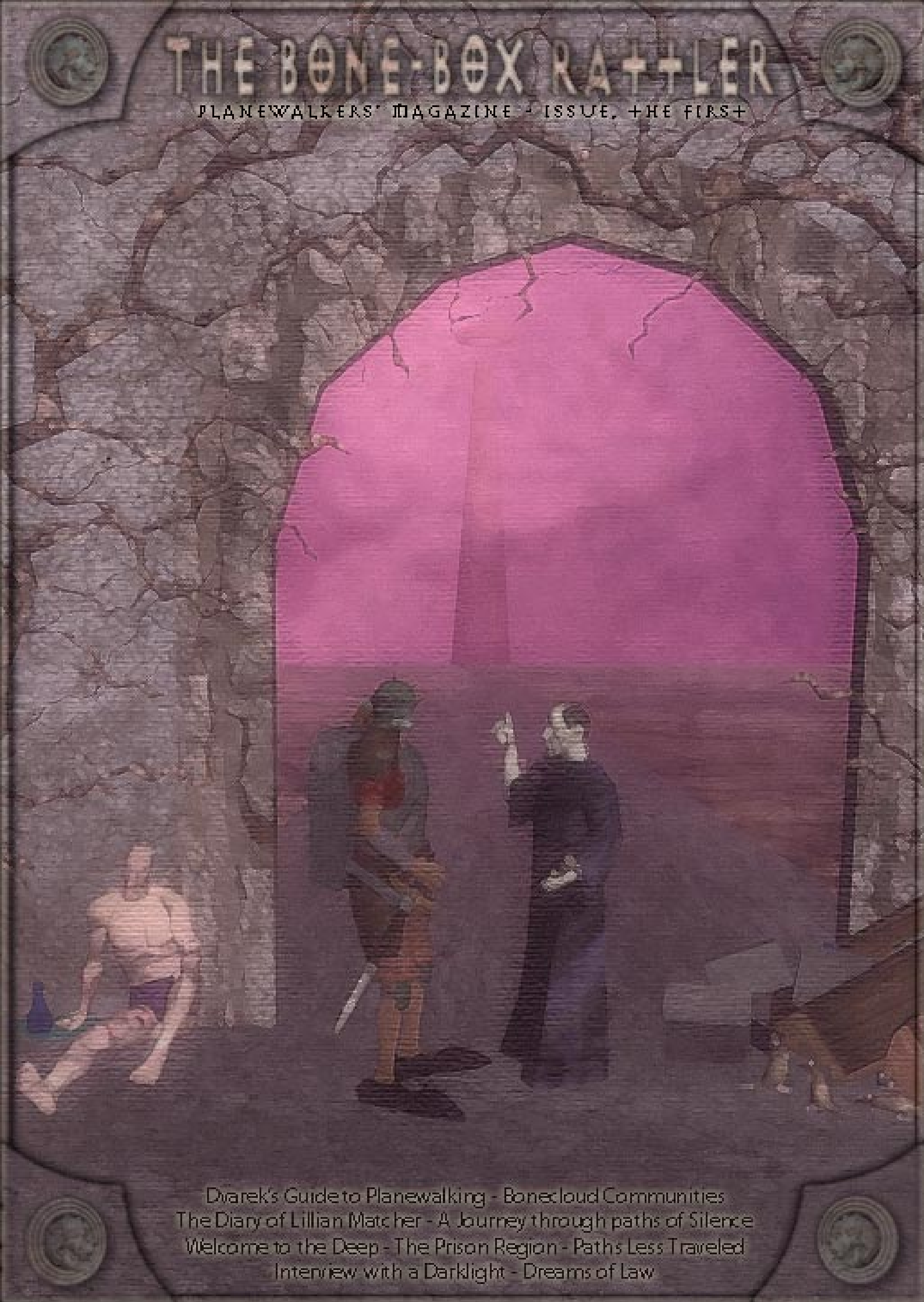
THE BONE-BOX RATTLER

PLANEWALKERS' MAGAZINE - ISSUE, THE FIRST



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EDITORIAL

Chant and dark. Two words that are alike in many ways, yet different. The distinction lies not so much in scope or validity, for in these they are the same - certainly a body might consider some information to be chant, while another sees it as dark, and yet they are both right, or wrong, for it matters little. No, the information itself is irrelevant for this dichotomy; true or false, obscure or common, it is not the information itself that distinguishes chant from dark, but rather it is the beholder's perception, which assigns its value. See, most bodies one might ask will tell you that 'the dark' is something secret, or rather, something you do not know. Yet what is a secret? What does it mean to know something? Could it not be that one might possess some knowledge, which he deems to be 'chant', while at some later point in time, come to know it as 'dark'? Has the information itself somehow changed during this time, then? No, it is not knowledge that changes, but rather the value assigned to it by the one who possesses it, and this is the most important thing to remember. Information is just that - information. It is not chant, and it is not dark, and nothing anyone will tell you can change that. Only you can decide what is chant and what is dark. And mind you, such a distinction is neither clear, nor permanent. Such is the nature of knowledge that it is ever obscure and shifting, so that one cannot adjust it into neatly ordered categories, without having to reassess its value at some point later on. As one gains more and more information, what was once deemed to be true may later appear to be false and what was once unknown may become trivial. What, then, is chant, and what is dark? You decide, and let no other do it for you.

This magazine, 'The Bone-box Rattler' caters to planewalkers, yet never will we provide the reader with such labels as 'chant' or 'dark'. No, this magazine offers information. Whether that information is chant, dark or even screed, you will have to decide for yourself. We cannot possibly guarantee the validity of all the information hereinafter, nor will we ever claim to. As editors, we will provide you with quality information, yet it is you, the planewalker that will have the last say in this. We make no decisions for others; we know, and trust, that a planewalker will know how best to use what we provide. This is why this magazine is not meant for just anyone. Those who expect us to paint them a picture of the multiverse in bright colors for them to enjoy had best look elsewhere. Knowledge, true knowledge is not something that can be imparted. We cannot unravel the myriad mysteries that enrobe the multiverse, nor can we hand them out to you as finality coalesced into a stack of papers. What we can do, and what we will do, is point you in the right direction, and give you some good advice to help you on your way. We trust that a planewalker understands all this, and it is for those who understand, that this magazine is for.

It is our aim to cover as many aspects of planewalking as possible, thus making this magazine a tool most useful in the hands of those who know how to wield it. The planewalker knows that the multiverse is a big place, and there is no sword or spell that cannot be outmatched by another. Thus, the true strength of the planewalker lies in knowledge - both in possessing it, and knowing how to use it. Knowledge then, is the Philosopher's Stone, the one key to all portals, the one weapon to outweigh all others, and the one armor against anything the multiverse might throw at you.

No, we cannot give you all the information you will ever need, yet piece by piece, together we can assemble this formidable bastion of truth, that is knowledge. It is us who shall provide the material, and you, the planewalker, who will use it to build that which is most sought after by those who understand the truth of the planes. Read on then, and take great care in appraising the materials you would use in your construction, for it is you alone who can decide its worth.

The Editors

DVAREK'S GUIDE TO PLANEWALKING

- PART I -

being an introduction and a collection of general advice on safe and profitable planewalking, and on how to make the best out of each situation

So, you want to know the darks of the multiverse, eh? Or perhaps banging around in your little anthill ain't all that interesting. Or maybe you just want to call kip somewhere else. All in all, every berk in the multiverse is gonna tumble on to one important piece of chant sooner or later, and that's the fact that planehopping is not just for the adventurous types. Pass through a door one day, humming that tune a bubber taught you at your favorite watering hole, and you'll find yourself hipped somewhere else. Mingle with the wrong crowd, and before you know it, you're pulled along for the ride of your life. Try to peel the wrong basher and then let's see you give him the laugh. So what's my point? My point is that if you know what's good for you, you'll think twice before passing this off as screed. A little chant ain't ever hurt nobody, and some day, it may just keep you from the dead-book. And take it from me, I've been there.

So who am I, and why am I rattling my bone-box about this? Well, lemme just lann you in on a bit of chant. Nothing in this whole sodding multiverse is ever free, yet for the right price, a deva and a fiend will be best friends. And this, friend, is no dark.

I am known as Dvarek the Undiced, knight of the post and planewalker of high repute. Aye, a knight of the post I am, and one of the best this side of the Cage. Which side? Any side, friend, any side. I've peeled devas and fiends alike, I trod the multiverse this side and that, and I've done profitable business in the Blood War and lived to tell about it. I know a lot of darks, yet most importantly, I know how to get more, and that's why you will need me. 'Cause you should get one thing firmly planted in your brain-box, and that is that there is no steel or spell in the multiverse that will outweigh a dark. Some say that jink is mightier than the sword, and that a garnish can pass through walls that no spell ever could, yet that's just part of it. The most important thing to learn is when and how to use each. Each door you'll ever come across has a myriad ways it can be opened, yet there is not one key that fits them all. A good planewalker is not a graybeard, a good planewalker is a spiv. And as long as you're intent of keeping your name off the dead book for least a bit while longer, you ought to learn just how to become a good planewalker. And mind you, such a thing cannot be taught. I can only give you a head start, and point you in the right direction. The rest is up to you.

And surely you must wonder if all this is but an elaborate bob. If all I want is to peel some addle-coves that take everything they get for granted. After all, why would a knight of the post help a body? Well, cutter, if you'd have read the words I've spilled so far, you'd be right to be peery. Yet also in those words you'll find your answer. No, I'm not doing this for any selfless reason. There's no such thing, believe you me. So yes, I do admit, right here and now that it is in my best interest that I do this. Yet it is also in yours. In this, I am a tout. I got paid to rattle my bone-box, by the good folks at the magazine you're holding, to guide you around, and I will also get my share of some other profits along the way. This is the way of the tout, and any berk who says otherwise is a blatant liar. So put your brain-box to work, and figure it out for yourself. Who better to trust than me? I do this for the jink I'm getting, and thus by peeling you I would be peeling myself. So trust me, the bestest friends are those who have use of each other, and in this we are best friends. You get me jink, and I get you darks. It's as simple as that.

If you're still reading this, then you've made a wise decision, and one you'll not regret. For you shall see for yourselves, that my services are more than worth their cost. So wigwag aside, park your ears and let's just get on with things.

As I have already told you, this is not one of those guides a body can readily find in the Cage. I'll not rattle my bone-box about sightseeing and amusement. This guide is useful. I'll lann you in on what you need

to know, what you need to have, and what you need to do to get to a certain place. Once there, I'll tell you the chant of things both useful and profitable. And most importantly, I'll teach you how to get the darks of those places. As for amusement, you're on your own.

Now then, as any blood will tell you, we need to start at the beginning, and work our way from there. You might already have some experience, but then again you might not. The way I see it, experience is like jink in that you can never have too much of it, or indeed enough. So, before you even twig the idea of planehopping, you need to know one thing, and that's how to take care of yourself. You might fancy yourself a spellslinger or you might know which end of a chiv you're supposed to be holding, you might be full of jink or not have a green to your name; all this is irrelevant. Jink can be had or lost, and any skill can be sharpened, so long as you're willing to work on it. Whatever it is that you're good at, or just meets your fancy, practice and strive to improve it. There are some who'll tell a body that he can never get anywhere if he doesn't practice. I say that the berk who fancies that he knows enough not to bother for more, will sooner or later find himself somewhere alright - in the dead-book. And it's usually sooner, rather than later, at least as far as the sod in question in concerned. Now having said this, there's something you should always keep in mind. No matter how much of a blood you think you are in something, never look at things from that point only. Keep your eyes open and your mind sharp, and try to get the best out of everything. It pays to be confident, but only a leatherhead will be stubborn. Always look at things from all possible angles. If there's an easier way to do something, don't go for the harder one, just because you enjoy it. Trust me, you can't enjoy it if you're a stiff. Out on the planes, you use what you can get, and the only thing that pride can get you is a one-way pass to the dead-book. Or worse.

Once you understand what it takes to be able to take care of yourself, you'll need to work on getting more jink. Like I already said, jink you can never have enough. Whether you need it for better equipment, a garnish, or just for some grub, the fact remains that you'll always need it. Sure, sometimes you can make do with little or none, but better safe than sorry. Remember, the easiest way, though maybe not the best, is always the safest. And safety is the prime concern of any but the barmies. Now, there are a myriad ways of getting jink, from 'honest' work, to providing 'services', to just plain bobbing someone. It all depends on what you're good at, how desperate you are, and how far you are willing to go. In this, my advice is always to consider the ride very carefully. How hard it is, how dangerous it is, and how much the payment would mean to you. My general advice is to always consider any 'small' rides that are relatively safe, even if the pay is little. Don't hold out for 'big jobs' just because they pay a lot, since you don't want to find out they are just too much to handle. More small payments are just as good as one big one, though with lesser risk or effort involved. If you like risk, go gambling; if you like effort, do push-ups; never choose work according only to pleasure. It's neither wise nor healthy. Besides, safe pleasure can always be found when jink is sufficient.

But all this is just general advice, and any leatherhead prime knows these things, right? Maybe, maybe not. Scan this, cutter, such things need to be said so as to get things straight. And it is always a better thing to think twice about something, rather then not thinking it at all. You don't want your next of kin to say: 'too bad he didn't think of doing that, before getting lost'. Anyway, now that we got things straight, I'll not repeat these things. For this point on, I'll be lanning you on chant particular to the situations at hand, and I'll be assuming that you've already gotten down the basics. If not, it's you who'll be up for petitionerhood, not me.

So, now that you know the basics, let me lann you on some more specific things you'll need to know, when making your way through civilized parts, namely what are the first things to mark, and what are the best places to get the latest chant. Of course, no two burgs on the multiverse are alike, yet there are some things that generally hold true for all of them. Take law for example. Each burg may have different laws, and different ways of enforcing them, yet generally, they will have two groups that a canny basher takes note of: the law, and the cross traders.

