room. There are also four demontree tendrils in the room, attached to the floor and northern walls.

Mutated Carrion Crawler		Al. Neutral	Large Aberration (Abyss)	CR: 6
Str: 18 (+4)	HP: 8d8+24 (60)	Speed: 12, climb 6		
Dex: 14 (+2)	AC: 20 (-1 size, +2 dex, +9 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 16 (+3)	Initiative: +2 dex	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 1 (-5)	Ref: +5 (+2 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +6	Grapple: +14	
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +5 (+2 base, +3 con)	Melee: +9 (+6 base, +4 str, -1 size)		
Cha: 4 (-3)	Will: +7 (+6 base, +1 wis)	Ranged: +7 (+6 base, +2 dex, -1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
8 tentacles, +10 melee, damage paralysis and 1d4 Strength, and Bite, +5 melee, damage 1d4+2		Climb +14 (+2 ranks, +4 str, +8 racial*)		
Feats and special abilities		Hide +13 (+5 ranks, +10 racial, +2 dex, -4 size)		
Feats: Alertness, Combat reflexes, Track, Weapon focus (tentacle)		Listen +5 (+2 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Paralysis (su): on a tentacle hit, DC 17, paralyzes for 2d4 rounds.		Spot +5 (+2 ranks, +1 wis, +2 alertness)		
Darkvision 18m, scent.		* can always take 10 when climbing		

The rest of the room is occupied by an iron staircase leading upwards to room 1 of the second floor.

11. This room is another sleeping quarter; it contains two demontree tendrils, but not much else.

12. This is one of the three entrances to Maldithar. It is surprisingly clean, considering that it is so close to the demontree. The middle of the hallway is occupied by an elaborated staircase leading upwards to room 9 on the second floor. Near the tall ceiling, within reach of the stairs' top, a mutated carrion crawler is hiding on the ceiling. It will attack by surprise anyone who tries to climb the stairs, or to pass through the hallway. The ruckus is probably going to draw the attention of the monsters in room 13, too.

13. This room used to be a guard room. Right now, it is occupied by three half-fiend shambling mounds, which are gobbling on the corpse of an hezrou. They are going to mindlessly attack anyone who enters. If the PCs search the hezrou, they can pry from its grasp a very heavy keyring. It contains a copy of each key of the fortress, allowing the owner to lock or unlock any door except

for those on the third floor. Since there are so many keys, however, it takes 2d8 rounds to find the correct one.

14. This room is heavily guarded by Mercykillers. There are five mercykiller fighters here; four of them are on either side of each of the two doors leading out, while the last is guarding the iron door leading to room **15**. Even though the bashers have tried to clean up somewhat, the room shows the signs of some real carnage, with blood stains everywhere and scratched and scorched walls.

15. This small room contains the stairs leading upwards to room **20** on the second floor.

16. This used to be a resting place for tanar'ri. It contains two wide leather couches, marked with cuts from claws. The leather is made from several layers of human skin – this is easy to tell, because the armrests end with the poor sods' faces. The middle of the room contains a couple of poles, with chains and manacles attached to them. Their use is unclear.

17. This room used to contain an iron spiral staircase leading upwards to room **8** of the second floor. Right now, however, the whole iron structure has collapsed, and it is leaning on a wall leaving just a wide hole on the ceiling.

18. This room has been converted for a sleeping quarters for Rothakon's mercenaries. It contains several bunk beds, and not much else.

19. This room looks like some kind of armory. Dozens of weapons and shields are hanging from the walls, and they are all beautiful items made from precious materials and masterfully carved with delicate lines. The shields are colorfully painted with Blood War scenes in an impressionist style, while the weapons are carved and chiseled with Abyssal runes. While the subjects may be disturbing, tanar'ri make as good artists as anyone else.

At a closer inspection, though, it is clear that all this stuff has only been made for shows. The materials are too fragile to be used, the balance is way off on all the weapons, and the beautiful shapes aren't practical. The stuff here could be sold for about ten thousand gold, but only to a collector or a tanar'ri art enthusiast.

There is one exception. A strange serrated scimitar, which has been made from Abyssal red iron, hangs among the other weapons, as good-looking as them but much deadlier. The weapon is non-magical, but it is masterwork. Combined with the properties of red iron, the red scimitar counts as a scimitar with a +1 enhancement bonus to hit and damage, and ignores DR as if it were cold iron.

The weapon, however, packs a surprise bigger than itself. The name of the surprise is Tamanaguk – the glabrezu who used to command Maldithar before Rothakon and his forces arrived. The powerful and cunning fiend has escaped certain death by possessing the scimitar (as per the rules in the *Book of Vile Darkness*, which will be summarized here in a simplified way for those who don't have that manual).

Tamanaguk is effectively inside the scimitar. The glabrezu can make a Hide check to escape being detected by a *detect evil* or similar spell; this check is opposed by a level check by the caster. Intelligence, rather than Dexterity, is used for this check; size modifiers don't apply. The item doesn't register as magical, either. Tamanaguk can hide in the same way to bypass any spell that would ward him off, provided that someone carries the scimitar through it.

The fiend can empower the scimitar while it possesses it. If he wishes, the scimitar can function as if it were +1 *keen flaming*. The big disadvantage of the possession, however, is that he has no senses and no way of getting information from the outside world unless someone picks the scimitar up. Afraid of being discovered and attacked by Rothakon's men, Tamanaguk has been hiding up to now.

If a PC picks the scimitar up, Tamanaguk will stay silent and do nothing until it gets an idea of the situation. The glabrezu is extremely intelligent, and he'll be able to put a picture together fairly quickly. When he learns that the two colossal monsters have escaped, he immediately realizes that this will draw the ire of Hayazeikanatzeras, and he will seek to leave the layer as soon as possible.

Tamanaguk knows of two ways out of the layer – the portal in Maldithar, and the portal in the forest. Before choosing either, he wants to learn as much as he can on the situation. If he learns about the curse on Maldithar’s portal, he will decide to leave through the portal in the forest, and to be carried there by someone if possible (he can’t fly for long, so the trip is going to be rather hard). He won’t leave the scimitar at the very least until he’s clear of the Worm goo covered zone.

If the PCs prove themselves as powerful heroes, he might decide to stay with them for some more time, hidden in the weapon, while he figures out a way to maneuver him into a new position of power. Tamanaguk can attempt to leave the scimitar and possess a creature instead, and he’ll do so when he decides that the right moment has arrived. The DC is 22; if you don’t have the *Book of Vile Darkness*, consider this as a *magic jar* spell which doesn’t leave the body behind.

Tamanaguk		Al. Neutral	Glabrezu Sorcerer 6 th (Abyss)	CR: 16
Str: 31 (+10)	HP: 12d8+6d4+180 (249)	Speed: 12		
Dex: 10 (+0)	AC: 27 (-2 size, +19 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 31 (+10)	Initiative: +0	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 16 (+3)	Ref: +10 base	BAB: +15	Grapple: +33	
Wis: 16 (+3)	For: +20 (+10 base, +10 con)	Melee: +23 (+15 base, +10 str, -2 size)		
Cha: 22 (+6)	Will: +16 (+13 base, +3 wis)	Ranged: +13 (+15 base, -2 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
2 pincers, +23 melee reach 4.5 mt, damage 2d8+10, and		Bluff +29 (+21 ranks, +6 cha, +2 persuasive)		
2 claws, +21 melee reach 4.5 mt, damage 1d6+5, and		Concentration +31 (+21 ranks, +10 con)		
Bite, +21 melee reach 4.5 mt, damage 1d8+5		Craft (weapons) +9 (+6 ranks, +3 int)		
Feats and special abilities		Diplomacy +10 (+6 cha, +4 synergy)		
Feats: Cleave, Eschew materials, Great cleave, Multiattack,		Disguise +8 (+6 cha, +2 synergy*)		
Persuasive, Power attack, Quicken spell-like ability (dispel		Intimidate +25 (+15 ranks, +6 cha, +2 persuasive. +2		
magic)		synergy)		
DR 10/good, darkvision 18 mt, immune to electricity and poi-		Knowledge (Arcana) +24 (+21 ranks, +3 int)		
son, resist acid, cold and fire 10, SR 21, telepathy 33 mt.		Knowledge (the Abyss) +18 (+15 ranks, +3 int)		
Improved grab (ex): pincer attack, Medium or smaller crea-		Listen +26 (+15 ranks, +8 racial, +3 wis)		
tures.		Move Silently +15 ranks		
Spell-like abilities: <i>chaos hammer</i> (DC 20), <i>confusion</i> (DC		Search +18 (+15 ranks, +3 int)		
20), <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>mirror image</i> , <i>reverse gravity</i> (DC 23),		Sense Motive +18 (+15 ranks, +3 wis)		
<i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), <i>un-</i>		Spellcraft +24 (+21 ranks, +3 int)		
<i>holy</i> blight (DC 20); 1/day - <i>power word stun</i> .		Spot +26 (+15 ranks, +8 racial, +3 wis)		
Summon Demon (sp): 1/day, 4d10 dretches or 1d2 vrock		Survival +7 (+3 wis, +2 synergy**, +2 synergy***)		
with a 50% chance of success, or another glabrezu with a		* when acting in character		
20% chance of success, as a 4 th level spell.		** when following tracks		
Continuous <i>true seeing</i> , CL 14.		*** on the Abyss		
Sorcerer spells known (DC 13 + spell level): 0 th level: <i>dancing</i>				
<i>lights</i> , <i>touch of fatigue</i> , <i>prestidigitation</i> , <i>detect magic</i> , <i>read</i>				
<i>magic</i> , <i>arcane mark</i> , <i>resistance</i> ; 1 st level: <i>expeditious re-</i>				
<i>trek</i> , <i>shield</i> , <i>ray of enfeeblement</i> , <i>bear’s endurance</i> ; 2 nd				
level: <i>scorching ray</i> , <i>invisibility</i> ; 3 rd level: <i>fly</i>				
Sorcerer spells/day: 6/6/5/3, caster level 6				

20. This room was used by the tanar’ri to eat some snacks and relax. It contains several stone benches, and a crate full of writhing larvae. At least, it used to be – there are only two larvae now, wallowing in a crate full of decomposing, gooey fluids. The whole room is soaked in the fetid smell coming from it.

21. This room contains a steel ladder leading upwards to room 7 on the second floor. A human corpse lies on the floor; it has been stripped of all possessions.

22. This room has been used to house Rothakon’s mercenaries. It contains several bedrolls on the floor, a chain mail armor (armor bonus +5, max dex +2, check penalty -5, arcane spell failure 30%) under one of them, and nothing else.

23. This room contains an iron spiral staircase leading upwards to room 6 on the second floor. The staircase is heavily damaged; a dead babau lies impaled on the iron structure. Attempts to climb them may (20%) result in the whole spiral staircase collapsing. If this happens, everyone on the

staircase must make a Reflex save, DC 15. Those that succeed fall to the ground and take 1d6 damage. The others get hurt on the spiky iron railings, and take 5d6 damage.

24. These corridors are empty, but there are three Mercykiller fighters patrolling them at all times.

25. This is one of the three internal courtyards of Maldithar. The courtyard is enclosed by an oval ceiling, rising up to twelve meters of height. The ceiling is covered by *continual light* spells, shining down on the inside.

The courtyard contains a wide circular pit, about one meter and a half deep. Here, the tanar'ri used to stage fights between larvae, manes, dretches, captured creatures of darkness, and sometimes a mortal prisoner or two, for their amusement. The bottom of the pit is littered with bones and a few bits of metal from the gladiators' equipment. There's nothing useful, though.

26. This is one of Maldithar's three entrances – and it is a trap. When the huge gate is open, the trap is active: pressure plates everywhere on the floor can trigger showers of cold iron arrows from the walls and ceilings. Every time someone moves, 1d6 arrows are shot at him or her from the mechanisms, striking at +10 attack bonus and dealing 1d8+3 damage. There are about a hundred arrows in the trap.

When the gate is closed, there is no risk. The Mercykillers know about this trap, and they'll warn the PCs if they express their desire to open the gate.

27. This empty room used to be a guard room, and stone steps around the perimeter lead upwards to room **5** on the second floor.

28. This large room was used as a prison and a tool of psychological torture by the fiends. The middle of the room is occupied by a huge steel cage, which is currently locked. From the outside, it looks like a normal cage. From the inside, illusion magic makes the air between the iron bars act like a mirror. As a result, anyone who is in the cage cannot see outside; instead, he sees himself imprisoned in the cage, endlessly in all directions including up and down. The images stare at him behind countless bars, wherever he turns to. Not having the key, the Mercykillers haven't realized this.

The doors on the eastern side are both made from iron. The northern one leads to a bridge over the river, and to the tanar'ri section of Maldithar; the Mercykillers have managed to unlock it. The southern one is locked. Five Mercykillers warriors are here at all times, as well as the Mercykiller cleric Tarinee. Tarinee is a middle-aged woman, with an average height and complexion, dark hair, and a stern voice. She wears a robe with the symbol of the Mercykillers above her armor. Tarinee worships all the major gods of Justice from all pantheons and is a loyal member of the Mercykillers.

29. This room looks empty except for a dusty, rugged backpack lying near a wall. It contains twelve torches, flint and a tinderbox, two waterbags, a cold iron knife, rope, and some packets which used to contain meat but have long since rotted away. Two levers on the wall allow anyone in this room to raise or lower the steel grates which block access through the river at the points where it enters and exits the fortress.

The short southeastern wall hides a secret passage. The wall can rotate to give access to the river; a small rowboat is here. Apparently, someone planned an escape but didn't get the occasion to attempt it.

30. This room is a sort of atrium. The iron door leading to the internal courtyard is locked, as well as the wooden one leading to the southern corridor. There are shelves on the western wall, holding up preserved severed heads of various humanoid races. A single hezrou is here, carefully examining the heads.

31. This room is empty of furniture, but it features the mangled corpses of a half dozen mercenaries and a vrock tanar'ri. One of the mercenaries has a pouch of *dust of tracelessness* (faint transmutation, CL 3). The middle of the room is occupied by the stairs leading upwards to room **17** on the second floor.

32. This is an antechamber to the mess hall in room **35**. It contains several shelves of cutlery, dishes and glasses, including some disturbing items such as mugs made out of children's skulls, bone knives, and blood-stained porcelain.

33. This hallway is where most of the fight between tanar'ri and Mercykillers has happened. It is currently guarded by two babaus, placed here by Tarlikin together with a dozen dretches. Unfortunately, the dretches are doing pretty much what they want, and the babaus are spending their time trying to keep them in the same place. So far, the best trick they've found consists in feeding them a corpse or two. Maldithar has no shortage of that.

In the corner of the corridor, there is a spiral iron staircase which leads upwards to room **4** on the second floor. The door leading to the bridge over the river is made out of iron, and locked.

34. This is another antechamber to the mess hall in room **35**. It contains a marble basin, full of normal water, and the walls are painted with sinuous, twisting, snake-like shapes, which seem to writhe and bend near the corners of a berk's eyes. The effect of the fiendish painting is so annoying that anyone staying in this room for more than one round must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) or become nauseated until he leaves. Fiends are immune.

35. This is a fiendish mess hall. It contains two long iron tables and four iron benches. The half-rotten remains of the last meal are still on the tables, and two dretches (escaped from area **33**) are over one of the tables, gobbling the decomposing larva steaks as if they were fine gourmet dishes. They won't attack unless disturbed somehow.

36. This room has been converted for use as sleeping quarters; it contains several bedrolls, scattered over the floor. One dead mercenary is still lying on one of them; it has normal equipment and 32 silver coins. A torture table has been put against a corner; it's a sturdy wooden table, with leather straps firmly nailed to its sides. The fiends would tie a prisoner to it, and leave her here for anyone passing near to abuse her to death.

37. This room contains the stairs leading upwards to room **3** on the second floor. PCs that make a Listen check (DC 16) can hear grunts from upstairs; it sounds like the voice of a hezrou tanar'ri.

38. This is one of the room that has seen the most fight when the PCs escaped. About twenty corpses are scattered everywhere on the floor. They are mostly mercenaries, though a few dead babaus are here as well as a couple barbazu devils. These corpses still have most of their equipment, including a *+1 cold iron lance* (faint evocation, CL 3), a masterwork scale mail, two *potions of cure light wounds* (faint conjuration, CL 1) and 324 gold coins.

39. This room was used as a small armory. Most of the weapon racks are empty, but it still contains a few mundane weapons, mostly two-handed reach weapons such as glaives, guisarmes and ranseurs. All the weapons here are tanar'ri-made.

40. This room used to house Maldithar guards. It is empty now.

41. These are the stairs leading downwards to the Upper Prison. They are literally chock full of corpses. There are dozens upon dozens of dead mercenaries and fiends, who fought for control of this point for hours, climbing over the dead and trampling the dying in their effort to kill their enemies. The bodies are stacked almost to the ceiling, and coupled with the debris from the collapse of part of the ceiling, they completely obstruct the passage leading downwards.

It would take many hours, even days, to free the passage, but it isn't worth it. After more than ten meters of corpses upon corpses, the passage is still blocked by the cave-in, and after that it is infested by demontree tendrils. The Upper Prison has nothing interesting anyway; everything has collapsed and there are no survivors.

Such is the carnage that happened in this area, that the moans of the dying are still echoing against the walls, amplified by the evil of the plane itself. Anyone within the room can clearly hear a chorus of faint screams, as if many people were dying somewhere in the distance. The psychic residue also interferes with divination magic – a faint evil aura is permanent here, and *detect magic* fails.

If the PCs have the guts to search the bodies, they can pick up lots of equipment and money. There are three *continual torches* here, several spell component pouches, lots of mundane weapons and armor, a +1 *lance* (faint evocation, CL 3), a +2 *short sword* (moderate evocation, CL 6), a *wand of lightning bolt* (faint evocation, CL 5, 10 charges left), three +1 *long swords* (faint evocation, CL 3), two +1 *breastplates* made from permanent ironwood (moderate transmutation, CL 11), a +1 *full plate* (faint abjuration, CL 3), two +1 *heavy steel shields* (faint abjuration, CL 3), and a total of 1329 gold coins. However, it will take nothing less than 6 hours of work to gather up everything from the obstructed tunnel.

42. This is one of the three internal courtyards of Maldithar. It has an ovoidal ceiling, reaching a height of ten meters, and covered in *continual light* spells which light up the entire area. A dozen or so human skeletons hang from the ceiling on spiked chains. Three babaus – the best warriors among these tanar’ri – are also here; they have taken some weapons and equipment from the corpses of the mercenaries around the fortress, and are trying them out on the skeletons.