First thing you should do when arriving in a new place, is mark the law. Usually, these will be the bashers with the stiff stride, and the smug look planted on their faces. A uniform will do that to a berk – make him feel important. Once you've marked them, the second thing you need to do is avoid them. Scan this: no matter how high and mighty, noble and true you might think yourself to be, fact is that each burg has its own laws, and no cutter can know them all. And rather than risk paying the music for breaking some ridiculous law that may not even exist, it's a safer bet to just give these bashers a wide berth. But as this isn't always possible,

here's the next best thing. Mark the first inn or tavern you come across. It doesn't matter how shabby it is, just remember its name. At the first sign that a lawful is becoming interested in you, you'll need to act first. Exaggerating your every gesture, act as if you've just noticed them. Then purposely and confidently move right up to them, and politely ask them if they could perhaps give you some directions to whatever it is that you marked when arriving. See, these bashers aren't usually the brightest ones around, so a surprise might just confuse them long enough for you to make tracks. When speaking to them, the trick is to make them feel important, so be sure to show your respect for them, and even flatter them a bit to get their minds off your case and onto their own. Once there, they'll lose themselves in their own glory, and you can be on your way.

Second thing to mark is the cross traders. These, however, are usually harder to spot than the law, but trust me, if you plan on spending some time in one place, you're much better off knowing them. For these are the bashers you don't want to peel, yet they can also be a planewalker's best friends, provided sufficient jink is forthcoming. Pointless morals aside, you need to get something firmly planted in your brain-box, and that's the fact that these cutters will have the best goods, services, chant and darks that you'll need, and as long as you're peery and sharp, they can all be had for a much lesser melt than some other source might ask. And don't bother thinking about where or how they got it all; they get it whether you want it or not, so there's nothing you can do about it anyway. Fact is, if you're smart, you'll mark them. Now there are a couple of ways to get this piece of chant. A trained eye will spot them right away, but assuming that you've no experience with such things, you'll need to ask around. Keep in mind, though, that asking such questions in the wrong way, and in the wrong places, can get you into a

lot of trouble. So here's how you should go about it.

Do not ask the barkeep at the first watering hole you come across. Only a leatherhead prime would do such a thing. Scan this: even if the barkeep is honest, a watering hole has more eyes than a beholders' party. And the point in all of this, is that you want to mark them, not the other way around. Them marking you is never a good thing, take it from me.

Your first bet is the quippers. Take your time and examine those carefully. First off, consider where they're standing. A quipper that's doing his ride in front of a case that doesn't see any traffic is most likely acting as an eye for some guild or another. Give these a wide berth. Instead, you should find a well-trod road, with some watering hole nearby. This is where the 'honest' bubbers will be riding. Once you found one of these, mark him well before approaching. Examine his face, his clothes and any chiv he might be holding. You'll be looking for someone wearing filthy rags, a dull, broken look, many evident sores and bruises, and holding nothing more than some rusty, dented chiv at best. This should tell you that he's been doing this for long enough to know some chant of this place.

Still, don't rush into things. Take you time and take another look at him. Does he appear to be lucid? Is he silent, or rattling his bone-box? You'll want to find one who is sober and sane enough not to raise the flag when he's speaking. If you think you've found one such quipper, then approach him carefully. Make sure there isn't anyone close enough to park his ears on you, and that no body is watching too intently. Acting casual, walk over to the quipper and throw him a green. Watch his face closely as you do so. Do his eyes dart to you first and the jink second? Is his expression more lucid than it should be? Are his movements too fast? If so, keep a jaded look on your face, mumble something seemingly to yourself, and move away. If not, if he truly seems genuine, then ask him the way to the case you've marked when arriving. Take note of his answer, and if this too seems genuine, and sufficiently coherent, then it's time for the more important questions. Start off by asking him which is the best watering hole and the best place to crash in that burg, for a traveller such as yourself. Then, if nothing seems suspicious, you can move on to more delicate matters. Ask him about the shops in town, the best places to buy equipment, and if he doesn't say it himself, ask him about any merchants who deal in 'second-hand goods'. If he doesn't tumble on to it, you can ask him if there are any particular places and people you should avoid. Get as much details from him as possible on these. If necessary, you can repeat this with another quipper, preferably in another part of the burg. Be careful though, not to ask too many questions. Such a thing raises the flag, and you don't want that. Better to ask a few questions and move on, than to be seen talking with someone for too long.

Having failed with the quippers, or if you're in need of darks, the next step is the jinkskirts. These, however, will not only mean music, but will most surely pass the chant about your interests to their 'keepers', so I don't recommend it.

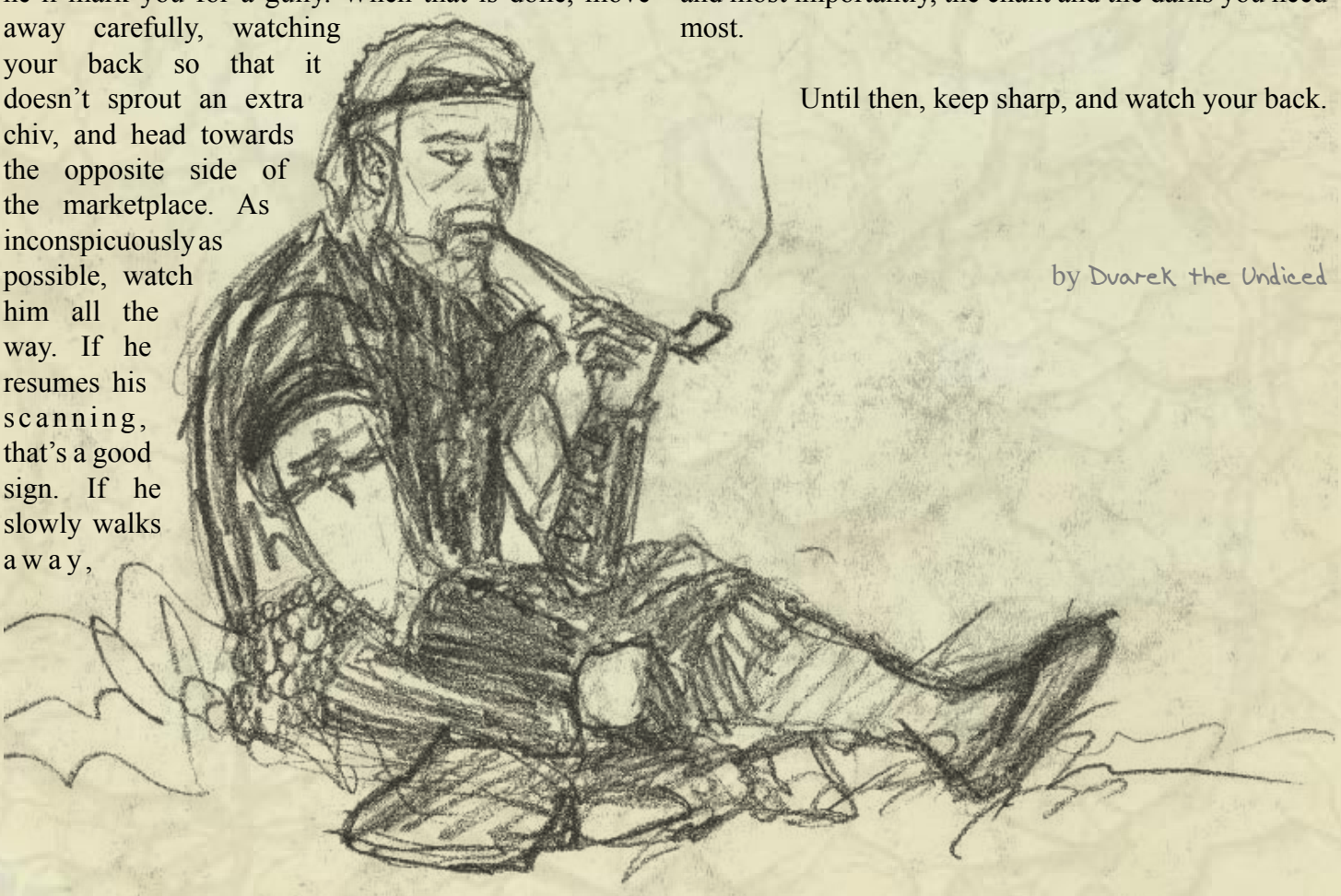
Your third choice is one that you should carefully consider, for this means to approach a cross trader, and such a thing is always dangerous. Still, if you can handle yourself, and have some jink to melt, it could be a very productive discussion. No one knows the darks of a burg better than the cross traders, though when dealing with them, the hardest part is telling the darks from the screed. Of course, for this too, you need to know who to approach, and where. If you haven't already been lanned on the guilds and cross-traders of that burg, you'll need to find one yourself. Make your way to the burg's marketplace. Once there, look for any dark alleys that move away from it. You'll need to mark these well, as the point is to approach a cross-trader when he's not in the middle of a ride. Doing otherwise is a sure way to ask for a fight. Thus, what you'll be looking for is some non-descript looking berk banging around an alley, who is scanning the marketplace. You'll know him by the way he looks and moves. Again, mark his face, his clothes and his chiv. He shouldn't wear rags, but nothing fancy either. Also, you're looking for a small time cross-trader, so if his chiv looks expensive or elaborate, find another. Once you've found an appropriate candidate, approach him carefully. Make sure he sees you coming, and keep a firm, yet non-threatening pose. If he flees, don't follow. If he moves further down the alley, don't follow. If you spot any more figures near him, move away. If you're confident that he is alone and he does not flee when he sees you coming, you can start the conversation by telling him that you think you might have found the purse he lost. If he looks like he's tumbled on to it, tell him that you will return it in a moment, but that as long as you went through the trouble of retrieving it for him, he could perhaps lann you in on some chant. Under no circumstance must you allow him to personally show you the way to some place. All your discussion should

and will be held right there, where no one is close enough to park their ears on you, yet plenty are close enough to see you talking. As for the questions, it all depends on what you really wish to know, yet some essential chant is where the 'night market' is located, what the power balance is in that burg, and if you were to look for some work, where and who you should ask. While talking, be open to your purse, your back, and the one you're talking to. Scan his expression and his movements. You don't want to be nicked, so if he even glances at his chiv, or moves his hand towards it, slowly and carefully take a step back, and warn him that you can handle yourself in a fight, if that's what he's twigging. Also, mark his words and expression carefully. He should never seem too intent on telling you anything, and if an answer seems too willing, it's probably screed. Politely remind him that this is business, and good business is more profitable than bad business. If all goes well, when you're finished with your questions, ask him how much jink there was in the purse he lost. Whatever he tells you, assure him that all you found was about 60% of what he was saying, and that maybe someone else took the rest before you found it. The usual price for his chant is about 50% of what he is asking, so in giving him 60%, there's something left for his trouble. But never give more than 60%, or he'll mark you for a gully. When that is done, move away carefully, watching your back so that it doesn't sprout an extra chiv, and head towards the opposite side of the marketplace. As inconspicuously as possible, watch him all the way. If he resumes his scanning, that's a good sign. If he slowly walks away, than that probably means he's about to bark to his guild about you. If, however, he quickly darts into some alley and disappears from sight, that's a sign of trouble. He might twig the idea of gathering some friends and laying out the red carpet, so you'd best make tracks, and keep a sharp eye out for trouble. If things look too serious, you might even want to ask a lawful to guide you to your intended destination, making sure you offer enough flattery and maybe a small donation to the cause of law, for his trouble.

By now, you should know some general rules to finding the chant and darks of a place, and that's the most important thing a spiv needs. Still, each plane, each realm and each burg, all have their own rules and tricks. So, I'll be telling you about the specifics, one place at a time. Even such things as tracking or procuring food are very different on each plane, which is why I'll be doing things this way. So, since I need to start somewhere, I thought that I might as well start with Sigil. Every planehopping berk in the multiverse is bound to end up there sooner or later, so it's the best place to start. Thus, in the next chapter, I'll be guiding you safely (and productively) through the Cage, and on our way to Tradegate. I'll be telling you about the dos and don'ts, where and how to get jink, equipment, and most importantly, the chant and the darks you need most.

Until then, keep sharp, and watch your back.

by Duarek the Undiced



BONECLOUD COMMUNITIES

being a transcription of some of what is found in that great conflux on the Astral Plane

This article is actually a reprint from the Annals of the "Anatomical Society of the Planes." The Anatomical Society is a relatively new and highly secretive group. Its annals are published for semi-public consumption via the Hall of Information and the Sigil Library, among other locations. However, in the interest of expanding their notoriety the society has chosen to let us republish some of their less academic articles. They are apparently well bankrolled and we have obliged them for partially monetary reasons, though the articles are of excellent quality. Enjoy. - the editors

The Bonecloud floats in the Astral, a giant mass of undead transplanted from the prime by mighty magic. It is an unpleasant eyesore, mostly, an annoying blot on the otherwise pure astral background. For the most part the Bonecloud is ignored by planars as anything other than a travel hazard. A giant mass of skeletons and zombies is hardly interesting to anyone but a few crazed necromancers with delusional visions.

Occasionally someone visits the Bonecloud. This does not happen because they are interested in the cloud itself, but because both the Astral and certain beings have provided sites of interest in the Bonecloud. Many of these sites are color pools, but these are far less interesting from my perspective than the domains carved and blasted into the Bonecloud itself.

These tiny fastnesses vary greatly in nature, but they are often connected via paths through the cloud or other devices. In this way small communities of a sort have been fashioned into the Bonecloud. I had occasion to visit one of these communities on a mission to retrieve a previously unknown undead specimen from within the cloud.

Here is the transcript of what I encountered.

1. Undead Mining and Sales

There is a rather interesting operation on the edge of the Bonecloud. Run by a surprisingly jovial Githyanki necromancer and a small group of Dustmen priests. They have a business established of lassoing skeletons and zombies from the cloud, controlling them, and selling them for a profit.

Apparently buying undead servants as opposed to animating them oneself is quite popular, as the Bonecloud miners have constructed an elegant residence on the top of a small block of rock.

They sell the available undead quite cheaply, only 50 gold for a controlled skeleton or zombie. More powerful undead are occasionally available as well, though such things are dangerous to try and control. The Githyanki E'varek does an excellent business, and I observed that he was surprisingly fair to his customers. It makes me wonder what he's doing otherwise, and how much of a cut the Githyanki race gets under the table.