Babau (3)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Babau Fighter 1 st (Abyss)	CR: 8
Str: 22 (+6)	HP: 9d8+1d10+50 (96)	Speed: 9		
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 19 (+1 dex, +8 natural)	Armor: none		
Con: 20 (+5)	Initiative: +5 (+1 dex, +4 improved init)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: -3	
Int: 14 (+2)	Ref: +7 (+6 base, +1 dex)	BAB: +10	Grapple: +16	
Wis: 13 (+1)	For: +11 (+6 base, +5 con)	Melee: +16 (+10 base, +6 strength)		
Cha: 16 (+3)	Will: +9 (+6 base, +1 wis, +2 iron will)	Ranged: +11 (+10 base, +1 dexterity)		
Attacks 2 claws, +16 melee, damage 1d6+6, and Bite +14 melee, damage 1d6+3, or Two handed weapon, +18/+13 melee, damage weapon+9, crit varies		Skills Climb +15 (+12 ranks, +6 str, -3 armor) Disable Device +13 (+11 ranks, +2 int) Disguise +14 (+11 ranks, +3 cha) Escape Artist +9 (+11 ranks, +1 dex, -3 armor) Hide +17 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex, -3 armor) Intimidate +7 (+4 ranks, +3 cha) Listen +20 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +1 wis) Move Silently +17 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +1 dex, -3 armor) Open Lock +12 (+11 ranks, +1 dex) Search +21 (+11 ranks, +8 racial, +2 int) Sleight of Hand +9 (+11 ranks, +1 dex, -3 armor) Survival +3 (+1 wis, +2 synergy*) Use Rope +3 (+1 dex, +2 synergy**)		
Feats and special abilities Feats: Cleave, Improved initiative, Iron will, Multiattack, Power attack. All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned. Sneak attack +2d6, damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 16, telepathy within 30 mt. Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>darkness</i> , <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22.5 kg of objects only); caster level 9 th . Protective slime (su): any weapon or character touching the babau takes 1d8 damage, ignoring hardness; magic weapon and characters may roll a Reflex save, DC 18, to avoid. Summon 1 babau 1/day with 40% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.		* when following tracks ** when binding someone		
Equipment +1 <i>breastplate</i> made from permanent ironwood (moderate transmutation, CL 11) (armor bonus +6, max dex +3, check penalty -3, spell failure 25%) Each of the babau has one of these weapons: +1 <i>greatsword</i> (faint evocation, CL 3) (damage 2d6+1, crit 19-20/x2) +1 <i>guisarme</i> (faint evocation, CL 3) (damage 2d4+1, crit x3, reach 3m) +1 <i>scythe</i> (faint evocation, CL 3) (damage 2d4+1, crit x4)				

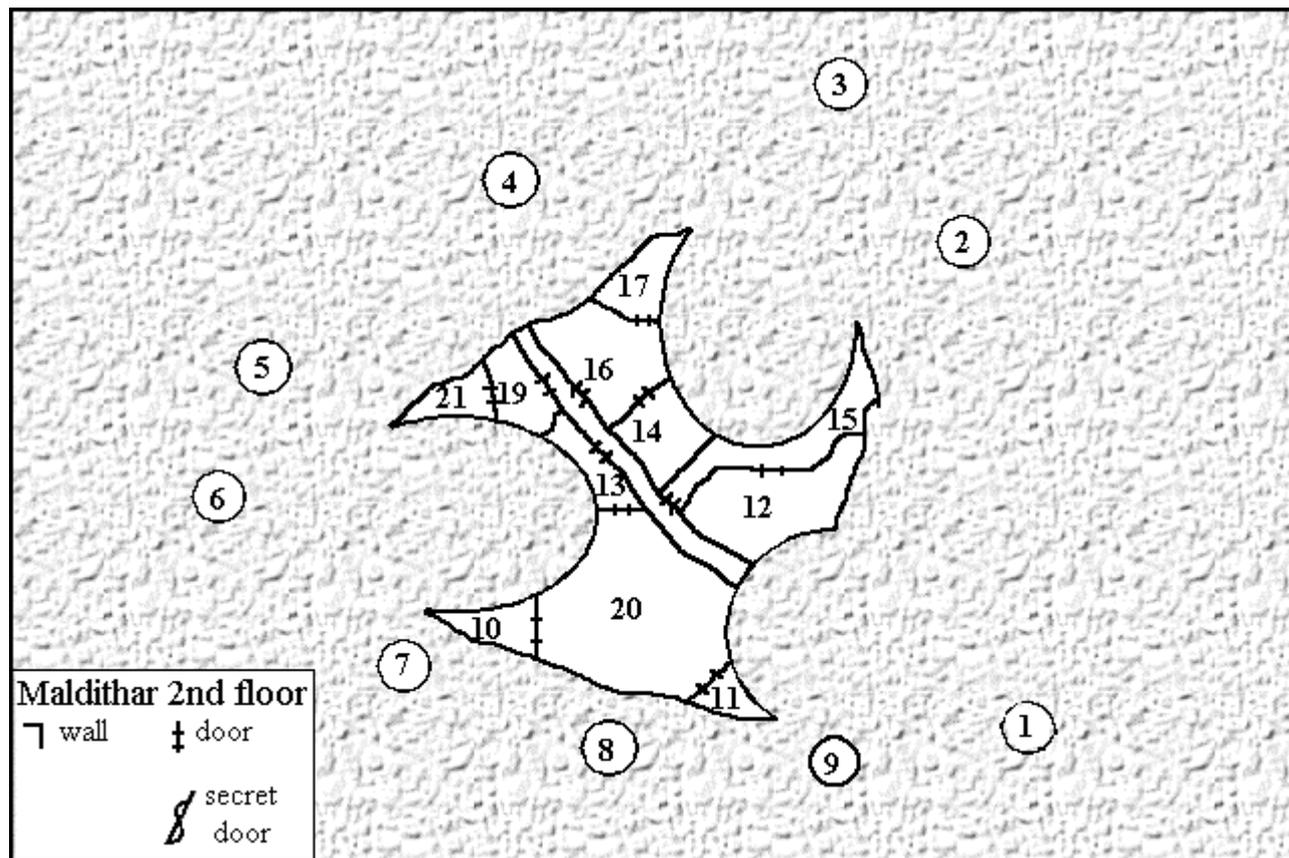
Tanar’ri area:

- one arcanaloth, who was summoned by the wizard. The fiend then killed the wizard and assumed control of the tanar’ri force. He's trying to uncover Maldithar's secrets but he can't get into the laboratory. It has the wizard's stuff (including 1500 gp in ruby dust, a statuette depicting the wizard worth 1500 gp, various spell components, a scroll of summon monster 2, a scroll of protection from arrows, three potions of healing, one potion of hide from undead, bracers of armor +3)

- the wizard's spellbook, well hidden. It's a slim book, with the following spells: Greater Planar Binding, Greater Teleport, Forcecage, Chain Lightning, Contingency, Cone of Cold, Dominate Per-

son, Arcane Eye, Summon Monster IV, Fireball, Fly, Bear's Endurance, Fox's Cunning, See Invisibility, Protection from Evil, Magic circle against chaos, Magic missile, Detect magic.

Maldithar 2nd floor



The second floor of Maldithar is a nice example of twisted fiendish architecture. It is split in two by a long corridor which runs directly above the river four meters below. Each of the two halves has stairs going down and stairs going up – but in order to get from the first floor to the third or vice-versa, you are forced to pass through the central corridor (look at the map for a better understanding).

Since right now the fortress is split in half between tanar'ri and Mercykillers, the central corridor is a very, very dangerous place. Before the arrival of Tarlikin, it was the main point of combat between fiends and humans. The yugoloth has caused the fight to calm down a little, and now both sides content themselves with keeping the iron doors well locked and barred, and crossing the corridor as little as possible. The Mercykillers in particular have quickly developed a protocol based on tapping the wall between rooms 19 and 13 with their weapons to inform the two sides that someone has to pass through the corridor. The doors are simultaneously unlocked and the person runs the 8 or so meters between them. Then the guards close them again; it takes just a few seconds.

1. This tower is infested by demontree tendrils. There are four on this floor; they'll attack anything that moves. There are stairs leading upwards to room 1 on the third floor.
2. This floor of the tower is dark and empty, except for the stairs leading upwards to room 2 on the third floor. Even the *continual light* spells are long gone.
3. There is a steel ladder leading upwards to the top of the tower here (room 3 on the third floor). Near the bottom of the ladder, there is a gray leathery bag. It is a *gray bag of tricks* (faint conjuration, CL 3). The hezrou upstairs exhausted its charges for this week, using the conjured animals to amuse itself with torture, and then angrily threw down the bag when it would no longer produce anything.

4. There's a single dretch here, wandering in circles. A ladder leads upwards to room 4 on the third floor, but access is closed by a wooden hatch. The hatch is stuck; it takes a Strength check, DC 20, to open it.
5. The iron staircase leading upwards has long since collapsed. A gaping hole remains in the ceiling, leading to room 5 on the third floor.
6. A steel ladder leads to room 6 on the third floor. The tower is otherwise empty.
7. The iron spiral staircase keeps climbing to room 7 on the third floor. Another corpse lies in the middle of the steps, stripped of all valuable possessions.
8. This tower contains a couple of crates of meat, preserved under salt. It is unknown for how long it has been here, but it is still edible. Stone steps, jutting out of the walls, lead upwards to room 8 on the third floor.
9. Two half-fiend shambling mounds are here. They will attack on sight. Stone steps lead upwards to room 9 on the third floor.
10. This room contains shelves full of vials and bottles of some thick black fluid. This isn't immediately interesting for the PCs, though, because the floor is literally covered in snakes. Fiendish vipers, to be more precise; there are *hundreds upon hundreds* of them. They are covering every centimeter of the floor, crawling over the walls, and jumping from the shelves. Swarm rules are used.