I stopped over here for a few hours, hoping to get some information on the inside of the Bonecloud, but E'varek was decidedly close mouthed about it. I suspect there is some strange pact between the Bonecloud miners and the residents of the Bonecloud. Certainly, no one else has established a similar operation, though this small group could easily expand greatly, given the success they are having. It makes me wonder what's going on there.

2. A Tunnel made of Zombies

There are no passages to guide a person into the Bonecloud, but there are passages within it. The greatest, and the easiest to reach from the outside is a tunnel made of zombies. The tunnel begins perhaps five

hundred yards into the Bonecloud, on the established "bottom" side of the cloud. The directions our source gave us were sufficient for me to find it, but without this sort of instruction it would be difficult to locate the entrance to the tunnel.

The area around the tunnel is densely packed with the undead, almost all zombies. Many bear patches on their shoulders, all are faded, but they seem to indicate this area contained a united military unit, as opposed to the common horde. If that is the case, whatever undead officers they once had have migrated elsewhere. By virtue of my Dustman status I was rendered immune to the attacks of the undead of the cloud, and so could roam it relatively freely, though at some points the undead were packed so thick as to be impassable barricades.

The tunnel of zombies opens up near enough to the edge of the Bonecloud that I could locate it with a simple directional spell. The tunnel is formed entirely of still moving zombies, all facing outwards, so that they cannot attack a person on the inside. The whole structure resembles a Living Wall in some aspects, and might possibly possess some of the properties of those creatures. I considered taking sample from the inside of the wall, but the environment there dissuaded me.

Inside the tunnel it is absolutely dark and silent. I managed to conjure a light, but it cast only a feeble glow. The silence could not be so easily countered, there was simply no echo at all within the tunnel. It must have been a natural property of all that dead flesh put together. The air within was stale, but stable.

Since the astral environment allows free movement I expected to be able to float through the middle, and avoid contact with potentially infectious zombie flesh, but I found instead that a force pulled me inexorably toward the walls of the tunnel, and I had to walk upon the bodies of the zombies. I am unsure as to the magic employed to empower this effect.

The tunnel stretches for a great distance, with no openings on any side. While the Astral Plane does not have distance in any material sense, I would approximate the length of the tunnel in earthly terms as at least fifteen miles. Given that a single zombie stretches only about two feet across, and five to six zombies make any ring of the tunnel there are likely at least 200,000 zombies forming the structure of the tunnel.

I am unsure why anyone would create a tunnel such as this, or what its purpose was. However, at points I noticed that some of the zombies had their heads turned to the inside, and their eyes remained in those faces. I believe that whomever created this tunnel could likely use those eyes to somehow spy on anyone in the tunnel. In any case, I do not know who created the tunnel or whether that being(s) is still alive.

The tunnel ends abruptly at a point well within the Bonecloud, I believe it travels almost directly inward. The tunnel's end has a large mass of zombies grouped around it, pressed into formation as if they were about to be used to make the tunnel, but they have obviously not been used for that purpose. Some skeletons have drifted in among them over time, so it seems that the project has been abandoned, at least for now.

The tunnel is obviously used with at least some frequency, because a small party of wights waited at the end, with the intention of preying on travelers. Being a Dustman protected me here again, and I asked the wights what they knew of the tunnel, but they refused to answer any of my questions, and seemed greatly angered that I could not be eaten.

From the end of the tunnel three more standard Bonecloud paths proceeded, cut into the fabric of the floating undead. I was instructed to take the left-hand path, and I do not know where the others lead.

3. Path Raiders and Path Traders

The paths of the Bonecloud are hardly safe or empty, as I would discover on my two day travel down the left-hand path, a distance of thirty-five miles into and leftward in the Bonecloud. I will admit that is was very difficult to orient myself within, but that I was not worried, since striking out without directions was unlikely to be harmful to me, since I was immune to undead attack. I suppose the dead know not to harm each other, yes?

Being a Dustman is not a cure for all danger in the Bonecloud though, for not everything within is undead. There are raiders and traders on the paths of the Bonecloud, and neither is a friend to the living or the Dustmen in particular. Thankfully I was not caught completely off guard when my attackers came in from

the cloud to swarm the path the first time.

The raiders were a band of Lythlyx, eel like creatures so maneuverable that they easily avoided the dead of the Bonecloud, and are immune to the fear powers of more dangerous undead. I was told later by the traders that Lythlyx generally suck the long stale, but never decaying, blood of the zombies, but crave the more succulent fare of the living. The also apparently have some mysterious psionic purpose for claiming the Bonecloud, and destroy all other raiders within who are not undead, and attack most living and undead visitors.

I avoided the Lythlyx by a few quick defensive spells and by fleeing into an extremely dense mat of undead, where they could not reach me without risk, and then throwing about a few attack spells. Knowing the psionic nature of these creatures I had mental defenses prepared, and they eventually decided to leave me alone. I must thank the society for its dissection of Lythlyx previously, so that I was aware of their weaknesses.

I met the traders later that day. The group was a mixed band of undead and other Dustmen, peddling minor magical items, and materials harvested from the undead of the cloud. They also appeared to be carrying items from one location in the Bonecloud to another, though they would not elaborate on the nature of their business. I purchased a crude map of this segment of the Bonecloud from them, and noted that it contained two separate networks of sites, with fourteen different locations in all. I queried the traders about the locations on the maps but received only the most rudimentary of answers. I did manage to confirm that my destination existed.

The traders seem to do a decent business, though the Dustmen did remark that it was difficult to get items for use by the living in the Bonecloud, and that they were considering making trade links with the outside and at least one community, but that there was a general feeling of worry about how the Githyanki would react if they learned how extensive the settlements in the Bonecloud really were.

Though the planar traders were humans, and the skeleton servitors were also of human stock, a number of the undead with them were Heucuva apparently of Githzerai descent, which I must admit confused me. There might well be Githzerai outposts and monasteries hidden deep within the Bonecloud, in the very stronghold plane of their Githyanki foes. Of course, they could all be undead now. It matters little. That feud is so pointless as deserves forgetting.

4. Fetter's Ring - Outpost of Tiralt

At the end of two days on the path I came to the first true site within the Bonecloud I had yet encountered, the Outpost of Fetter's Ring, a series of buildings bound together by giant chain fetters. Fetter's Ring contains little more than a trio of guard towers and a small barracks/supply building, with small bundles chained to the buildings to increase space storage. This place is an outpost for the community of Tiralt, an undead ruled society that was the first of the two communities mentioned on the map, and the one that I had business with.

Fetter's Ring has little to recommend it to a visitor. The entire compound is garrisoned by the living, so as to allow some movement in defense. There were perhaps fifty troops present, supported by a small number of intelligent undead. These troops were all Gityanki, apparently charmed or otherwise enslaved to the Tiralt community. Each and every one was bound on long chains to the buildings; dragging five hundred feet of chain causes no drag in the Astral, but it does prevent escape.

The undead supporting this garrison were specters, and they watched constantly. Command was held by a being who interrogated me, a Flameskull. The being seemed very lonely, and once it had stopped me, asked question after question about the world outside the Bonecloud. I answered as circumspectly as I could, but I was forced to give it the truth when I was queried as to the purpose of my visit. I told the Flameskull that I was to pick up a specimen being held at Tiral Town by a Vampire for the Anatomical Society of the planes, and that I had brought a supply of blood in payment. Thankfully he did not ask me for the source and nature of that blood.

The Flameskull allowed me to pass, more because I indulged it in its questions than for any other reason I expect, but it at least claimed that Tiralt was a community open to all visitors, though visitors had no protection under the laws of the community, and I should be aware of that.

Two paths diverged beyond Fetter's Ring, which I

know to be one of four outposts on the edge of Tiralt. One led to Tiral Town, which I took, and the other led to the Fortress of Split Bone, which was currently not aligned. Or so I was told.

5. Within Tiralt and Tiral Town

At first I noticed no difference in the Bonecloud within the boundaries of Tiralt. Later on, however, I began to see wraiths and specters out of the corner of my eye a bit more often. When I started encountering them openly on the passageways I knew that I had hit a major concentration of undead. It seems that many of the intelligent undead of the Bonecloud migrate to communities such as this in the hope that a powerful spellcaster will send them off plane. I have no idea how many succeed at such pursuits, but doubt it is many. Still, judging by the number of wights, wraiths, and spectres I saw here, I judge that there are far more intelligent undead in the Bonecloud than was previously believed.

Tiralt also contained additional traders, for I encountered another group on the short journey to Tiral Town. They were similar in almost all aspects to the first, and also had Githzerai derived undead with them. I began to wonder if there was some sort of trade guild in the Bonecloud, but they said there was not, and that all enterprises were private.

Tiral Town was not what I expected. I thought it might be based around a slab of rock like most Astral settlements, or perhaps even anchored to a dead god, though I knew of none in the Bonecloud. Instead, the town was anchored to the gigantic skeleton of some immense prime material beast; it must have been at least two hundred feet in length. I believe the creature was serpentine in nature, and might have been some form of dragon. In any case, whatever enchantment had once animated the creature, it no longer functioned, and the skeleton was simply bone.

A structure resided within that central skeleton, the lair of Tira, a female lich of rather cosmopolitan tastes, who wards her lair with a squadron of crypt things that repel all intruders, and a force of wights to strike down any more persistent attackers. Her lair is closed to outsiders, and she speaks through a Flameskull when she addresses the outside community.

All other buildings are linked to the great skeleton by cylindrical links of bone, with chains attached to pulley systems for quick movement of goods between them all. There are some eleven outbuildings in Tiral Town, belonging to various undead and at least two mortal necromancers.

The area between the buildings is still a normal part of the Bonecloud, with undead present to attack anything that approaches. Lesser sentient undead roam about the town forlornly, looking for employment from the masters of the town. Occasionally they group together to try and demand it under threat of retaliation. I saw one such action savagely put down by the owner of a small tower. All the insolent undead were utterly destroyed by burning light.

I am unsure as to the exact inhabitants of Tiral Town, but I will list those names and identities I was able to discern:

1. Tira - female human lich from the prime
2. Fergon the Cold - Male human greater mummy from the prime
3. Yirshe - female tiefling Dustman Necromancer from Sigil
4. Ressilliat the Black - Shade race and plane of origin unknown
5. J'k'y'kitch - Shadow Fiend, plane of origin unknown
6. Revil Dread - Human Vampire from the prime
7. Yispislish - Elven Vampiress from the prime

The others remain unknown to me. Revil Dread was the Vampire I had come to see, and he provided me with this information. Revil Dread was gruff and impersonal, but seemed to hide a keen mind beneath his exterior, and discussed a few Society explorations with me for a moment. Apparently our journals have circulated even to such a remote location in such a form, though apparently only through undead couriers. The vampire seemed somewhat interested in securing a copy of our Journals, but I told him that it could not be supplied in such a fashion, and he would have to find access to one from the most recent print run, or reprinted data. His specimen was contained in a force box for ease of transport, and he took it for the payment in infant Githyanki blood that he had requested (which had cost a fortune to procure, the sacrifices we make for science!). The specimen was reputed to be of a new type of undead known as a Bonepowder Spirit, which had not been previously examined, but had been encountered.

After taking the specimen I had intended to leave the Bonecloud, but the Flameskull spokesman for Tira met with me instead. It requested that I take a scroll to the community of Ill-Bourne, the other one indicated on my map, and beyond the Fortress of Split Bone. I was asked this because I represented a neutral party that would not be seen as a harbinger of conflict between the two communities, which apparently Tira wished to avoid for some reason. When I suggested that the local traders would likely be more suitable the Flameskull rebuffed me, saying that they were not impartial. This made me all but certain that some secretive guild does indeed control the trade within the Bonecloud.

When I asked for a reward the Flameskull seemed put out, they expected me to do this out of coercion, but I said calmly, that no undead could openly attack me in such a way, and that there was no reason for me to trust them in good faith. In response I was quickly given a small sheaf of unlabelled notes, which discussed that strengths and weaknesses of making skeletons from several different races. I am unsure as to the origin of these researches, but I believed they to be in line with the Society's goals, and certainly my own, so I took them.

Carrying the scroll, which apparently discussed trade relations, I departed for Ill-Bourne, taking yet another undead cleared path.

6. Ill-Borne

After another short passage through the Bonecloud, and going through another outpost similar to Fetter's Ring in most respects, the path came to an end. I had to continue directly onward through the Bonecloud itself. The two communities were apparently segmented, which seemed odd if there was trade between them. Perhaps it passed through the "neutral" Fortress of Split Bone.

I came upon Ill-Borne by encountering another path. However, this one was not simply a roughly circular gap in the Bonecloud, but a series of rods that appeared to repulse all undead back from them, creating an area where undead could not enter. I entered this passage easily, wondering at what would force a community to expend such magic on nothing more than a pathway.

Ill-Borne was not more than four miles down that path, and I believe it was closer to the edge of the Bonecloud than Tiral Town had been. The community of Ill-Borne was surprising to see here, for it was a community of the living in this place of death.

The town was centered on four Color Pools, with destinations I do not know, but it was made of simple structures like one might expect to see on Bytopia or Elysium. The buildings were linked together haphazardly by rope bridges and catwalks. There must have been a sizable community, at least fifty or more buildings. There was no central orientation like at Tiral Town, but a large building stood close to a hypothetical center, and I discerned this to be the Town Hall. The whole area enclosing the buildings had been completed cleared of undead, in what must have been a sphere of several hundred yards.

The people of Ill-Borne were all living, a community of humans in fact, most apparently in monastic robes. I am uncertain, but I believe now that the entire community was some kind of monastery. The inhabitants would answer no questions, despite being otherwise cordial. They would say only that Ill-Borne was an ill-conceived idea upon the multiverse, but one they must reclaim. I am uncertain if they were all much wiser than I, or completely barmy.