Fiendish viper swarm	Al. Chaotic Evil	Tiny Magical Beast (Augmented Vermin, Swarm) (Abyss)	CR: 8
Str: 4 (-3) Dex: 17 (+3) Con: 11 (+0) Int: 3 (-4) Wis: 12 (+1) Cha: 2 (-4)	HP: 12d8 (54) AC: 17 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural) Initiative: +7 (+3 dex, +4 improved init) Ref: +4 (+1 base, +3 dex) For: +5 (+4 base, +1 con) Will: +1 base	Speed: 4.5, climb 4.5, swim 4.5 Armor: none % fail.: 0% BAB: +9 Melee: +8 (+9 base, -3 str, +2 size) Ranged: +14 (+9 base, +3 dex, +2 size)	Check pen.: 0 Grapple: -
Attacks Swarm 2d6 plus poison		Skills Balance +11 (+3 dex, +8 racial) Climb +20 (+9 ranks, +3 dex, +8 racial)* Hide +15 (+8 size, +4 racial, +3 ranks) Listen +8 (+3 ranks, +4 racial, +1 wis) Spot +8 (+3 ranks, +4 racial, +1 wis) Swim +5 (+3 str, +8 racial**)	
Feats and special abilities Feats: Ability focus (poison), Improved initiative, Weapon finesse. Darkvision 18 m, half damage from weapons, SR 17, DR 5/magic, resistance to cold and fire 10. Smite good (su): since there are so many of them, every strike against a good creature deals +1 damage. Distraction (ex): every creature in a square occupied by the swarm must make a Fortitude save (DC 16) every round or become nauseated. Vermin traits, swarm traits. Poison (ex): DC 18, damage 1d6 Constitution primary and secondary.		* use Dex modifier for Climb checks, and can always take 10 ** to avoid hazard or perform special moves; can always take 10, can run in a straight line	

The jars and bottles over the shelves are full of viper poison. This poison has a DC of 10, and deals 1d6 Constitution as primary and secondary damage. There are about a hundred doses of it.

11. The viper room was dangerous, but this one is the most evil of the two. It is full of agony – liquid pain, extracted with the device in room 20. There are many bottles of it, and one can only wonder how many people were horribly tortured to produce it.

12. This room has been completely trashed. The furniture used to be beautiful and precious, and now it lies broken in a thousand pieces, everywhere in the room. Even the eastern wall has crumbled, exposing the collapsed area below (area 3 on the first floor). The devastation has been caused by an angry bulezau – probably the strongest tanar'ri around here, and also the most stupid. Tarlikin find it to be quite easy to manipulate, and has managed to intimidate the fiend into guarding the corridor leading to the third floor.

Frightened of the powerful spellcaster, frustrated at his fear, and angry at his frustration, the bulezau has trashed everything up to and including the room's door. The wall, though, crumbled during the Worm's escape.

Bulezau		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 10
Str: 26 (+8)	HP: 14d8+84 (147)	Speed: 9	Armor: none	
Dex: 19 (+4)	AC: 23 (-1 size, +3 dex, +11 natural)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Con: 22 (+6)	Initiative: +3 dex	BAB: +14	Grapple: +26	
Int: 6 (-2)	Ref: +13 (+9 base, +4 dex)	Melee: +21 (+14 base, +8 strength, -1 size)	Ranged: +17 (+14 base, +4 dexterity, -1 size)	
Wis: 8 (-1)	For: +15 (+9 base, +6 con)			
Cha: 10 (+0)	Will: +4 (+5 base, -1 will)			
Attacks			Skills	
+1 <i>greatsword</i> +22/+17/+12 melee, damage 3d6+13, crit 19-20/x2, or 2 claws, +21 melee, damage 1d4+6, and Head butt +19 melee, damage 2d8+4, and Tail slap +19 melee, damage 1d3+4			Climb +23 (+17 ranks, +6 str)	
Feats and special abilities			Jump +23 (+17 ranks, +6 str)	
Feats: Awesome blow, Improved bull rush, Multiattack, Power attack, Weapon focus (<i>greatsword</i>) All attacks are considered chaotic and evil aligned. Damage reduction 10/cold iron or good, darkvision 18 mt, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, spell resistance 14. Awesome blow with the head butt, as the feat. Rage: 25% chance per round of combat, 75% in rounds during which it was damaged but didn't hit a foe. Rage lasts until all opponents are dead or until 5 rounds pass without combat; it otherwise work as a barbarian's rage. Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>cause fear</i> , <i>command</i> , <i>see invisibility</i> , <i>wall of fog</i> ; 1/day – <i>shout</i> . Caster level 7 th . Summon 1-3 rutterkin (40%) or 3-12 dretches (60%) babau 1/day with 25% success, equivalent to a 3 rd level spell.			Listen +17 ranks	
Equipment			Spot +17 ranks	
<i>Potion of bull's strength</i> (faint transmutation, CL 3)			Survival +17 ranks	
<i>Potion of bear's endurance</i> (faint transmutation, CL 3)			Swim +23 (+17 ranks, +6 str)	
+1 <i>greatsword</i> , Large size (faint evocation, CL 3) (damage 3d6, crit 19-20/x2)				

The monster is going to drink the potions as soon as it hears a fight coming its way. However, bulezau have some anger management issues; if the PCs hurt it, there is a 75% chance that it will fly into a rage and attack, forgetting about the potions.

The rage grants it a +4 modifier to Strength and Constitution, while the potions grant a +4 modifier to Strength and Constitution respectively. With one of these bonuses, the monster attacks with the *greatsword* at +24/+19/+14 with damage 3d6+16 and/or has 175 hit points. With all bonuses, the monster attacks with the *greatsword* at +26/+21/+16 with damage 3d6+19 and has 203 hit points.

13. This room is constantly watched by a Mercykiller fighter, who won't allow anyone to enter the corridor without an important reason. He has the key to the iron door leading to the corridor. A stuffed barbazu is hanging by the northern wall (not a common sight by any means).

14. This is it – the portal room. This is where the PCs entered the Abyss. It is just like it was back then; a square room, divided by two steel grates in three rectangular section with the portal in the middle one. It looks like a metal arch, somewhat rough at touch.

The portal is guarded by a single babau right now, and the grates are closed. If the PCs wish to examine the portal closely, they notice that the rough feeling of its surface is due to thousands of minuscule runes carved upon it. No human artisan-mage can be so precise. Each PC can make a Spellcraft and Knowledge (Arcana) check to learn more about this, but unless they have some kind of magnifying lens they'll take a –5 penalty. Depending on what they score, they can learn different things. Use the highest result between the Spellcraft and Knowledge (Arcana) check; both the practical and academical approaches are valuable here.

- **0-10.** The PC doesn't understand anything of these runes.
- **11-15.** The PC understands that these runes are the spell which was cast upon them, and that it is still active. It is an epic spell, an abjuration, much more powerful than any common magic.
- **16-20.** The PC understands that the spell becomes active when something tries to move the targets between planes. It greatly strengthens the planar barriers, making the trip impossible. The

spell doesn't contain enough power to do this trick for a long time, or to resist powerful dispelling attempt, which leaves the character a bit puzzled. It should have expired long ago. Also, there is nothing here which should deal damage to the victims.

- **21-30.** The PC understands that the spell draws power from an external source. Every time it is activated, it consumes some power from that source. This way, it can keep working as long as that source exists. The bond also prevents the spell from being dispelled; any attempt to do so would simply consume more power from the source. There is some arcane "power leakage" here, which causes damage to the targets when they try to leave the plane, but it doesn't look like it was intentional. Overall, it looks like this spell was put together in haste – there is lots of power here but not much finesse. An *antimagic field* can suppress it normally, but this is useless because it would also prevent planar travel.
- **31-40.** The PC understands that the spell draws power from a living soul. Every time the spell is activated, and every time someone attempts to dispel it, some life force is drawn from that source. Also, the spell is very inefficient; between the painful leakage and the fact that by now it is spread over lots of targets, it uses lots of life force to function. Judging by how tough the spell has proven to be, it must be some extremely powerful creature. The character can't determine the identity of the creature, though.
- **41+.** The PC understands that the spell can be used to damage the source by forcing the magic to suck life force out of it. The enchantment is so shoddy that it wastes lots of power, making it a very inefficient way to prevent planar travel but a very efficient way of hurting the source. Unfortunately, simple *dispel magic* aren't powerful enough to make a dent. The spell consumes real power when it has to deal with powerful magic – *disjunction*, *wish*, *plane shift*, portals. However, the spell leaks. When it draws power from the source, some of that power is leaked – causing damage to the subjects. And it looks like the source, whatever it is, is much, *much* tougher than the characters. It looks like it's almost a god. Anything capable of hurting that would cause a leakage capable of killing the PCs many times over.

Basically, Ithla-Sathlo consumes some XP whenever someone attempts to plane shift or dispel the curse, but the targets take damage. The amount of energy involved increases exponentially with the power of the effect, and is much greater for dispelling attempts than for plane shifting attempts. The PCs can't really hurt him this way; they don't have access to *disjunction*-level spells and even if they did, it would be too dangerous to use them.

Still, this is a major flaw in the spell's weave. A powerful spellcaster could seriously threaten Ithla-Sathlo by casting repeated *disjunctions* at the spell, if the targets could survive. Smart planewalkers should recognize the potential usefulness of this information.

15. This corridor ends in a flight of stairs leading upwards to area **18** on the third floor. There are no guards in the corridor itself, but if someone passes in front of the door to room **12**, the bulezau there will notice and attack. Also, the iron door to the central corridor is locked; the key is in the lock.

16. This large was used by tanar'ri officers. It contains a small, empty iron cage, several petitioner-skin couches, a table engraved with Abyssal writings glorifying violence, and a shelf of strong liquors. A single babau is standing guard here, and he has gone through half the liquors already.

17. This room contains the stairs to room **31** on the first floor. A dead mercenary is lying on them.

18. This is the corridor splitting this floor in half. The Mercykillers haven't even recovered the corpses of their fallen from the south end of the hallway, where two of them have been slaughtered by the tanar'ri. These two corpses still have their equipment: masterwork half plates, +1 *guisarmes*, masterwork composite long bows, 20 +1 *arrows*, backpacks with basic supplies (torches, water and rations, rope, a knife, a bedroll), and 43 gold coins.

19. A Mercykiller fighter is standing guard here. All of the soldiers have a strong dislike of the Abyss, where Justice simply doesn't happen, but the forced permanence here is harder on some than others. The basher here is *very* stressed, and the Abyss is slowly driving him insane. His name is

Hant and he is very peery of the PCs. He doesn't trust them, and he thinks they are probably criminals, and that maybe they fled to the Abyss to escape the rightful punishment. Hant has the key to the corridor, and he won't let the PCs pass without an explicit authorization from Coriolis. Worse, if the heroes aren't careful with what they say, he may decide to arrest them – every time they speak, he is literally obsessing over every word they say in order to find some kind of admission of guilt, to anything, no matter if he's stretching the meaning of their sentences.

20. This large room is dominated by a huge metal contraption, which lies on a 9-meters wide raised marble platform in the middle of the floor. This device looks like several concentric circles made from steel, with manacles at several points of each circle. Over the steel circles, many jointed metal bars are attached to the device. They are full of spikes, attached to each bar at varying distances. The joints can be moved to place the spiked bars at almost any point over the circles. The whole thing is mounted over what looks like a wide, low oven. Bags of coal lie against the wall.

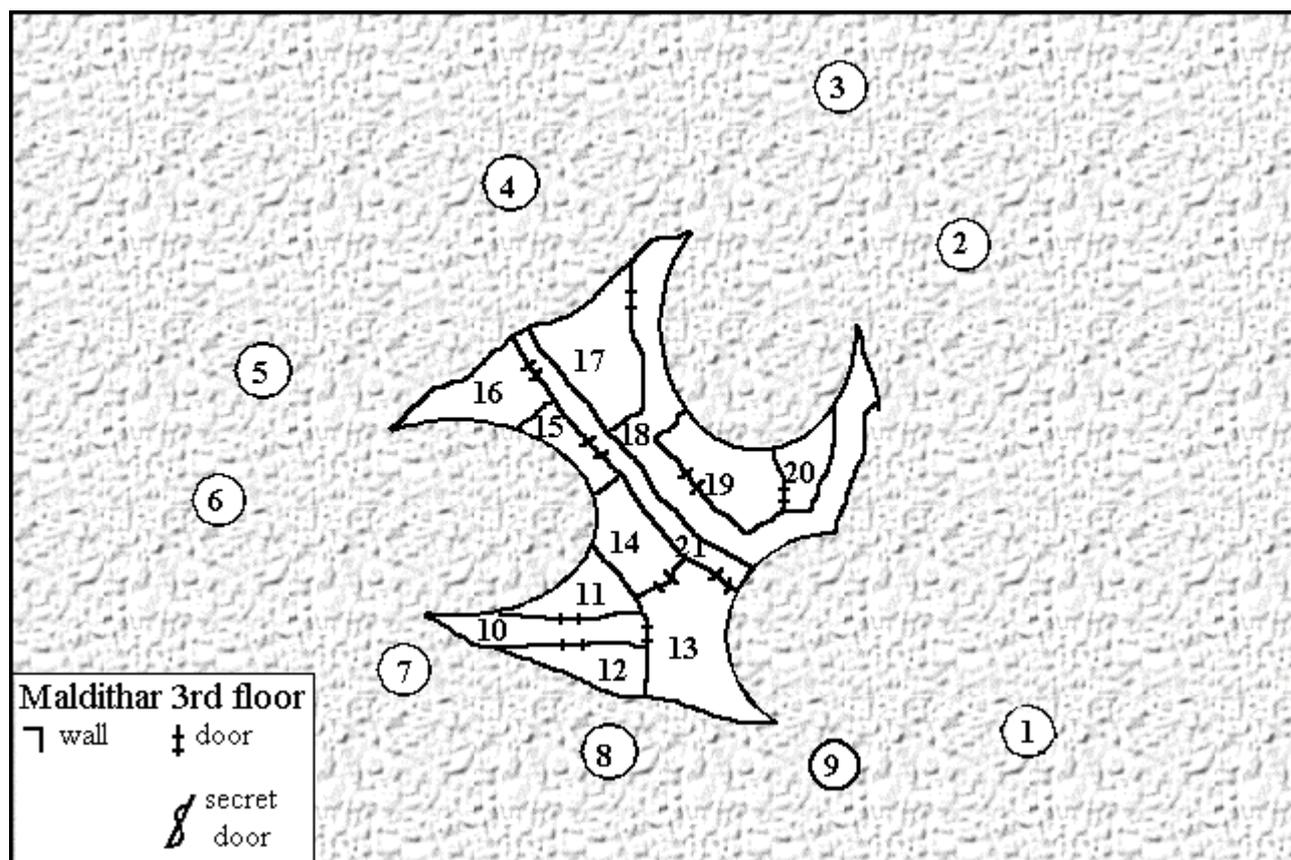
The contraption is an infernal torture device, with which a skilled operator can burn and pierce the flesh of the victims while leaving them alive for as long as possible. If that wasn't enough, the marble platform is a *liquid pain extractor*. Twelve thin brass tubes leave it in radial directions, climb over the walls and ceilings, and collect in a small marble basin on a wall. The torture of a victim on the machine produces some agony – pain in liquid form – in the basin. A single victim can only produce a small amount of liquid pain before it has taken too much abuse to be useful. The fiends have collected quite a lot of it, presumably by torturing to death a great many people.

Joseph has already expressed his desire to destroy the apparatus, though Coriolis has told him not to waste time on it. The paladin suspects that Coriolis wants to bring it back to the Prison in Sigil, but he has decided not to discuss the matter for now – they have worse problems to think about.

The north side of the room also contains a hatch which opens to reveal the stairs to room **15** on the first floor.

21. This small room contains the stairs leading upwards to room **16** on the third floor.

Maldithar 3rd floor



The third floor of Maldithar is split in two. Unlike the second floor, there is no way to go from one half to the other without climbing back down and going through the central corridor on the second floor. This makes it one of the quieter and most defensible places, and the one Joseph and Coriolis have chosen as their headquarters. Right now, the Mercykillers control the larger section, but the fiends control the one with the laboratory.

The towers rise about as high as the top of the ceilings of the fortress. Each tower has a wide observation window. This is kinda pointless since even tanar'ri can only see up to about 18 meters in the dark of the 76th layer – but they did it anyway. At least, it allows them to rain arrows and spells down on hypothetical attackers.

1. The top of this tower has been reached by the demontree tendrils; there are four of them and several on the outside as well. Leaning on a wall near the observation window, there is the corpse of a mercenary. The corpse has a dagger planted in its throat – and its right hand is still holding the handle. This poor sod of unusual loyalty didn't leave Maldithar in time, and kept on fighting together with the fiends instead. This being the Abyss, no loyalty goes unpunished. When the demontree started popping teendrils through the walls and floors of Maldithar, this mercenary was cornered in the top of this tower with no escape. The tentacles had already begun to sap his strength. Terrified to madness, he attempted suicide by stabbing his throat with his magical dagger. The demontree tried to keep him alive so that it could feed on his life energy, but the only result was a prolonged, excruciating agony; the soldier finally died two days later.

This horrible event brought two consequences. First, the dagger, a family heirloom of no small power, had its magic corrupted by the sheer evil and self-destruction of which it has been the focus. Before, it was a +2 *dagger*. Now, it is a +1 *vicious dagger* and every time it strikes, the wielder's hands get drenched in his own blood.

The second consequence was the creation of an allip, a spirit of madness and suicide.

Allip		Al. Neutral Evil	Medium Undead (Incorporeal) (Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: -	HP: 4d12 (26)	Speed: fly 9 (perfect)		
Dex: 12 (+1)	AC: 15 (+4 deflection, +1 dex)	Armor: none		
Con: -	Initiative: +5 (+1 dex, +4 improved init)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: -	
Int: 11 (+0)	Ref: +4 (+1 base, +1 dex, +2 lightning ref)	BAB: +2	Grapple: -	
Wis: 11 (+0)	For: +1 base	Melee: +2 base		
Cha: 18 (+4)	Will: +4 base	Ranged: +3 (+2 base, +1 dex)		
Attacks				Skills
Touch, +3 melee incorporeal touch, damage 1d4 wisdom drain				Hide +8 (+7 ranks, +1 dex)
Feats and special abilities				Intimidate +7 (+3 ranks, +4 cha)
Feats: Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.				Listen +7 ranks
Darkvision 12, incorporeal, undead, +2 turn resistance.				Search +4 ranks
Babble (su): all sane creatures within 12 meters must save on Will, DC 16, or be affected as if by <i>hypnotism</i> for 2d4 rounds; this is a sonic, mind-affecting compulsion.				Spot +7 ranks
Madness (su): anyone using detect thoughts, mind control or telepathy on an allip takes 1d4 wisdom damage.				
Wisdom drain (su): the allip deals 1d4 wisdom drain on a successful attack, and gains 5 temporary hit points for one hour.				