In any case, I delivered the scroll from Tira to a woman sitting behind a desk in the Town Hall. She asked me why I was carrying a Lich's missives, since the dead should not contact with the living. I replied that there was no such difference, but she gave me a disturbing smile, and said nothing more. I asked another what her name was, and if she led this place, but they said only that she was a Priestess, and would answer no more, not even to say what power they served.

I gather that all of Ill-Borne consists of some five communities like this, filled with closed-mouthed monks who answer few questions asked of them. They seem to have walled themselves off from the undead with powerful magic, but why should such people bother to live in the Bonecloud in the first place? And why would they trade with Tiral Town. I could also not learn whatever bad blood lay between the two settlements. One monk did tell me that: "The ruler of Split Bone has driven a wedge among the people of the Bonecloud." I do not know how to interpret that statement.

From Ill-Borne I left the Bone Cloud via a color pool they possessed to Arcadia, and from there I teleported

to a portal back to Sigil. The specimen is now in the Society's freezers awaiting dissection by the entire undead team. I have begun to look for any additional references to this creature and made a preliminary visual examination.

Regarding the Bonecloud settlements I encountered. I had originally believed that all those locations were simply isolated fortresses and wizard's realms, but it seems the situation is more complicated. While there are certainly isolated sites within the Bonecloud, there are also quasi-communities, both of undead and mortals. I believe all such groups must have a reason for dwelling in the Bonecloud, and I suspect that most are hiding from the Githyanki in some fashion or other. My encounters with the Bonecloud traders leads me to believe that there must be a hidden group of Githzerai settlements and monasteries hidden somewhere deep within the Bonecloud. Who would have thought that there would be such advance postings in that ancient war? I wonder how long they have been there?

In any case, exploration is not our mission here at the society, though the notes I obtained have proved to be interesting reading.

by Dr. Hevern
Assistant Professor of the
Anatomical Society of the Planes, Dustman

THE UNDEAD

EFFICIENT, LOYAL, EFFECTIVE, LOW MAINTENANCE, QUIET.

USEFUL DON'T YOU THINK?
NEED SOME?

NO PROBLEM.
WE'VE GOT 'EM
UNDAMAGED, ANIMATE, AND READY FOR YOUR CONTROL!
ONLY FIFTY STANDARD GOLD PIECES FOR A SKELETON OR ZOMBIE!

INTERESTED?
THEN STOP BY THE BONECLOUD MINERS,
ON LOCATION JUST OUTSIDE THE BONECLOUD
IN THE EASILY REACHED ASTRAL PLANE.
WE CATER TO ALL RACES, INCLUDING GITHYANKI AND PRIMES!

BONUS:
ANYONE WHO CAN ADD A NEW USE TO OUR LIST OF 10,001 WAYS TO USE SKELETONS AND ZOMBIES GETS TO TAKE HOME A CONTROLLED WIGHT, AT NO EXTRA CHARGE.

THE DIARY OF LILLIAN MATCHER

- PART I -

being the unusual record kept by an Alu-fiend sorceress as she traveled the planes

This article is perhaps a rather odd one to be included here. It holds no direct information on planar doings or direct pieces of advice on the planes. However, this diary holds a wealth of information as an example of actual planewalking experiences. Such records as this are rare; planewalkers rarely have the time or inclination to chronicle their doings firsthand at anywhere near this detail level. So, while this first example is admittedly somewhat introductory, it provides an interesting profile of Curst. Further excerpts will illuminate planar locations in more detail, and search out the answers to a mystery that delves deep into the past of the planes.
- the editors

Unknown Lower Ward Alehouse - Sigil
Third Market, Tithing
Year 127 Reign of Factol Haskar

I know you're reading this Verid. I know, because I knew you wouldn't be able to resist reading my diary, so I placed an enchantment on it that will tell me where it is once you've stolen it. So, now I know you're reading it, and I know where you are. Wanna place bets on how long it'll take for me to get there and kill you? Wait…that would be rather pointless, since I'm going to kill you anyway, so it wouldn't matter who won.

So Verid, you're going to die, keep that in mind, and don't think you can dump the diary somewhere. I put a special curse on it that only you can trigger. You can't get rid of the book now! Looks like I've got you, yes? Maybe I'll let Exerb knaw your bones when I'm done with you.

Well, now that that is out of the way, I can start using this as an actual diary. It's strange that I conceived of doing this at all. Keeping a record like this isn't really my style, but I need it as a trap for Verid, and it could turn out to be useful otherwise. Exerb just told me to scrap the whole project. Lousy bat! I'll scrap him! Oh, wait. You don't know about Exerb do you Verid? I'd forgotten. Maybe that's a good place to start, or maybe I'll start with me, just to jog everyone's memory and to be nice and formal about it.

To begin then, I am Lilian Matcher born of a human male and a succubus mother. Therefore I am what is called an Alu-fiend, half-mortal, half-Tanar'ri. I am a cunning sorceress, and possessed of unearthly beauty that mortal men can almost never resist (the fools!). I grew up in the horrid Abyss, surrounded by my sisters. Our mother tried to provide for us, so we would make her look wise and powerful. She was really quite a fool, watching her paramours too much and her daughters not enough. One day one of my sisters told a Balor that she was giving her affections to one of his rivals. The Balor ripped my mother apart in his rage, and most of my sisters for good measure.

I was prepared, because my magic had warned me, so I escaped, and with several of mother's most prized possessions.

That was years ago. Since then I've hopped about quite a bit, avoiding the Blood War mostly, looking for magic and fun otherwise.

You, reading this, are Verid. You're a Githyanki, a liar, a thief, and one lousy lover, despite your pretensions otherwise. I met you on Gehenna, dodging some Yugoloths. You were a decent companion for a time, though your uncultured speech was annoying and you brought back boatloads of false information for every scrap of truth. Together we discovered a trail of secrets that could lead to a secret treasure with the power and wealth to make the finder live like an Abyssal Lord.

Then you tried to sell me into slavery to the hated Baatezu, you slimy, wretched cross-trading bastard! I got away with all the information, thanks to my magic,

but you took my sword, the one I took off mom's corpse! I liked that sword! Well, if you still have it I believe that's an added bonus I can claim from your corpse.

You've dogged my trail ever since then, hoping to steal the treasure's secrets after I've done all the hard work. I swear I'll find it first, and I'll kill you just for fun as soon as I track you down.

Exerb's been reading over my shoulder, he says that Githyanki marrow tastes good.

Right, bet that makes you wonder about Exerb. Well, the filthy rascal's a Varangoin, an Abyssal Bat. I found him on Carceri, where some Tanar'ri exiled him way back. Anyway, he offered to be my familiar in exchange for transport off the plane. The bat's screeching, foul-mouthed, and eats too much, but he's a Type V, so he's plenty good in a scrap, and he has some other uses from time to time too. Not sure how things will work out in the end between us, but for now he's fun enough.

Well, that covers the relevant people I believe, at least the ones I consider important. I think I'll leave this here, got to move on, and I think the barkeep expects me to pay the tab. He's an ugly sod, that he is, face to make a Rutterkin look polished, but maybe that means I can buy my meal for a kiss. I don't have the money for all the crazy drinks it took to conk that Sensate under the table. Ah, the price one pays for information.

---End of Entry---

Bar in Curst - Gatetown to Carceri
Third Clerk, Tithing
Year 127 Reign of Factol Haskar

So, it's been two days since I began this diary. Two rather boring days frankly, mostly walking. Still I needed to record the events of this far more interesting evening, since the equation may have been changed somewhat with the introduction of a new player. Ah, whatever, somebody important to this little quest showed up, here's how.

You know quite well Verid that the treasure we seek is called the Blades of Kelven, said to be a hidden treasure more powerful than a Blood War Army. It's been hard to find any information about it at all, even with over a year of looking, but I've just learned that we may not be the only ones on this search. I had drunk that Sensate under the table in Sigil, right after setting up this diary. He confirmed info I had on an earlier lead I'd discovered on Carceri two months ago, and of a soldier in Curst who could lead me further.

So I decided to find the soldier. I figured I could either charm the information out of him, or Exerb could steal it.

The only portal I could find to Curst required a two-day walk across barren Outlands terrain. By the powers that was boring! The Outlands outside Curst is barren and desert-like, thankfully magic still works there, so my spells kept me functioning. Exerb was a constant stream of hissing complaints; he hates flying about in bright sunlight. The lousy bastard should just be thankful he can fly at all!

Curst is a miserable place, everyone who lives there wants nothing but to leave, no one enjoys the place the way it is. Granted, there's not much to enjoy there, but it would be a lot more fun if the people put even a tiny bit more energy into running the town. I mean, even the gambling dens are duller than a street fight in Arcadia. Such a waste. It would also be more fun if everything wasn't so battered and sun cracked. The town is just plain ugly, bleh. I resolved to get out of the town as fast as I could the moment I walked in.

Finding the soldier was trickier than I thought it would be, since he wasn't where a nicely flirtatious guard said he'd be. I then had to go bar roving, which in a town so filled with backstabbers is dangerous. Exerb helped out a bit, biting the nose of a thug who thought I was an easy pick. It's good to have someone I can trust behind my back for once. Still, I had to deal with a duo that wanted to be forcibly amorous. I don't mind the attentions of men usually, but I was busy, and I hold that I'm the one who does the chasing thank you.

Well, stabbing one through the heart and burning the other to cinders with a spell certainly got everyone to stand back. Unfortunately, it wasn't just the crude and uncivilized that gave me a wide berth, but everybody. You just can't win in places like this!

Finally, in the fourth dusty and wretched dive, I spotted my quarry. The solider was a grimy and wrinkled one, with dusty mail and a battered halberd, but it looked like he might have seen some of the planes in his day. Unfortunately, he was slumped in a pool of blood at his

table, his face looking as if it had been through a meat grinder.

That sight made me angry. Really angry. The kind of anger that burns deep in the breast, the kind that demons feel when they kill whole villages for a single insult, the kind of anger that makes the Tanar'ri feared throughout the multiverse. I almost launched a fireball strait at the corpse just then, never mind that it would have leveled the bar and killed everyone inside.

Exerb managed to snap me out of that burst of anger by his ever-present instincts.

"So? He's dead." He said in his shill varangoin voice. "Does that mean I can eat him?"

My anger dissipated into sudden, bitter laughter. "Yes, you might as well."

I then turned to address the portly barkeep. "I assume you don't mind?" I asked pointedly.

"No, no, of course not, lovely lady of the Tanar'ri." He said most pleasantly, with beads of sweat dripping off his baldpate.

Exerb launched himself onto the table and started in. He tore great chunks of exposed flesh off the man with a sort of manic glee. Most of the dives patrons took one look at the sight, muttered a derisive comment or two, and then turned back to their bub.

I addressed the barkeep. "Who killed this man? Why did you leave him lying here?' I demanded answers harshly, but I was not in a mood to be sweet.

"I left 'em there cause the tarmy cutter that wrote yonder sodding bubber into the dead-book said he 'twas going to come back to collect the corpse. But I'm not one to cross a high-up lady like yourself." The barkeep had a squirrely voice, and it angered me greatly. His ruthless abuse of what Sigilians called "the cant" and my mother rightly called bad language, also annoyed me.

"So who is this assassin, and where can I find him?" I asked, showing an all teeth smile.

"He didn't give no name, and I don't want to be called a cross-trader for telling ya, m'lady." The barkeep fairly screeched.

I grabbed the pudgy human by the collar, wings on my back twitching in anger, and yanked hard. I slashed a stinging cut onto his flabby tissues with my long nails. "I'm not in a patient mood barkeep, so why don't you answer my questions before I decide that Exerb could use another meal."

He took a quick glance at the Varrangoin, now perched contentedly at the table and picking the last bits of flesh off the old soldier's bones with relish, and gulped. "Well mistress Tanar'ri, 'twas a Bladeling did the killing, and I never spoke truer in my life. He talked with the old bubber a long time, then all but ripped his face off. I called the guards, but he muttered some words at them and they seemed to forget all about it. The Bladeling said he'd be back for the body tonight though."

"Then I'll wait." I replied. "I'll take the soldier's table for me and Exerb. Bring him a perch if you could. I'll take whatever this house's best meat and red wine are to eat, and it had better be edible."

So I sat down then, and waited for a while. The meal was absolute swill, and the wine tasted like piss, but I choked it down. I do need to eat, and it was hopefully at least somewhat nourishing. Besides, one has to eat and drink at a bar, even cheap dives, or you're not fulfilling social obligations. Mother was very clear on such things, and I do believe she was right.

"So, why are we waiting around for this Bladeling?" Exerb asked me, curiously.

"So I can get from him what that soldier would have told me." I replied, irritated, surely he would have known that.

"You think this Bladeling will be so easy to persuade as this nice tasting bubber was?" Exerb shrilled. "I doubt that, bladelings are dangerous, tricky. They are lawful scum I hear, and quick to kill."

"Well, I have you to assist me then." I told Exerb. "Aren't you confident that the two of us together can beat any simple Bladeling?"

"Sure, lady, sure. The two of us can beat anything. What if he offers to let this crowd have their way with you if they help him? They've been looking at you all evening."

"Pigs." I spat anger burning forth again.

"Lady, you make it almost impossible on the poor men. Ha! If I were a human, or even close, I'd be stealing looks." Exerb said, the bat can be annoyingly frank sometimes.

He's probably right about me attracting men. I do wear rather tight leathers designed to show off my smooth figure and quite, hmm, ample, cleavage. It's often amusing to see the men goggle at what I won't let them have, unless one amuses me or intrigues me. Besides, looks allow me to get so many things that I want. Men are such fools that way. I may not have the unbeatable charms of my mother, but even my wings are shapely, and accent my sharp beauty.

"Let the Bladeling try, I'm in the mood for a fight tonight."

"Fine with me, but I can't move very well in this low bar, so let's make sure to move outside it if comes to blows."

"Whatever," I answered, bored once more, when the bar doors shot open.