2. There is nothing but a couple of skeletons on the top of this tower.

3. There is a hezrou tanar'ri here, armed with a spear it plundered from a dead gelugon.

Hezrou		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Exemplar (Abyss)	CR: 11
Str: 21 (+5) Dex: 10 (+0) Con: 29 (+9)	HP: 10d8+93 (138) AC: 23 (-1 size, +14 natural) Initiative: +0	Speed: 15 Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0		
Int: 14 (+2) Wis: 14 (+2) Cha: 18 (+4)	Ref: +7 (+7 base, +0 dex) For: +16 (+7 base, +9 con) Will: +9 (+7 base, +2 wis)	BAB: +10 Grapple: +19 Melee: +14 (+10 base, +5 strength, -1 size) Ranged: +9 (+10 base, +0 dexterity, -1 size)		
Attacks +2 <i>spear</i> , +16/+11 melee reach 3mt, damage 2d6+9, or Bite +14 melee reach 3 mt, damage 4d4+5, and 2 claws, +9 melee reach 3 mt, damage 1d8+2			Skills Climb +18 (+13 ranks, +5 str) Concentration +22 (+13 ranks, +9 con) Hide +9 (+13 ranks, -4 size) Escape Artist +13 (+13 ranks) Intimidate +17 (+13 ranks, +4 cha) Listen +23 (+13 ranks, +2 wis, +8 racial) Move Silently +13 (+13 ranks) Search +15 (+13 ranks, +2 int) Spellcraft +15 (+13 ranks, +2 int) Spot +23 (+13 ranks, +2 wis, +8 racial) Survival +2 wis* Use Rope +0**	
Feats and special abilities Feats: Blind-fight, Cleave, Power attack, Toughness Improved grab (must hit with both claws) Spell-like abilities: at will – <i>chaos hammer</i> (DC 18), <i>greater teleport</i> (self plus 22,5 kg of objects only), <i>unholy blight</i> (DC 18); 3/day – <i>blasphemy</i> (DC 21), <i>gaseous form</i> . Caster level 13 th . DR 10/good, darkvision 18 mt, immune to electricity and poison, resistance to acid, cold and fire 10, SR 19, telepathy within 30 mt. Stench: non-demons within 3 mt. must roll a Fortitude save versus DC 24 or be nauseated for as long as they remain in the area plus 1d4 rounds. Those that save are sickened for as long as they remain in the area. Creatures that succeed are unaffected by following exposures for 24 hours. <i>Delay poison</i> or <i>neutralize poison</i> removes the condition; creatures that are immune to poison are immune to this effect; poison resistance applies. Summon demon: once per day it can attempt to summon 4d10 dretches or another hezrou with a 35% chance of success. This ability is the equivalent of a 4th-level spell.			* +2 synergy when following tracks ** +2 synergy when binding	
Equipment +2 <i>spear</i> , Large size (moderate evocation, CL 6) (damage 2d6+2, crit x3, range increment 6m)				

4. The top of this tower hasn't been visited in a fairly long time. Its floor is covered in dust, and it is otherwise empty. However, several dire bats of darkness have nested on the ceiling, and they will attack by surprise anyone who comes here and doesn't spot them. If more than three of them are killed, they'll fly away.

Dire bats of darkness (6)		Al. Chaotic Evil	Large Magical Beast (Augmented animal) (Abyss)	CR: 3
Str: 17 (+3) Dex: 28 (+9) Con: 17 (+3)	HP: 4d8+12 (30) AC: 23 (+9 dex, +5 natural, -1 size) Initiative: +9 dex	Speed: 12, fly 18 (good) Armor: none % fail.: 0% Check pen.: 0		
Int: 3 (-4) Wis: 14 (+2) Cha: 6 (-2)	Ref: +13 (+4 base, +9 dex) For: +7 (+4 base, +3 con) Will: +3 (+1 base, +2 wis)	BAB: +3 Grapple: +10 Melee: +5 (+3 base, +3 strength, -1 size) Ranged: +11 (+3 base, +9 dexterity, -1 size)		
Attacks Bite, +5 melee, damage 1d8+4		Skills Hide +21 (+2 ranks, +8 racial, +9 dex, +2 stealthy) Listen +10 (+2 ranks, +2 wis, +2 alertness, +4 racial) Move silently +21 (+2 ranks, +2 stealthy, +8 racial, +9 dex) Spot +9 (+1 ranks, +2 wis, +2 alertness, +4 racial)		
Feats and special abilities Feats: Alertness, Stealthy, Mobility Sneak attack +2d6, low-light vision, darkvision 18 mt, blindsight 36 mt, scent.				

5. The top of this tower has apparently been used to store broken furniture and trash in general. There are bits of wood, stone and metal piled everywhere. A half ton of them is forming a tall scrap heap of broken chairs, tables, torture instruments, decorations and whatnot.

If the PCs start searching the heap, they hear a scream from the inside of it. A moment later, a small crystal-like figure flies out of the pile of scrap, causing half of it to fall down on the second floor, and hugs the leg of one of the PCs, begging for mercy on its knees. The creature is an ice mephit, one of several mephits which Saintrii summoned in order to try and get help from the Mercykillers.

Instead, the bashers attacked and this mephit, who calls himself Axitaminhasosyrillis, The Frost That Dwells In The Scrap Heap, was the only one who escaped. It flew out of the fortress and back

into this tower, where it has been hiding since then. If the PCs promise not to hurt him, he will recount Saintrii's story up to the point where he ordered the mephits to go. The plumach told him everything, including the reason for which he entered the Abyss. Obviously, Axi doesn't know anything about the summoning of Tarlikin and Saintrii's death.

Axitaminhasosyrillis		Al. Neutral	Small Outsider (Air, Cold)	CR: 3
Str: 10 (+0)	HP: 3d8 (13)	Speed: 12, fly 18 (good)		
Dex: 17 (+3)	AC: 18 (+3 dex, +4 natural, +1 size)	Armor: none		
Con: 10 (+0)	Initiative: +7 (+3 dex, +4 dex)	% fail.: 0%	Check pen.: 0	
Int: 6 (-2)	Ref: +6 (+3 base, +3 dex)	BAB: +3	Grapple: -1	
Wis: 11 (+0)	For: +3 base	Melee: +4 (+3 base, +1 size)		
Cha: 15 (+2)	Will: +3 base	Ranged: +7 (+3 base, +3 dexterity, +1 size)		
Attacks		Skills		
Claw, +4 melee, damage 1d3 + 1d4 cold		Bluff +8 (+6 ranks, +2 cha)		
Feats and special abilities		Escape Artist +9 (+6 ranks, +3 cha)		
Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative		Hide +13 (+6 ranks, +3 dex, +4 size)		
DR 5/magic, darkvision 18 m, immune to cold, vulnerable to fire.		Listen +6 ranks		
Breath Weapon (Su): 10-foot cone of ice shards, damage 1d4 cold, Reflex DC 12 half. Living creatures that fail take -4 to AC and -2 to hit for 3 rounds unless immune to cold.		Diplomacy +4 (+2 synergy, +2 cha)		
Summon one ice mephit 1/day with a 25% chance for one hour.		Disguise +4 (+2 cha, +2 synergy*)		
Spell-like abilities: <i>magic missile</i> 1/hour (CL 3), <i>chill metal</i> 1/day (DC 14, CL 6).		Move Silently +9 (+6 ranks, +3 dex)		
		Spot +6 ranks		
		Use Rope +5 (+3 dex, +5 synergy**)		
		* if acting in character		
		** when binding someone		

Axitaminhasosyrillis, The Frost That Dwells In The Scrap Heap, has a cold and aloof demeanor. He is prone to greatly overestimating his own importance, unless he's being personally threatened by something, in which case he turns into a grovelling coward. Obviously, Axi likes cold and icy environments and really dislikes heat. He doesn't like people mispronouncing his name, though he may settle for a diminutive.

6. The top of this tower is half crumbled; a chill wind blows in the open air. There is nothing interesting here.

7. The Mercykillers have put a bunch of the bodies they found around Maldithar here, where the sickening smell won't be felt as much. There are close to 20 corpses of humans and tieflings; three babaus are present as well. All the bodies have been stripped of any valuable possessions.

8. The top of this tower looks damaged. There is a barrel of clear water – unfortunately, while it looks good enough, it is tainted. Anyone who drinks from this barrel is exposed to the blinding sickness (DC 16, incubation 1d3 days, damage 1d4 Strength and if the victim takes 2 or more damage, he must make another Fortitude save or become blind).

9. This room is empty; there is a table and a couple chairs, but nothing more.

10. This hallway separated the two small officers' quarters. The western wall is actually a large stained glass window, and though with no light coming from the outside it doesn't look much spectacular, it is actually a pretty good work of art, depicting a screaming balor. PCs with darkvision can easily see the tower marked as 7 through the window.

11. This room used to belong to an officer of Maldithar. The Mercykillers have cleared it of furniture, and are using it as sleeping quarters for themselves. There are between three and five sleeping Mercykillers here at any given time. The bashers aren't getting much rest, and they'd appreciate it if the PCs don't make noise here.

12. This room was used by a Maldithar officer as well. Like room 11, it has been converted for use as Mercykiller sleeping quarters; the furniture has been moved aside and bedrolls have been layed on the floor.

13. This used to be a "war room" of sorts. Its main feature is a huge circular table, made from black obsidian, and painted with a map of the layer in the area surrounding the prison-fortress. Maldithar

is in the middle of the map and the PCs can recognize the river and the forest (and the cliff, if they have seen it. It crosses the entire map). Apart from these, there aren't many features. Near one side of the map, a small arrow points outwards. It has a small label in Abyssal, which reads "To the Lord's fortress". No distance or scale is given, but the "Lord's fortress" is clearly twice as far as the forest.