They had been struck forcibly, and they snapped back closed with a matching slam, as a Bladeling appeared. He was an impressive figure I must admit. Not much taller than an average man, but he carried himself with the presence and menace to equal anyone I have every encountered. He wore nothing but a series of satchels and scroll cases, showing his bladed skin openly. The blades were impressive, how to describe them? Ice, jet, steel, and other metals, they all jutted sharp and jagged from every point on his body. Their lengths differed, longest on the torso and legs, but sharpest on the arms and the hands themselves seemed designed to form into literal swords when held with malice. Blades adorned his face as well, with only a small portion devoid of the protruding weapons, where his eyes, nose, and mouth were placed. His mouth was a thin line, glossy like aluminum, his nose was sharp and hawkish, and surely could cut a man, but the eyes, oh the eyes. They were the most intriguing part of him. The glowed like ice trapped in the freezing layers of the Abyss, but there was a starry tinge behind them, a glittering purple energy and passion that shown out, that allowed me to see the force of spirit held within. I had never before seen eyes as interesting as those.

The Bladeling looked at the table, the table where Exerb perched and I sat, accompanied by the cleaned bones of the dead soldier, and those eyes went cold. He glared at Exerb and me with a menace deeper than anything I felt since I felt slavery under the Baatezu. "You have destroyed the body." He said in a metallic voice, sharp and edged.

"Yes," I replied, as flippantly and styled as I could. "It wasn't helpful to anyone, so I decided to treat my familiar to a meal."

"I needed that body preserved, Tanar'ri, you have caused me a setback." He replied harshly, "And for no better reason than your bat's belly."

"I'm not a mere bat." Exerb screeched indignantly. "I'm a greater varangoin, and I'll eat what I want to eat."

"Shut up Exerb." I said at the exact same moment the Bladeling said. "Silence bat! I'm speaking to your mistress."

"Oh?" I asked. "What is it you have to say to me?"

"You have caused me a great setback wench." The bladeling spat. His reference made me so angry, so very angry, I could feel the killing spell move to the front of my mind. My hands began to move through silent motions. So I was a wench was I?

The Bladeling's leg lashed out, kicking the table into me, disrupting my movements, ruining my spell. "None of your demon magic now, witch. I will ask the questions. Why are you here, why let your bat familiar destroy the body, surely the barkeep must have told you I intended to use it."

"Somewhat too late he did that yes, but frankly, I had my own questions for this otherwise worthless human. When I found him dead I figured I might as well let Exerb get some use out of him."

"Really? You had questions for this man?" The Bladeling asked. "I recognize your Tanar'ri anger, witch, and if your explanation is satisfying I will drop the matter. I have no intention to do battle here."

"Why should I tell you what I wanted?" I asked tempestuously. "My business is my own, as I am sure yours is. I have no intention of doing battle with you, but I think I can convince the low-life of this bar to rip you apart."

"We could match mental magics witch, and accomplish nothing. I doubt whatever you wanted from this soldier would have been found. His memory had been wiped of the knowledge I required, and most other secrets I doubt not."

"His memory was wiped!" I was shocked, that was not something I had anticipated. "I was told this one knew the directions I needed, that he could tell me more!"

The bladeling was a sharp one, make no mistake, he didn't miss a single piece of my outburst, but neither did he react to it directly. "His memory was wiped, I searched his mind, and could find nothing of what I searched for. I think he was exposed to the Styx recently, and not much more than a few basic details had been told to him."

"So why did you kill him?" I asked. "I do not think anger compels you in the same way it does me."

"I killed him so that I could extract information from his spirit. I only left so that I could prepare the spells I required, and give his spirit time to become accustomed to death. I would have extracted the answers from his spirit if I could, it would remember before having been dunked in the Styx, at least if the memory loss had not been long ago." The Bladeling explained. "But you destroyed the body witch! Now I cannot summon his spirit!"

"Oh," I replied, feeling foolish. I should have realized that this one had a use for the body that caused it to leave him here. "Well, that is unfortunate, but it could not be helped. It seems neither of us will get what we wanted. Here, you seem to be a decent conversationalist, at least better than the rest of this rabble. Sit down, I'll buy you a drink, we will talk."

"As you wish." The Bladeling sat down, his body cut the cheap wood of seat and gouged in severely, but he seemed not to care about such things. I took that as a good sign. "Barkeep, water, in a clean glass." He called out as he sat.

"Water?" I crooked an eyebrow as the barkeep brought the drink.

"Exactly," he said, and grabbed the sputtering oil lamp at the center of the table. As I watched he poured a great dollop of oil into the water, and quickly drank it down before the two could separate. I blinked in surprise.

"Well, I should make the next Sensate I meet try that trick."

"Doubtless you'll kill them then, but it would probably be as much as such a fool deserves. Well, lady, you wished to speak with me then. I am Glintspine, a Bladeling of Acheron, though you have surely noticed that."

He gave me his name, so I was obligated to do the same, rules of polite conversation being what they are. Thankfully, humans provide so many names for one to establish oneself with. "I am Lillian Matcher." I told him. "Yes, I suppose I do want to talk with you. We seem to have an interest in this recently deceased soldier. I don't suppose you'd be willing to tell me why you wanted to speak with him."

"It is a matter of my people, and need not be known to outsiders, besides, I believe that you should make the revelations, since it is your familiar that caused the trouble." Glintspine said cordially.

"I resent that you know." Exerb injected shrilly. "I can talk you know, don't try and talk around me, I could outwit most of these bubbers with ease, and I've killed more than few in my years too. If you have a problem with me, then say so, and I'll mess up that sharp face of yours." He flashed his long needle teeth at Glintspine.

Glintspine spat a few metallic tones, which I suppose were words in his own tongue. Exerb's eyes went suddenly wide, and then they glassed over slightly. "Do be quiet bat, I have business with your mistress. Why don't you take a nap?"

Exerb's head nodded slightly, and he fell almost immediately asleep.

"I admire your skill," I said taking a sip of wine. "But charming a person's familiar is not the best way to encourage someone to spill their secrets."

"Yes, but I think your tongue is more trustworthy than the bat's. You at least have some sense of civility, Tanar'ri lady, the Varangoin has none. Now, would you tell me why you wished to speak with this soldier, or must we come to blows? I have a feeling that such an exchange would be to our mutual woe."

"Perhaps, you do seem to have some skills." I considered this polite menace for a moment. Glintspine

seemed honest enough. Certainly he was as cunning as any I'd met in a while, and more than capable of handling himself, but he was still a man, and men can be controlled. "Alright, a Sensate told me this soldier could lead me to a place in the Red Prison that interests me."

"Ah, Carceri. By chance I was also inquiring of the same plane. What in Carceri do you seek?"

"Oh, just some carvings on Minethys." I said nonchalantly.

Glintspine's eyes went utterly cold. They burned like black ice for a second, and I felt my blood freeze. "It would seem we seek the same thing, Lillian Matcher. We must speak further on this, for I must know why you are searching after the secrets of my people."

I was almost afraid, there was such menace behind the words. I knew it would be a fight to the death should I answer wrong, and that I must answer. "The secrets of your people?" I asked carefully. "I'm seeking a great treasure, but nothing to do with bladelings as far as I know."

"Then you deny seeking the Blades of Kelven?" Was the ice-laded reply.

"The Blades of Kelven?" I was genuinely confused. "What does that treasure have to do with the bladelings?"

"Treasure?" Those eyes stayed cold. "I suppose that might be how it is described by many, but the Blades represent the secrets of my people. They are not for the likes of you to seek them out."

"Really? I've been seeking that treasure for over two years. I've been through all kinds of hardships, and only now am I even making real headway. Don't think you can just tell me to stop Bladeling."

"The gods of my people have appointed me to seek the Blades. I will not have a Tanar'ri try and steal them. If you have knowledge I will see that you are rewarded for sharing it, but you will cease this search now."

"I don't think that's likely Glintspine. The treasure represented by the Blades is immense. If your people want to pay me off for it, they can offer their price when I have the Blades in my hands." I spoke coyly, but I made sure to inject resolve into my voice. I have no intention of giving up on the Blades, not after all the work I've put into them. Besides, I had a feeling the Bladeling could lead me to them.

"I see, you are surprisingly resolved for a Tanar'ri, Lady Lillian Matcher. I would kill you, but I am unsure what the outcome of a battle between us would be, and my task is more important than to die here. I will need your knowledge, since the Blades are of the utmost importance. I will not tell you any secrets, but I must have what you know at my disposal. If that means you will accompany me on the search, then so be it. I will journey to Minethys with you and your familiar. I had intended to hire mercenaries here, but perhaps this is a better solution. You are obviously a sorceress, and I am a priest. Between the three of us we ought to be formidable in battle. So, is it agreed?" Glintspine said with ironclad resolution.

I was somewhat taken aback by his offer, but I realized that I would have to accept. The only alternative was battle, one that I was unsure I could win, especially without Exerb's aid. Besides, I like this bladeling named Glintspine. He seems interesting, and he has faith, faith is sometimes fun to play with, and I've seen the power of the gods sew people together in the past. "I will agree to a partnership together, with the two of us equal, and to split the treasure equally at the end. We will share all we know as soon as we get to Carceri, so that there are no secrets between us, yes? Otherwise I'm sure we'd betray each other. I am familiar with betrayal, and better that is not there as a threat from the start."

"As you wish, but what I reveal can never be told to others, for I shall be forced to entrust you with many secrets of the Bladelings, my people, and I will kill you should you even try to betray us."

"Well, you can try." I laughed. "Here's to a search together!" I raised my glass and toasted him. He raised his own empty one is response. Of course I didn't tell Glintspine about you Verid, he doesn't know you're behind me, which should be interesting.

"Well, then tomorrow we will go through the gate to Carceri." Glintspine said. "I know the carvings are in the Pit of Gargon, on Minethys, in the desert south of Scoured, a largish town. I do not know where in the pit they might be found. The soldier was to guide me, but perhaps you know a bit more?" He questioned.

"A man in Carceri told me that the Carvings of Bladework are covered by the shadows as the light is lost when a sandstorm passes from the east. I did not know where the Pit was though, but we should be able to find the carvings when we get there now." I said, invigorated that our information matched. It seemed Glintspine would be quite useful indeed.

"Good. I have a room elsewhere in town, but I will meet you at the gate in the morning, be ready to go when you arrive." Glintspine said quietly, then turned and left.

So that's it, I have a Bladeling companion. I woke up Exerb, dispelled the charm that had been laid on him and told him what had happened. He said he would watch Glintspine very closely, and not get caught in spells again. He doesn't know much about Bladelings, and neither do I, but I guess you learn what you must learn, eh?

Carceri tomorrow, well leaving Curst will be nice. They charge too much for everything and its all junk anyway. This refuse heap of a town is one I fully intend to leave behind, thank you very much. Pity things don't look to get any better.

---End of Entry---

A JOURNEY THROUGH PATHS OF SILENCE

being a brief treatise on death and the alterations subsequent

Death has always been a matter of utmost controversy, both to primes who know virtually nothing, and to planars who think they know it all. Each faction, church, sect and individual have their own view of how death is manifested. Now, at first sight, most of these views seem rather incompatible, and thus the general opinion is that one of these views is true, while the others are not. Yet does not the multiverse run on belief? The outer planes themselves are formed, maintained and governed by belief. So is this not to say that belief, or rather conviction is sufficient for any idea to become true? Is there only one truth, or are there as many truths as there are believers? In the following article, we shall try to resolve this issue, and show that all of the popular beliefs regarding death are not only true, but that they are closely related and governed by the same laws which will be made clear. And to accomplish this, we shall thoroughly examine the ways in which physical death can affect a sentient, self-aware being.

Before we address the matter of death itself, however, it is imperative that we begin by distinguishing the components of being, so that by delineating them we might see how death affects each in turn.

We shall thus define a sentient, self-aware being as the ensemble of body, soul, psyche and spirit.

The body of a creature consists of the creature's extension (or place in the sense of bounding space) in the physical world. Thus a human, and a wraith, though one be referred to as corporeal while the other incorporeal, both have a body. And it is this body that serves to consolidate the soul-psyche-spirit ensemble. It is both a cage and a receptacle.

The soul-psyche-spirit ensemble is a difficult thing to explain. One should imagine these as a large sphere (the spirit) encompassing a smaller one (the soul), and in-between them an array of determinations which constitute the psyche.

The soul is the essence of a being. It is an array of pure determinations, inherited at birth, augmented through life and passed on at death. It passively participates at the psyche as a priori patterns. Talent is the most evident form of soul participation in the form of inherited proficiency.

The psyche is what defines individuality. It is the result of experience and stored in the form of memory. Any abnormal loss or shift of memory results in the alteration of the psyche and thus the individual itself. For, of all these three components, the psyche alone is an active principle.

The spirit is what defines the creature itself. It is a repository for accidental determinations which derive from the psyche and have the possibility, if they become sufficiently pure, to augment the soul. The soul has form, the spirit is form, yet the psyche is formless. Without the soul as foundation and the spirit as container, the psyche could have no coherence, being nothing more than a confused mass of accidents. Thus, it is the spirit that regulates the psyche by creating patterns, which, through the active participation of the psyche take the form of mannerisms. These patterns could very well be thought of as impressions, which become a part of the spirit itself.

Thus, with a clearer understanding of 'life' we can now move on to the matter of death. As we all know, death is the end as far as the body is concerned. This body will gradually dissolute until it is no more. Yet what is to happen to the soul, psyche and spirit once the body no longer contains them? This, we shall see, depends on the beliefs of the deceased, though not entirely. Belief, thus, while indeed important, is not always enough.

Death comes in many forms, and the paths it opens

are more diverse still if we are to believe all that is preached. Yet we shall see that regardless of how different certain paths may seem, many of them are actually the same, while others, though seemingly alike, are vastly different. For the purpose of this discussion, we shall group the effects of death in two fundamental categories, as far as becoming is concerned. Thus, there is continuity and there is end. Since this is not the place to discuss all things, we shall analyze two paths of each category, namely petitionerhood and ascension for the former category, and oblivion and True Death for the latter. While petitionerhood and ascension would seem to be incompatible at first sight, we shall see that this is in fact not so, and that they represent in fact the same path, though seen from different perspectives. Oblivion and True Death are also objects of popular misconception, for though they might appear the same to some, they are in fact quite different, and this for reasons that we shall also address.

When a person dies, his body can no longer contain the soul-psyche-spirit ensemble, and these in turn are released. When this happens, the spirit, which has up to this point acted as an interface between the microcosm and macrocosm though the use of the body, now unable to act as such becomes diaphanous and loses its power to contain the accidents that form the psyche. These, in turn will steadily leave both the body and the soul-spirit ensemble, and drawn into the Astral, will coalesce into memory cores. How or why accidental determinations are drawn to the Astral is of no concern to this particular discussion.

Now then, up to this point, death will have the same effects on a being, regardless of belief or outside factors. It is from this point that the path of death branches out, with each diverging path having a different effect on what is left of the being proper, namely the soul and the spirit.

In the case of petitionerhood, the soul-spirit ensemble is drawn to a particular plane or realm, either through Astral conduits in the case of primes, or trough progressive passage through intermediate planes in the case of planars. Now regardless of route, the soul-spirit usually manages to arrive at its destination proper (of course, there are exceptions, usually due to outside interference, though this is not the place to address these). By the time that the soul-spirit has reached its destination, the psyche is utterly lost to the Astral, and thus all that remains is the soul and a still diaphanous spirit. It is important to note that only upon reaching the appropriate destination does the spirit begin to solidify. One must understand that though the psyche has been lost, the spirit still holds the patterns that were impressed on it in life, and though this soul-spirit ensemble has no sentience, being entirely passive, it is, now more than ever, susceptible to the pull of pure belief manifested by the outer planes, the echo of these planes resounding in the impressions that the spirit still holds. And thus, the soul-spirit ensemble will eventually be drawn to the plane or realm that best fits it. Now, the solidification of the spirit is most likely the result of the pure energy of its destination plane, which, resonating in perfect accord with the spirit, acts as an active force to embody the soul-spirit. With a new body present, the spirit is infused with enough energy so that it is no longer diaphanous to accident. Thus, with the spirit solid enough so that the first accidental determination is retained, a new psyche is formed, and thus a petitioner is born. It should be noted then, that regardless how long a soul-spirit is detained from reaching its destination, this does not influence it in any way, for the spirit, being as yet diaphanous, is not susceptible to accidental determinations, which in effect ensures it's purity upon arrival. Nor is the spirit liable to dissolute, for as long as there is participation from the destination plane or realm, in the form of a drawing force, the spirit is subject to sufficient energy to keep it intact.

We have thus come to know how a petitioner is born, yet this path of death is still not at its end. Certainly, the petitioner will usually live its life utterly ignorant of his previous one, for though the petitioner still possesses a soul which gives it the same proficiencies as before, and though he still possesses the same spirit, thus exhibiting the same mannerisms he did in life, something has changed. Both his body and, more importantly his psyche are derived from the plane or realm that he now inhabits. And this is very important, for it is exactly this reason that makes petitioners seem to narrow-mindedly follow one course, and that alone, viz. to merge with their plane or power. The reason for this is easily discernable in the fact that the psyche, being a collection of accidental determinations, is now limited to determinations peculiar to that plane or realm. The result of this becomes more apparent as the petitioner progresses towards his goal. For though, from the initial moment of death up until rebirth as petitioner, the spirit had been diaphanous, and thus remained intact, once whole again, it will resume its becoming, with the new psyche leaving its mark on the spirit and even the soul, though to a lesser degree, for

the soul is less malleable than the spirit, and is only susceptible to the purest of determinations.

And so we come to the point of a petitioner's merging with his plane or power. It is widely known that by merging, a petitioner is actually absorbed into the plane or power, yet we should again clarify the matter. For it is only a part of the petitioner, which is actually absorbed, and that is the spirit. Certainly, the psyche ceases to be, and the accidents, being derived from the plane or power do not take to the Astral. The body ceases to be as well, for, much like the psyche, it was formed from the energy of the plane or power itself, and thus it is there that it returns. Yet what remains is the soul, which, being entirely essence, cannot be absorbed. The soul is thus discarded, and chances are it will eventually be drawn to a 'host', namely a still unborn being, which possesses a diaphanous spirit, though not yet a soul or a psyche.

So it is now that we come to see the truth of ascension. The Godsmen are rather ambiguous when it comes to defining ascension. Certainly, by constantly striving to improve oneself during life, they will ascend, yet what this actually means they choose to obscure in words. So what does it mean to ascend then, and how does this conform to petitionerhood? Are we to believe, perhaps, that a Godsman avoids petitionerhood altogether, and instead is immediately reborn as a higher being, the meaning of which we cannot be certain? No, for ascension is much more subtle than that. By striving to improve oneself during life, a Godsman actually concentrates on shaping his soul, by augmenting it with pure determinations. Thus, the more determinations a soul possesses, the more elevated it is. Yet as we have already learned, ascension is not only something exclusive to Godsmen, but in fact they, much like everyone else have to pass the stage of petitionerhood in order to ascend. Thus, ascension is not transcendence, as some would have you believe, but rather a progressive journey which most undertake, whether they are aware of it or not. Each reincarnation, by which we shall understand the act by which a soul comes to inhabit a living host as yet souless, thus sees an ascended being, in terms of the soul, which is the sole persisting element of a being.

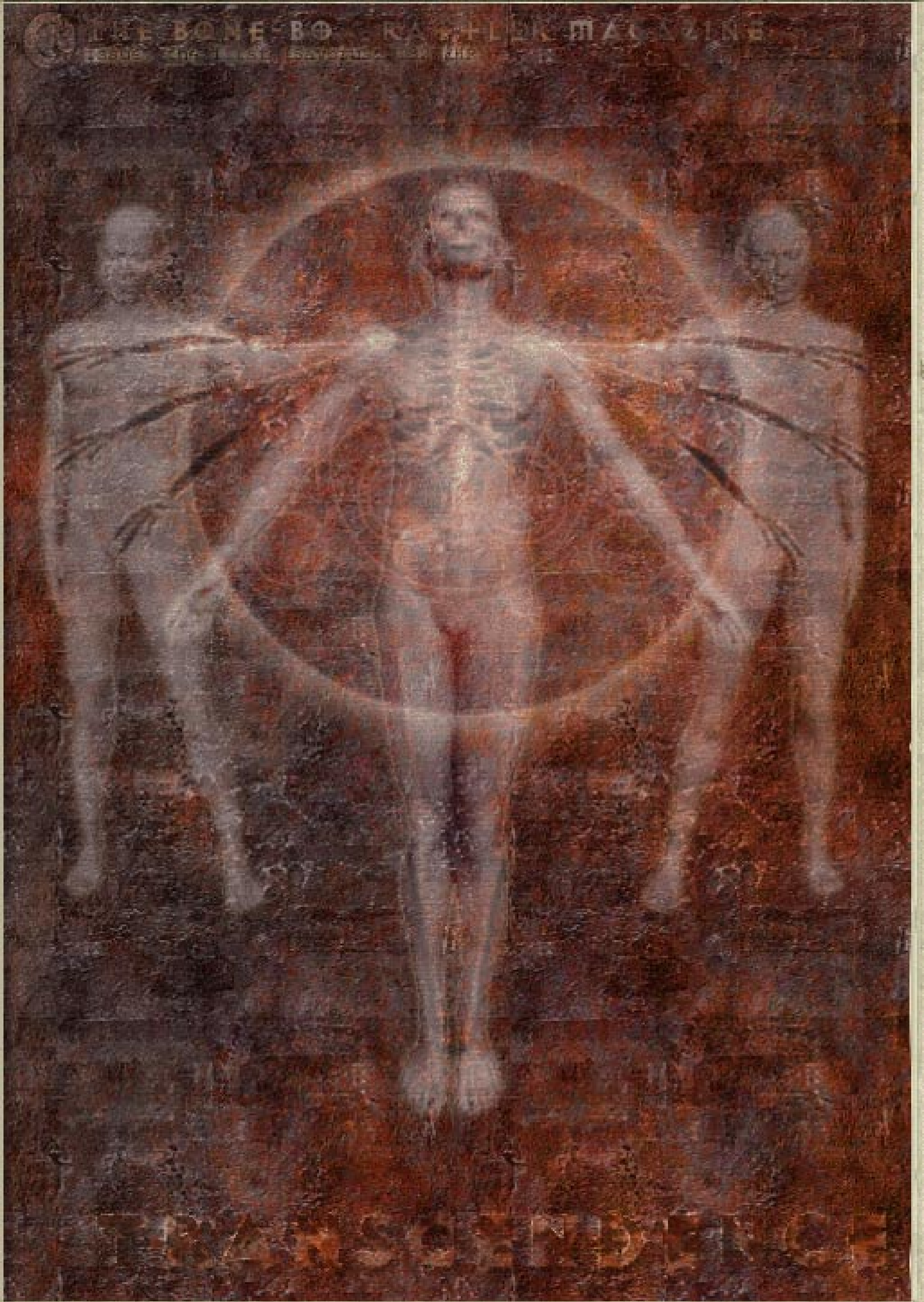
We have thus gained a deeper understanding of death as continuity. Yet what of death as end? By what we have learned so far, it seems that the usual, and indeed, normal course lies in continuity. So is then an end possible, and if so, how do oblivion and True Death conform to the laws of the multiverse?

Before we go any further, we should address the distinction between oblivion and True Death, for though some Dustmen namers might insist that True Death is oblivion, this is in fact quite incorrect, as we shall see.

Both oblivion and True Death are paths that require belief in the form of conviction, yet we can already see a distinction in the fact that belief is not sufficient in both cases. If a being truly believes that there is no afterlife, that being will probably achieve oblivion, yet merely by believing in True Death, a Dustman will not necessarily achieve it. The reason for this is to be found in the actual process, or path of death, and thus it is this that we need to compare so as to understand why.

There are no real obstacles in reaching oblivion. If a being is convinced that there is no afterlife, then, upon death, the spirit will dissolute along with the body, for without any external participation, as is the case with the drawing force that ensures the stability of petitioners' souls, the spirit, like most things, will fall to entropy. The psyche still breaks down into memory cores, which find their way to the Astral, yet with the spirit gone, that being cannot be resurrected. The soul, once freed from the spirit will reincarnate.

True Death however, acts much like an inverted power would. To achieve True Death effectively means to merge with it, though while for a power this means that the spirit is absorbed, and thus becomes a part of a bigger whole, in the case of True Death, the spirit actually implodes, coalescing through a final inward journey. Yet herein lies the obstacle that must be overcome. Remember the image we thought of earlier to represent the soul-psyche-spirit ensemble, viz. two spheres, one contained within the other. For the spirit (the larger sphere) to implode, it needs to overcome the soul (the smaller sphere), which must also collapse upon itself to the point of implosion, driven by the guiding path the spirit follows. The driving force is present, for True Death is an inherent part of the soul, yet if the spirit and the soul are not pure enough, or if any discrepancy exists between the two, then the spirit is unable to overcome the soul, in which case the spirit, hearing the call yet unable to answer it, would be forever trapped in this state, unless it is somehow destroyed. In this case, the deceased Dustman will not only have failed to achieve True Death, but would also be unable reincarnate due to its trapped soul.


THE BONEBO RATHER MAGAZINE
TRANSCENDENCE

We shall conclude our treatise at this point, knowing that, while most of the constituting elements of this discourse would demand further analysis, we have at least come to have a clearer knowledge of death.

by Initiate Rigor Mortis

WELCOME TO THE DEEP!

being an introduction to the Deep Ethereal and its peculiarities

This piece has come to us thanks to the diligent efforts of the crews of the Olvover Diz *and the* Ersatz Folly, *and the Rattler's own in the Ether. – the editors*

Hail and greetings, fellow sailors of the Waveless Sea, as well as all our other-planar readers. We understand that this may be read even in Sigil, or perhaps even such places as the demiplane city of Union! We, the crew of the *Olvover Diz*, feel quite privileged to be able to reach readers in such a prestigious, famed demiplane.

We are the crew of the *Olvover Diz*, vessel of the esteemed Etherfarer's Society, converted to the purposes of science as well as exploration. Our craft is an altered marlin brought from wildspace, changed heavily within and without. Her spelljamming helm has been replaced with a power core, and her sails have been rewoven with stabilized ether. All arms have been replaced with most effective equipment of our own design, as well as other tools that have seen use among other ether explorers. We sail the Waveless Sea to catalogue and study the multitudinous ethereal phenomena, the first of our Society commissioned to perform such intensive studies beyond the demiplanes.