Coriolis and Joseph have placed a map of Maldithar on the table, and they are here discussing more often than anywhere else. Their map is fairly detailed in the Mercykiller-controlled area, but sketchy everywhere else.

14. This used to be another officer room. It still has all its furniture – a luxurious bed, a desk, a couple armoires and a water basin. The room is occupied by Harken, the Mercykiller wizard on the expedition. He is usually here, saying that he's studying his books and the enchantment which was placed on the party when they crossed the portal. In fact, Harken doesn't know anything more than the PCs about the curse. The reason he's spending so much time alone in his room is that he has found a book of dark, corrupt spells somewhere in the fortress, and he is studying them. Knowing that both Coriolis and Joseph would disapprove if they found out, he has kept the tome secret from everyone else.

The truth is that there is something more to the tome than simple written words. Anyone who reads even just one word from it is the target of a *suggestion* spell (DC 20). The *suggestion* is to study the book in secret, without telling anyone about it, and Harken has fallen for it. The spell lasts for 15 hours, but anyone subject to it would want to read the book more often than that. Since the *suggestion* is very reasonable after the first time (after all, you don't want your superiors to find out that you've studied dark magic without their permission), subsequent saves take a –2 penalty.

The book contains the following spells from the *Book of Vile Darkness* (if you don't have the manual, feel free to invent some wicked spell to put here, or just fill it with standard necromantic and [evil] spells.

15. Near the northwestern corner of this otherwise empty room, a big mirror (one meter wide, two meters tall) is covered by a drape. Its frame is an elaborate work of art in yellow and red gold. If asked, the guard or any other Mercykiller can relate that their wizard said that the mirror is some kind of extremely powerful divination device (overwhelming divination, CL 21), but that it would be too risky to use it without knowing more about it.

The item is the *Mirror of Tenebra*. It is a very, very powerful item which was crafted by an unknown mystic theurge who briefly ruled this layer before Hayazeikanatzeras moved in, untold eons ago. Some speculate that the wizard/cleric actually became the fiend lord somehow, though that's dubious since Hayazeikanatzeras has never shown any interest in the *Mirror*.

Whatever the truth about its creator, the *Mirror of Tenebra* is first and foremost a scrying device. It allows anyone who gazes into it to use *greater scrying* on any target, though any target which is in an area of daylight, sunlight or other bright light cannot be scried upon. The image of the target and its immediate surroundings appear in the mirror (therefore, anyone can see it); similarly, noises and voices are heard as coming from the device. The *Mirror* can only scry any given target once per day.

This power, however, has its share of danger. The *Mirror of Tenebra* is an intelligent artefact (Chaotic Evil, Intelligence 18, Wisdom 18, Charisma 10, ego 26), though it never communicates directly with anyone and it never attempts a direct possession of a user (it may be unable to do so, or simply unwilling). If it desires to do so, the *Mirror* can:

- Deny the target of the scrying any saving throw against the effect (though a check to detect the divination sensor is still possible).
- Cause the target to immediately become aware of the divination sensor.
- Scry into any time of the target's past.

- Alter some details of the scene that it is showing, making it differ from the truth. Though it can't entirely make up a scene, the mirror can substitute a character for another, add or remove something in the background, change a name or a sentence as it is being spoken, and perform other significant but not radical alterations.
- Terminate the effect at any time.

The user of the *Mirror of Tenebra* can make a Will saving throw, DC 26, when he uses the item. If he succeeds, the mirror is unable to alter details of the scene, though it retains all other abilities. The *Mirror* currently knows that Hayazeikanatzeras is coming to raze the fortress, and it knows that the tanar'ri lord doesn't know of its presence there. So, it wants to get out of the layer. To this end, it will provide the PCs with accurate information about what happens on the 76th layer but it may still lie every now and then on external events – whatever it takes to make the PCs more likely to leave and carry it away.

If that wasn't enough, remember that the lord of the layer can intercept divinations. This includes the mirror's effect as well! Hayazeikanatzeras will know everything the PCs learn using the mirror. The lord knows about the *Mirror* and its evil intelligence, and he will not act on the scenes he sees, deeming them unreliable. But he will get an idea of the PCs' intentions and relations outside the 76th layer. Hopefully, the party will get out before this becomes a problem. The lord of Tenebra isn't interested in Abyssal politics; his layer is too hostile and devoid of resources to be a practical

If they scry Hayazeikanatzeras, they see the following scene:

Within the mirror, an image of the layer's dark ground appears. Despite the total darkness, you can clearly see the ground as if you were flying over it at low altitude and great speed. The ground is literally crawling with an army of millions and millions of creatures of darkness. It looks like a veritable carpet of black fangs and claws. In the middle of all of it, Hayazeikanatzeras is riding an enormous reptile creature, and he's staring right at you. Then, the vision ends.

If they scry Tarlikin, Saintrii, or any of the tanar'ri currently in the fortress, they see the following scene from the past (assuming they understand the Abyssal language):

You see a room in Maldithar which you haven't visited yet. The furniture has been cleared away, and a large summoning circle has been drawn on the floor in blood. A humanoid creature is kneeling before it; it looks like a dwarf with a metallic-tinged skin, and it is severely wounded. A bulezau tanar'ri is holding its massive greatsword over its neck, ready to strike. Several other babau and hezrou tanar'ri are around the circle.

One of the hezrous bends its mass towards the creature. "Listen carefully, plumach. You will summon a tanar'ri. Or you will die. No more tricks, understood?" The "plumach" nods weakly and begins casting a spell. The circle starts filling with yellowish mist.

After ten minutes, the mist vanishes, revealing the jackal-headed form of an arcanaloth, wrapped in wizardly robes. The bulezau immediately raises his sword, but the "plumach" turns to look at it and says "No, no! Wait! I know this fiend; we have had dealings in the past... he will help you in defeating the Sigilians if you just let me talk to him!"

PCs who understand Abyssal can make a Sense Motive check, DC 20. If they succeed, they understand that the plumach is bluffing. Each PC can also make a Sense Motive check, DC 34. If they succeed, they understand that the yugoloth has caught the bluff and is going with it to see what happens. All of the tanar'ri are falling for it. PCs can make a Spellcraft check, DC 23, to figure out that the circle is a *magic circle against evil*, focused inwards as fit for a calling.

The conversation between Tarlikin and Saintrii is in the yugoloth language.

The yugoloth looks down on the plumach, saying nothing. The metal-skinned dwarf speaks: "These tanar'ri have captured me. They are fighting some Mercykillers in this fortress, and they forced me to summon help".

“Why did you call me?”

“I know what your kind desires. The portal which led me here has been the subject of some kind of powerful abyssal magic, and there is a laboratory which... well, I think this fortress hides some interesting arcane knowledge. And you can defeat all these fiends and the Mercykillers have no beef with you...”

The jackal-headed fiend smiles friendly. “Interesting. Very interesting. Say what – I’ll free you from these fiends, deal with the Mercykillers, and help investigating the secrets of this place. Do we have a deal?” A flash of deep suspicion crosses the plumach’s eyes – but it is quickly subdued by sheer desperation. “Deal done. You can...”

Before the sentence is even over, the arcanaloth steps out of the circle, and casts a spell. A beam of frozen air hits the plumach straight in the face; in an instant, his whole head, arms and upper torso are frozen solid. As the tanar’ri stare in astonishment, the yugoloth casually says “Well, you are free now”.

If they scry Tarlikin again, the mirror will show this scene:

You see the yugoloth in a big room, the same that was used to summon him. He is alone. He’s examining a strange set of wooden panels on a large door, which looks like it was made from solid adamantium. You can see Abyssal runes on the panels, but they aren’t in clear sight and what you can read doesn’t seem to have any meaning. The arcanaloth goes to a corner of the room and picks up a chair and a book from the pile of broken furniture there. Then, the fiend begins reading. He murmurs something every now and then, but you can’t hear what he’s saying.

The *Mirror* doesn’t want to end up in the yugoloth’s hands, because it would be carried out of the Abyss, something it doesn’t desire. So, it will try to get the PCs to kill Tarlikin. If the heroes don’t seem inclined to do so, the *Mirror* may try to push them that way by showing them this altered vision (if they fail the Will save):

You see the yugoloth in a big room, the same that was used to summon him. He is alone. He’s examining a strange set of wooden panels on a large door, which looks like it was made from solid adamantium. You can see Abyssal runes on the panels, but they aren’t in clear sight and what you can read doesn’t seem to have any meaning. The arcanaloth goes to a corner of the room and picks up the plumach’s spellbook from his frozen corpse there. Then, the fiend begins reading. He makes a comment every now and then, mostly something like “I really should carry my spellbook with me at all times. Now I’m stuck with this rilmani’s stupid cantrips... good thing those tanar’ric morons haven’t realized it”.

If they scry the Gardener, they will see this:

You see a prison cell, in a place you don’t recognize. It is very small, maybe one meter by one, and the Gardener is sitting there, chained to the wall. You can’t understand whether he is alive or dead, but he looks in a very bad shape.

If they scry Red Shroud, they will see this:

You see the succubus’ throne room in Broken Reach. She is sitting on the throne in a beautiful green silk long dress, one leg over the armrest, listening intently to someone you know. The Gardener is there! He’s talking to Red Shroud: “So you see, milady, I... wait...!”

The Gardener turns to look at you, and gestures with his hand. The vision ends abruptly.

Further attempts to scry either the Gardener or Red Shroud will fail (or, in the case of Red Shroud, may end up showing a past scene of her having sex with her nalfeshnee husband or something else – the *Mirror* enjoys embarrassing viewers).