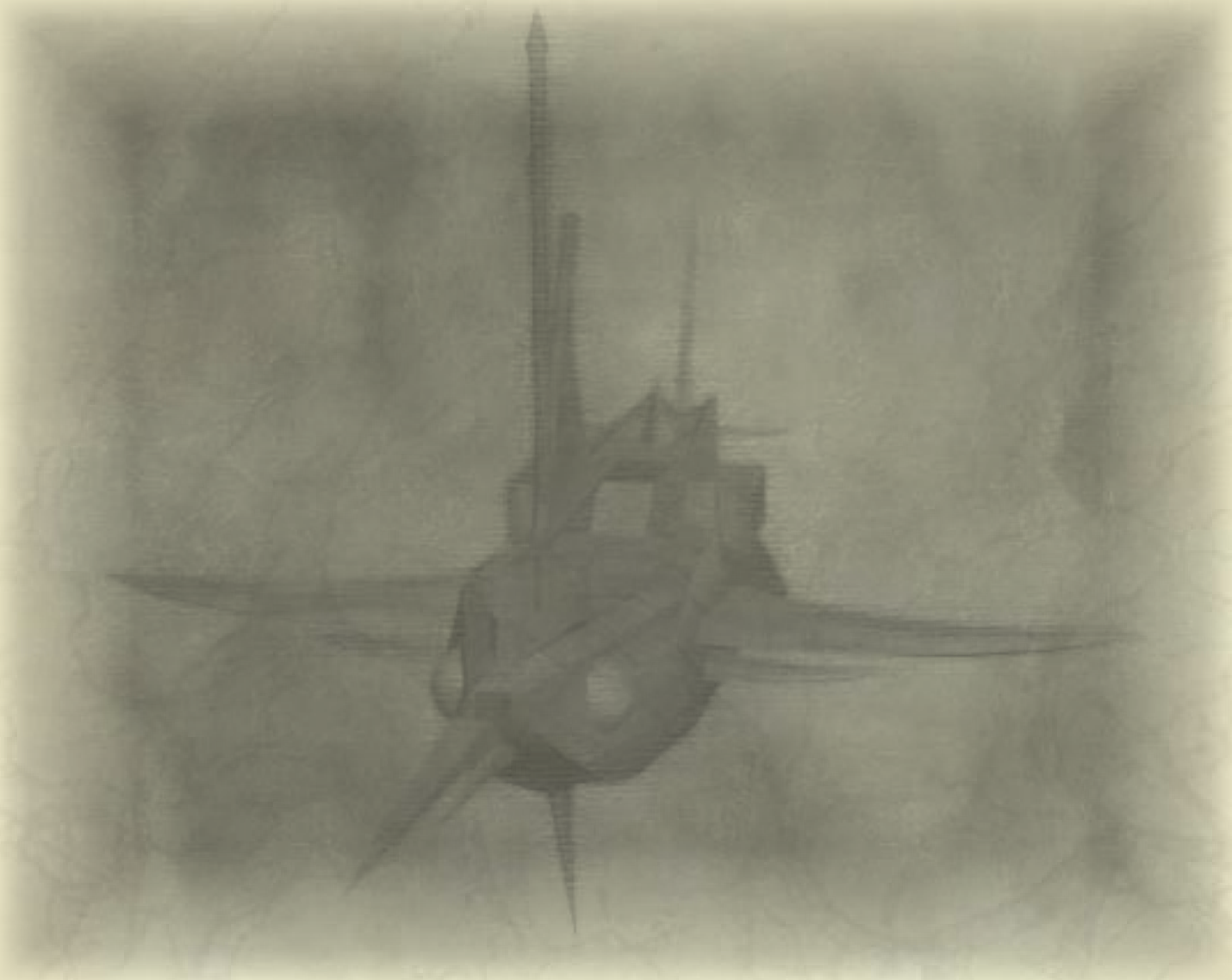
As such, we treat you here to an introduction to the Deep, all its glories and wonders, but also the mundanities. This is for those of you out there, whether you're prime or planar, who want to get briefed about the Waveless Sea before diving in.

An initial understanding must be had of the nature of the Ethereal Plane, something my fellows seem unwilling to provide. So, the task has fallen to me, Geshtira Enkilmet. Both the Border and the Deep are suffused with a medium known as protomatter, or the ether. To help accept some of my colleagues' more overwrought and wild hypotheses, it must be understood that protomatter is indeed not true matter. Instead, it exists in a state of flux between the elements, positive and negative energy, and some essential nature known as *potential*. By the nature of the intermixture of the elements and energies, the protomatter may potentially become anything. Enough protomatter condenses and becomes a demiplane, filled with anything from dead rock to living vegetation, and even possibly becoming nothing but a massive sphere of pure platinum.

Anything can possibly be created from the protomatter eventually, though control of the material by most is still far too unrefined to begin to properly reproduce any other known materials, from steel to water to a raw fhorge steak. This nature of protomatter can be controlled unconsciously to allow a being to breathe in the Ethereal Plane, even so that humans and fish could coexist quite easily within five feet of each other. The potential of the protomatter to be air, or whatever other substance is needed, is drawn out so that it genuinely becomes so in the lungs or gills of whatever creature is breathing. Some travelers and numerous nathri have even become able to concentrate on the protomatter and derive a basic nourishment from it, though it is hardly fulfilling and real food must be substituted before long, else the traveler may find it more difficult and starve.

This potential-infused nature of the protomatter is also what makes divinations impossible on the plane, as one cannot find a single truth among an infinite swarm of particles that *may be* the same truth or a sufficiently close one.

There exist three phases of the protomatter. Before it is properly known as protomatter, it is the ethereal fog, the mists of the plane. The first phase is what is known as ephemeral protomatter, created when the mist weakly condenses, and slips back to the fog almost immediately. Some small amount of ephemeral protomatter becomes quintessential protomatter. Quintessential, the second phase, can be carved and shaped. Some small amount



of quintessential protomatter will, finally, change into stable protomatter. Spells can force this change into the third phase. Any shaping or carving of the protomatter must be done in the quintessential phase, as stable ether cannot be changed -- except to be shifted back to quintessential protomatter.

The Ethereal Plane's philosophical location is between the Prime Material Plane and the Inner Planes. By philosophical, I mean a non-literal, conceptualized understanding of the cosmological structure of the multiverse. There are many such interpretations of the multiversal structure, with perhaps the most famous one being the "Greater Great Ring," this conceptualized structure lacking only a plane of transitive nature standing between the Outer Planes and the Inner Planes -- though some, acting on hearsay and gossip and their own poorly thought-out logic, place a plane they call the Ordial Plane between the Outer and Inner Planes. Though this plane has no evidence to support any hypotheses of its existence, this unfounded supposition continues to be perpetuated by fools who think themselves scholars.

This conceptualized structure of the multiversal cosmology places the Ethereal Plane between the Prime Material Plane and the Inner Planes, but this neglects the essential nature of the Ethereal Plane to partially *overlay* these planes, as well as the demiplanes, which are initially "seeded" within the Deep Ethereal Plane. This overlapping phenomenon is known commonly as the Border Ethereal, a phased aspect of the Ethereal Plane that coexists with a similarly phased aspect of the planes the Ethereal borders. The Border is neither exactly Ethereal nor Prime, or Inner-planar, or demiplanar. It has close ties to the Ethereal Plane, much stronger than to whatever other plane it is connected to, and one may cross from the Border to the Ethereal Plane with little more than a thought, as well as the other way around, through the color curtain found in the Ether.

The philosophical location does have some use in understanding the Ethereal Plane's genuine, planar

location. As much as any infinite space *can* be bound on more than one side, the reality of the Ethereal Plane's planar location is that it connects -- is apparently *bound by* -- the Prime Material Plane and the Inner Planes. Bound by simple virtue of the fact that one must pass through the Ethereal Plane to reach one from the other, neglecting the use of extremely powerful magicks or portals.

My colleagues' preference for an understanding of the Ethereal Plane has a few problems with it. In both a very broad and narrow sense, the definition *is* true. In the senses most of them are familiar with -- the raw infinities of the elemental planes, the real infinity of the phlogiston and wildspace and all the worlds of the Prime, and the perceptual infinities of the Outer Planes -- the definition is *very* false. The Ethereal Plane is not infinite in space, or belief, or element. It is infinite in possibility, and perhaps in element. In space, it is terribly finite, and belief does not even affect it, though the power of the mind does.

Allow me to provide a simple example: items made of stabilized ether. These can only exist on the Ethereal Plane because it is the only place it is possible, that it is *probable* for them to exist. This may seem terribly abstract, to speak of possibility and probability as defining forces of the nature of the Ethereal Plane and of ether itself, but it is no different than to speak of belief as a defining force of the Outer Planes! Movement through the Ethereal Plane then takes on a very different nature than the one we understand.

There is, in fact, only *one* point of space in the Ethereal Plane. This point is indeed infinite -- infinitely *small*, that is. What does exist, however, is an infinite variety of possibilities for what *might exist in this point*. Matter and energies actually can exist on the Ethereal, though, just as they can exist on the Astral Plane, a plane widely acknowledged of being of *no* space or time. Just as matter and energy entering the Astral Plane are transmuted into that plane's essential energies and remanifested, matter and energy entering the Ethereal Plane are transmuted into "waveforms" of possibility. It is about the only thing that keeps your head from meeting your ankles, as well as your stomach and your elbows and every other part of your being when you enter the Ethereal, as well as every other piece of every other being's anatomy, not to mention all the weapons and ships and clumps of stabilized ether. This phenomenon is replicated in the Outer Planes, where something material is transmuted into a non-energy -- such as belief -- and is subject to rules surrounding it. There is at least one reliable account of someone on the Outer Planes being believed -- or rather, doubted -- out of existence, in accordance with the observed rules of belief in the Outer Planes.

To put it in simplest terms, what it all amounts to is: you exist as you are because it is *most likely* to be so. It is *highly* unlikely, *very* improbable that your ears would ever share the same location as your ankles. So, every part of you exists in a probability where your body is as it normally is, and thus you *are* as such. Most of the rules of material reality hold here because they are so probable -- you *cannot* walk through walls because it is unlikely you and the wall might occupy the same location.

Travel in the ether thus relies *not* on moving through space, but shifting through probabilities. Moving from Point A to Point B works thusly: when you are at Point A, you are where Point A is *most probable*. When you begin to move from Point A to Point B, you move to where it is less and less likely to be at Point A, until you reach Point C, which is *no* probability of being at A or B. Of course, there is an infinity of Point Cs out there to select from, if you are not picky. Most try to follow some "course" they choose by unconsciously setting other criteria -- avoiding the Border, staying "near" settlements of others, and so forth. After reaching this Point C, the traveler begins to move towards Point B by moving to where it is more and more probable to be at Point B, until they are where it is *most* probable. In short, you decide it is more likely to be "over there" and thus move that way through the Ethereal medium.

This explains the need for elemental spirits to inhabit the power cores of most ether ships, for an object lacking a mind to steer it cannot control the journey. Trying to move a ship in the ether without a mind properly connected to steer it would mean the trip could be forever unless, out of sheer chance, you stumbled upon the proper probability, the place where it is most likely to be somewhere.

The hazards of the Ethereal Plane are not to be discounted. Aside from living creatures, there are three important hazards and dangers of the Deep. These are the ether cyclone, the ether gap, and the vortex front.

The ether cyclone is akin to a true cyclone or waterspout on the Prime, except it is larger than any such could be on a Prime world. If one can hear the cyclone coming, an unlikely prospect, he or she can hope to evade it.

If not, then a traveler is doomed to be flung across the Waveless Sea by the cyclone.

The ether gap is one of the most deadly hazards of the plane, but also one of the easiest to avoid. They can be seen from a distance away as they draw the mists into their deadly maws, along with everything else. One who turns back quickly enough can avoid tumbling into an ether gap, which leads to death -- or worse, perhaps total annihilation of the soul or spirit. Nobody who has fallen into an ether gap is known to have ever come back, and not even the arcane might of a *wish* can restore a gap's victim.

The third hazard is the vortex front. A vortex is a direct connection from the Prime to one of the Inner Planes, and are near-instantaneous. Their paths move through the depths of the Ethereal Plane, and occasionally can be found as narrow but long "tubes" through the Deep. Every once in a long while, a length of up to ten miles pulses, expanding and contracting rapidly, sending out a massive cylindrical wave of protomatter. This wave can harm those who are caught in it, though some attempt to get caught in the vortex front to move with it and somehow speed their journey.

We end this introduction to the Ethereal Plane with a discussion of magic. Every plane has its effects upon the various schools of magic, not to mention effects upon various spells due to its relationship with the other planes of existence. Obviously, considering its lack of connections to the Astral Plane and the Outer Planes, very few spells that access each will work without spell keys -- though wielders of divine powers exist in exception. Clerics are still able to cast such powerful magicks as the spell known commonly as *astral projection*, though objects of both arcane and divine power are restricted.

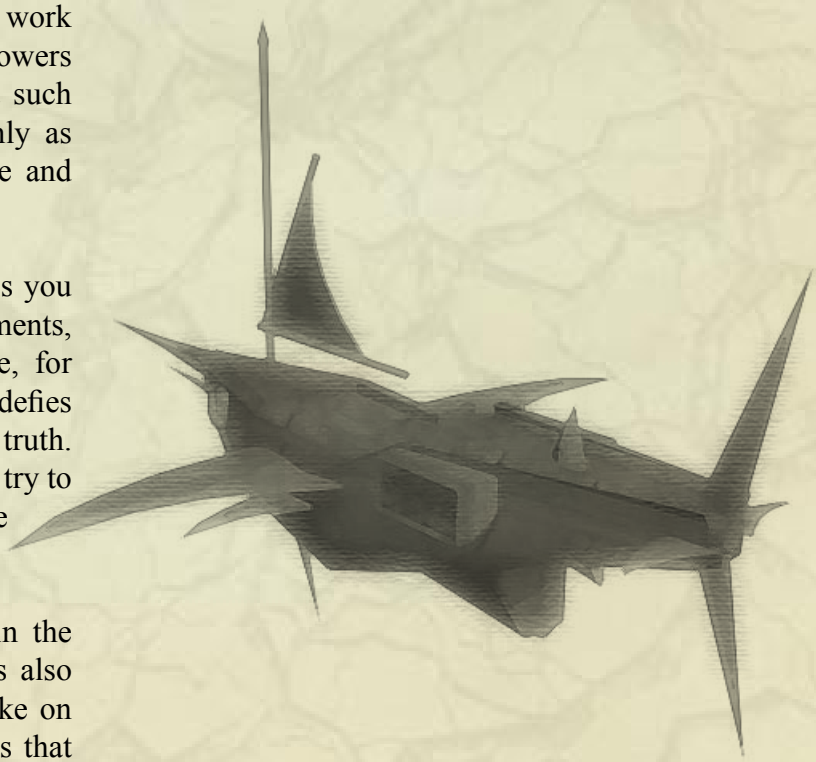
Do not bother trying to cast a summoning unless you are trying to call a being from the Prime, the elements, or a demiplane. Divinations are worthless here, for the sheer raw potential of the Ethereal medium defies the ability of such spells to "pin down" any truth. Abjurations are similarly weakened because they try to limit something in some way, which is against the nature of the ether.

Illusions are extremely potent and dangerous in the Ethereal. They are harder to resist, and there is also a small chance they may never fade, as they take on substance from the ether. Stories tell of illusions that not only took on substance but developed other powers. There are phantom steeds out there that never faded away, gained intelligence, and gained powers akin to some of the most vicious of spells. Some such beings are also extremely evil and seek to extinguish all life they encounter.