16. This room contains the stairs leading downwards to room **21** on the second floor. Sometimes, there is a Mercykiller guard here, but not always. The third floor is considered to be safe. The room

also contains heavy drapes on the northern and southern walls; they are painted with scenes of great tanar'ri leading baatezu away in silvery chains.

17. This used to be Tamanaguk's room. It is by far the most lavishly decorated place in Maldithar; its ceiling is about two meters taller than the rest of the third floor, and it features a huge canopy bed, large armoires full of costly Huge-sized clothing, two locked steel crates, and a great crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling.

A tanar'ri leader always has to be a step ahead, even when he sleeps. The room has several surprises. First of all, the poles sustaining the bed's canopy are made from cold iron. One of them can be twisted in a particular way, allowing it to be removed easily by someone who knows the trick, and is well-balanced for use as a Huge shortspear (damage 2d6). It takes a Search check, DC 21, to figure this out.

The chandelier has an aura of faint evocation (CL 10). With the right command word, the chandelier will fall on the floor and shatter with exceptional force, causing a shower of magically frozen crystal bits which will cause 5d6 physical damage and 10d6 ice damage to anyone within the room (Reflex halves, DC 18). The bed is conveniently placed in such a way as to shield anyone on it from the blast. Creatures that are lying on the bed have the benefits of improved evasion against this effect. Tamanaguk used to be the only one knowing the command word, but Tarlikin has learned it as well by casting *identify* on the chandelier.

The two crates are both locked (DC 32 to pick) and trapped with *greater glyphs of warding* (moderate abjuration, CL 16) which deal 8d8 sonic damage to anyone who opens them. A Reflex save, DC 22, halves the damage. It takes a 31 Search check for a rogue to find this trap, and a 31 Disable device check to disarm it. Luckily (or unluckily, depending on your point of view), Tarlikin hasn't yet bothered to dispel and open them. One of the crates contains 200 platinum coins, 2000 gold coins in diamonds, and a beautiful tiara made from mithral and gold, crafted to resemble a pit fiend and a balor clawing at each other, with gems for their eyes (it is worth 3000 gold coins).

The other crate, however, has a *nasty* surprise. First of all, the inside is lead-plated, preventing *detect magic* from detecting the magical aura inside. The crate's only content is a *symbol of insanity*, triggered by looking at it. A very skilled rogue could figure this out without triggering it and even disable it. He notices the presence of the symbol if he beats DC 33 while looking for traps (otherwise, he doesn't notice it). He can disable it with a DC 33 Disable Device check, but if he rolls 28 or less, he triggers it.

18. The eastern end of this corridor has the stairs leading downwards to area **15** on the second floor. Apart from this, it is empty and unguarded. Tarlikin has explicitly ordered all fiends not to bother him on the third floor.

19. This is the room where Tarlikin spends almost all of his time. The room was used to summon him, and the *magical circle against evil* is still on the floor though its magic has vanished. The room used to be a study of sorts; the furniture has been smashed and piled in the corners together with several dozens of books. The books, more than fifty of them, describe many layers of the Abyss and their inhabitants; anyone with access to this library has a +4 competence bonus to Knowledge (the Abyss) checks, and can perform those checks untrained.

If Tarlikin notices that the PCs are approaching, he will start casting defensive spells and illusions to get ready for a battle. However, he will not immediately attack unless the PCs are overtly hostile. Tarlikin hopes that they can help him figure out the puzzle blocking access to room **20**, and that he can manipulate them into opening the door before attacking.

The door is exceptionally thick, and made from solid adamantium (hardness 20, 100 hit points). The front is covered with teak wood, into which a square depression is carved. Twelve wooden panels can fit in the depression; each panel bears a single letter in the Abyssal language. As they are placed now, the panels spell **A A H H I L L O S T T** = . The door emanates an aura of strong evocation (CL 16).

The magical lock opens when the panels are arranged so as to spell the correct password. Ithla-Sathlo not only managed to crack the puzzle, but he was even able to change the password. Being as egocentric as any other tanar’ri lord, and figuring that noone was going to get this far anyway, he changed it to his own name. If someone attempts to open the door while the panels are not arranged in the right way, or if someone attempts to damage the door, an invisible lance of force shoots from the door and hits him unerringly, dealing 12d4+12 force damage. A *shield* spell prevents the damage, but is immediately dispelled. A *brooch of shielding* works the same as against magic missiles. A *globe of invulnerability* is useless; an *antimagic field* protects from the damage but if the door is within the field it also prevents the opening mechanism from working even if the panels are placed in the right position.

Considering that the heroes have only heard the name until now, and that it isn’t exactly easy to figure out how its spelling, the smartest thing they can do now is getting Lianne to tell them the correct written form of her grandfather’s name. With that kind of trap, trial-and-error isn’t a good option. If the PCs push the door while the panels spell “ITHLA-SATHLO”, the door emits a loud “click” but only moves a few inches. It seems to be stuck; it takes a Strength check, DC 22, to fully open it.

20. This is the (rather small) laboratory which used to belong to Tamanaguk and was overtaken by Ithla-Sathlo and Rothakon. Right now, it is a real mess. There is a carpet of dead leaves and unknown putrefying fruits, covering the floor for five to ten centimeters. Thick vines and woodlike organic growths climb over parts of the walls and ceiling. Syrupy sap drips from above, over the working bench and shelves.

The whole stuff is mostly dead and definitely inert, if disturbing. Over the desk, the PCs can see lots of bottles, vials, beakers and alchemical equipment, as well as a silver-studded human skull. Several magical auras come from the stuff over the bench, including a faint divination aura from the skull (CL 3). The other stuff lying on the table and on the shelves is mostly alchemical components, useless by themselves, but there are also a few magical potions. Five vials and bottles contain a *potion of barkskin* +5 (strong transmutation, CL 12), a *potion of cure serious wounds* (faint conjuration, CL 5), a *potion of protection from arrows 10/magic* (faint abjuration, CL 3), a *potion of heroism* (faint enchantment, CL 5), and a *potion of fly* (faint transmutation, CL 5). A pouch contains diamond dust for a total of 1000 gold pieces worth.

The skull is a *mimir* – a magical item designed to record voice. It contains a very interesting conversation between Rothakon and Ithla-Sathlo, which happened shortly after the fortress Maldithar was conquered. A third creature is present – a prototype of the plant monsters which Ithla-Sathlo was planning on breeding after the Orb is in his hands (well, tentacles).

As you touch the skull, it jumps in the air, with its eyes flaring. It immediately stops, hovering about ten centimeters from the surface of the table, and begins talking.

“Why the mimir? I don’t need to record this”. You have already heard this voice. It is Rothakon, the half-fiend who used to control this fortress and who apparently believes that you have the Selthian Orb.

“You need to do what I say”. This voice, on the other hand, you have never heard. It feels like a bunch of snake people or khaasta trying to talk above each other through a slime pit. It is like a very, very bad chorus. The voice echoes and reverberates; no humanoid vocal apparatus could produce something like this. “You will not forget my orders. Should you feel in doubt, you will listen to this skull, and do what it says, for it is my will”. There is a low noise after this sentence – it might be Rothakon grumbling.

The unearthly voice resumes talking. “You will take command of the retriever. You will send it to Arborea, where it will take the Orb. It will get back here. You will deliver the Orb to Infestant”.

Rothakon speaks again: “Are you sure that your spell will prevent the Orb from escaping?” The low growl is heard again. It is not Rothakon, after all. “I mean... what if the spell’s duration expires? We are very far from Infestant. What if enemies attempt to dispel it?”.

“The spell draws energy from my own essence. It will not expire. It will not be dispelled. Nevertheless, you will hurry in your task, and you will shield the Orb from attempts to undo my curse”.

“What are the plans after the Orb is delivered to our realm?”

“When the Orb is in MY realm,” The low noise, again, as the inhuman voice speaks. This time it’s louder. “I will corrupt it and bend it to my will. It will create a mighty army for me. You will lead this army to victory”.

“An entire army of... those things”. The growl again. “Assuming a surprise attack, we can easily take down Demogorgon before the rest of the lords even realize what’s happening. It’s almost too good to be true”.

The last sentence is followed by a loud slamming noise, followed by a roar by the same low growling creature. There is a rattling noise – like someone falling over the table. The other voice says: “You will not doubt my plans. You will execute them without flaw”. From the sound of the voice, it looks like the mimir has fallen from the table.

“...of course, father”.

“Demogorgon’s realm will be conquered. The voices in his head will be silent, forever. Before Graz’zt, Pazuzu, Baphomet or anyone else can ready a bid for the three layers, I will seed them with my progeny and make them into my strongholds. Turn that skull off!”. A moment after this, the mimir’s eyes become dark again and it lowers itself on the table again.

The skull doesn’t contain anything else. If the PCs remove the organical growths from the walls, they find that the surface of the walls which they covered is inscribed in tiny runes, almost too small to discern. They cover every single centimeter of the area under the vines and branches. PCs that examine the runes can make a Knowledge (Arcana) check, DC 20, to understand that these runes are a prototype for the spell which was placed on the portal. If they make the check, they realize that they are inert, but they can be examined to obtain the same information that is described for room **14**, in much the same way. This allows the PCs a second shot at discovering information on their curse.

The Second Escape

CHAPTER V

In which the Heroes use the power of knowledge to destroy their enemy

CHAPTER VI

In which the Heroes abandon all hope as the curse upon them remains as strong as ever

CHAPTER VII

In which the Heroes travel to the throne of a prince of darkness, and turn to him for help

CHAPTER VIII

In which the Heroes travel to a place where evil fought evil, and left only ruins behind it

CHAPTER IX

In which the Heroes flee from nightmare incarnate into the light