There are finally some various conditions in common between some spells that are not based on school. For example, such spells as the *black tentacles* or *dig* simply will not work, unless cast upon quintessential or stable ether. Nor will any other spells that are meant to shape the terrain. Meanwhile, purely disruptive spells such as the one known as *disintegrate* are rather more difficult to survive in the ether. The last notable change is of spells such as the well-known *polymorph*, which occasionally shift a person into a different form than was intended.

Of course, this is all really only touching on the mere *surface* of what the Ethereal has in store for visitors! Why, we could go into endless detail on the many demiplanes catalogued by the Etherfarer Society, or the sights and sites out there like the Body Luminous or the Waystop on Urunaland. The wonders of the Ethereal are out there to behold, or even to be made, for the intrepid sailor of the Waveless Sea!

by the Crew of the Olvover Diz



THE PRISON REGION

being a description of that area surrounding one of Sigil's most imposing edifices

The Prison of Sigil stands in the Lady's Ward. The area abutting it is the most quiet and law-abiding of the whole city, for fear of the wrath of justice at the hands of the Mercykillers. This suspicion might in some part be justified, the truly just are quite few within the bounds of Sigil, but it hasn't prevented a number of truly honest businesses from springing up in this part of town. Planewalkers and Cagers generally avoid this area; this is their folly and their loss, at least for the few honest men and women among them. The shops are surprisingly interesting places, especially for many who believe the honest man is always a bore. There are many useful things to be found here.

I pass through Sigil only rarely, but when I do this is the area I frequent most often to find those things I need. So, I feel reasonably confident of my ability to do justice to an explanation of this area and what a person can expect to find here.

One just warning: I am indeed a Mercykiller, and my opinions follow accordingly. Also, I have two motives for writing this, and neither one involves kindness to travelers. I am writing this to help improve the unjustly tarnished Mercykiller image, and because I have been suitably paid for my services. As for those of you reading this who are not followers of justice, well, you may attempt to exploit the knowledge herein to your own sick devices, but you will assuredly be caught and suitably punished. We are ever vigilant.

The area around the Prison is not large, as there are few streets between it and the City Court on one side and the Lower Ward on the other. The edge of Sigil abuts the lower edge, and Fortune's Wheel stands only two streets away in the other direction. The area dominated by the presence of the Prison can thus be summed up into four sections. They are: Guvner's Mile, up to the halfway point between the Prison and the City Courts and extending to Petitioner's Square, Advocate's Row, likewise between the Courts and the Tower of the Wyrm, Wyrm Circle, the area surrounding the tower, and Petitioner's Square.

The area has a general character different from the rest of Sigil. This area is a combination of tension, from visitors who do not hold justice well in their hearts, and assurance from the Mercykillers and the truly just who reside here without gnawing fear in their hearts. The Harmonium patrol often here, and in force, but it's not truly necessary that they do so. The Mercykillers patrol with great diligence and strength. Their patrols consist of four to six tough agents and there is always at least one on each street and square. Also, the guards atop the Prison walls can survey the whole area, and do so whenever they can spare a glance from the Prisoners within.

Admittedly, there are two states to the area around the Prison. The first is the normal environment, when nothing beyond the patrols is present. During this period the streets and buildings resemble a well-ordered area filled with the just and well to do, with nothing to fear. The other state is that of execution. Executions are held in Petitioners Square on a monthly basis, and the whole area fills up to watch. These poor near-do-wells are nothing more than a menace, and the Prison turns out dozens of guards to keep order and assure none of the just residents are harmed. Once the executions are completed the Mercykillers order the crowd to disperse, and then disperses them by force if necessary.

Guvner's Mile

The last major road before reaching the edge of the ring of Sigil Guvners Mile represents a center for law and learning in the Lady's Ward. Filed with the cases of rich advocates, sages, chroniclers, and moneylenders, these are all beings who make their money by clearing contracted arrangements between the intelligent and learned. These homes are spacious and well made, but

nothing to awe a passerby, the truly rich always have some shady dealings to hide and fear justice. Still these honest folk who have gained wealth by the toils of their minds have nothing to fear from the Mercykillers, and have wisely traded safety for a little bit of extra jink. Guvner's mile is generally filled with homes and small businesses, sometimes both at once. These all open at the same hour in the morning and close at the same time at night, by agreement of all the residents. There are no taverns here, but there is a café or two for the purpose of business meetings in the open air, when it chances to be nice for a few hours.

The chief services of Guvner's Mile are legal advice and knowledge. If you need to know about some esoteric topic there's a good chance some sage lives on Guvner's Mile with the dark of it, or at least access to the books that contain them. Their services don't come cheap, but their information will certainly be as reliable as it gets.

Some of the Interesting sites of Guvner's Mile:

Creased Lines: This is the studio of the rather famous (in highly selective circles) cartographer Trankil, a Sigil born Guvner with a helpful nature. The mapmaker is getting on in the years, but he still has the touch and skills essential for his craft. Trankil became famous among cartographers for his ability to take scattered reports and accurately correlate them to map the flow of the interplanar rivers Oceanus and the Syx. Two great maps adorn the walls of his show rooms, one of each river, twelve feet long and eight feet high. Smaller maps of the rivers, and many other places besides are available to planewalkers for a price. Trankil used to make maps almost constantly in his youth whenever he received a new location to demarcate, but now he works primarily for specialized commissions. Any planewalker wanting a map made or copied by Trankil had better be prepared to front a good deal of jink (at least 500gp worth) or they'll be directed to search elsewhere. The advantage is that Trankil won't fudge his maps, if he doesn't know where to place something, he'll tell the buyer frankly, and his maps of the Styx have saved my life more than a few times in a tight spot.

Lenses and Examinations: Wrought ironwork may be a staple of Sigil's architecture, but this business has a very interesting form of decoration all its own. The six great windows of the shop, all on the ground floor, are actually giant lenses, more than six feet in diameter, and stained according to the primary and secondary colors. Each lens focuses in on a single tiny machine structure, magnifying it in the viewer's eye to be man-sized. These are actually less than two inches tall, and each is a full crafted replica of one of the six lowest castes of Modrons, the base Modrons and the Decaton. In addition there is a great stained glass window above the door that displays the image of a Secundus. Lenses and Examinations is run by Dr. Teresa Kiln, truly talented half-elven wizardess and Guvner, of the Metallic and Mechanical life division of the Anatomical Society of the Planes.

Dr. Kiln has a fascination with all Mechanical forms of life, particularly Modrons, and constantly wishes to learn about their internal structure. However, Modron innards are complicated on a minute scale, and magic is not sufficient for long-term observation of such structures. So Dr. Kiln has developed a series of lenses to observe all kinds of small structures normally impossible to see with the unaided eye. She is willing to use these lenses to examine things brought in by planewalkers, as she always wishes to expand her knowledge. She has a great knowledge of the workings of all things mechanical and clockwork, and can usually explain the function of such things to a "layman." Also, there are other uses for her lenses. Dr. Kiln will sell the devices, and even magical lenses that can be used as glasses, the price for these creations is extremely high, but not a penny more than what should be paid for such things.

Dr. Kiln also has a specialized machine that can observe invisible inks and decipher codes. It is not always successful, but when faced with an unbreakable code there it is generally worth the jink to try. Of course, Dr. Kiln observes all this translation, as well as all things examined with her lenses. Many are beginning to wonder how confidential she is about such dealings, or whether she is passing information on to the Anatomical Society in secret.

Law's Wanted Wall: This wall stretches for some forty feet of street down Guvner's Mile. It is a plain wall of stone kept in the open, and kept in excellent repair by the Mercykillers, who refuse to allow razorvine to even get within a block of it. The wall is essentially a giant posting board and newsrag, one that updates constantly.

Several kinds of data are common on the wall, the first is the listing of punishments meted out by the Mecykillers

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ADAMANT RESOLUTION

in the prison, and is updated daily. The kindred of those who are executed are allowed a space to place a short obituary for the price of a few coppers. It is a succinct testament to justice done. The Guvners post a listing of recent changes in the laws of Sigil or new precedents established in court here, so that the Mercykillers and advocates can stay on top of things. Also, the wall holds posters of wanted criminals, posted by all three factions of law. There are no rewards offered, for of course justice is its own reward, but the notification is important, and planewalking Mercykillers are encouraged to memorize recent postings on the wall before leaving Sigil for elsewhere.

Defacing Law's Wanted Wall is a capital crime by edict 1037, paragraph IIB, and this is enforced strictly. The last two vandals caught defacing the wall were Xaositects with many additional crimes to their names. They received death by public execution.

Advocate's Row

It runs from the City Courts to the Prison, and down it are brought the condemned forth to and then back again from their trials. The slow processions take place everyday, but the bustle of the City Courts stops not far from their borders, and the domain of justice, not abstract law, takes hold. Advocate's row is the dwelling place of many an advocate and judge, but they stay close to the courts. The end near the prison is filled with the homes of bailiffs, prison guards, and inspectors. Against this grim backdrop the homes are smaller than perhaps anywhere else in the Lady's Ward, for this is not a place where the rich would live. Indeed, those unjust souls would see themselves carted off with every prisoner who passes by. Instead, Advocate's Row garners the attention of the just that are secure and supportive of the process of punishment. The people who live here would not shelter an escaping criminal but would swiftly take their weapons to him or her faster than we could likely react. Many of those on Advocate's Row are practitioners of the military form of justice, defenders and prosecutors of courts martial of the myriad mercenary companies of the planes, notably of Rigus and Automata, but there are others as well. These are not the most well to do, but none could ever be considered anything less than financially secure.

Security is one of the few things Advocate's Row offers visitors not concerned with the law. With so many Mercykillers on the streets at all hours, no cross-trader would dare so much as show us his backside, much less his face. For the rich and powerful that suffer wrong turns a few hours of sanctuary on Advocate's Row may offer a chance to regroup. Since the founding of the Mercykillers only one assassination has ever taken place on Advocate's Row, and that only because the assassin concealed a deadly contingency magic on his body that claimed the victim after death.

Of course, the rich and powerful are so very rarely on the right side of justice. Many a seeker of sanctuary on Advocate's Row has revealed too much, and found himself or herself on the wrong end of a gibbet or axe the next morn.

Some of the Interesting Sites of Advocate's Row:

Advocate of Steel: The Advocate of Steel doesn't advocate in court, he advocates steel; carrying lots of it and using it, generally to the detriment of others. A weaponsmith bar none Ferigoj, a Godsman, and the Advocate of Steel, sells blades to match the best the Doomguard produces in the Armory. However, his weapons aren't meant to promote entropy, but to punish all those who would attack other unprovoked. Ferigoj's a hulking tiefling, over seven feet tall and all of it muscle. He's said to have had three sons killed by unprovoked attacks in the Hive and so now he makes weapons to prevent such things.

Ferigoj can make just about anything, but he specializes in pole-arms, specifically halberds, and his weapons have found great popularity with the Mercykillers, to whom he gives a substantial discount.

No one's sure if Ferigoj enchants the blades he makes, people report striking opponents that a normal weapon wouldn't harm with them at times, but then other reports don't make any mention of this. Ferigoj refuses all questions on the matter, but says he practices no magic. Our observation has detected nothing, so perhaps the rumors are nothing more than that.

The Annalists' Repository: Military history is a wondrous thing, don't you think? I certainly do. In any case, this three-story solid brick building is the greatest concentration of it in Sigil, perhaps anywhere on the planes. Here are kept copies of the records by the annalists of all the Rigus mercenary companies. While most of the companies don't open their records to outsiders, or even to each other, a blood can make a

case to the company representatives, and if his cause is just and he pays a reasonable fee, then the material will usually be made available. This might not seem useful to a planewalker at first glance, but keep in mind that these companies travel, a lot. They go far a field and the archives are constantly being updated. There are places describes in those listings that are described nowhere else in Sigil, and the companies keep good track of everything that could put you in the dead-book at some place. So, if you can get access the Repository holds a wealth of historical data. Of course, wading through it is a pain, and non-Mercykillers seem to have trouble getting access. It must be because we are known to pursue justice, and others are untrustworthy. Well, we also guard the Repository at all times with a company of twenty guards, so maybe that has something to do with it. After all, we should have access to that history so that we can further keep it from the unjust.

Hive Mind: Most of those who live on Advocate's Row don't have a problem with the constant progression of prisoners going by, and Hive Mind is a perfect example. Hive Mind is an inn, though most looking on it for the first time would have trouble recognizing it as a building, much less a structure for lodging. Hive Mind is spherical in structure, with three globes stacked on top of each other to form the building. The globes are made of some glossy ceramic structure, rather like a seashell, but nobody knows what it's really made of. Hive Mind is said to have been grown overnight following the destruction of the building that previously stood there. The resulting inn for insects has proven popular with visitors of that persuasion. Strangely, the ownership has successfully argued three different cases to prove their building conforms to all the codes of Sigil. Frankly I think the whole effort to have it banned was a folly, justice doesn't discriminate by architecture.

Hive Mind is open to any visitor, but its distinctive design is really suitable only for members of insect races, others tend to have problems adjusting to the internal environment, which makes very little sense to a mammal that enters. Insects seem to understand the angle-less place just fine. The owners of Hive Mind are Yer'inh a cunning Rastipede and possibly the only Indep for blocks and blocks, who runs the business side of things, and Killic'rec one of my fellow Mercykillers, she's a Thri-Kreen who can sense injustice in minds themselves and screens visitors mentally and makes sure they'll be no trouble. In addition to rooms and meals, which are always meat, the owners run a small business in odd items and chitin-painting, and they have the best chant regarding insect peoples in Sigil to be found anywhere, though one has to win their trust first.

The insect visitors to Hive Mind have a rather unique perspective, and oft times a careless fool has stopped in for a peak and said something they shouldn't have, thinks the customers wouldn't notice. They seem not to realize that Hive Mind implies a sort of hive justice, one that we take care of as Mercykillers. The inn is surprisingly popular with Gelugons, and a whole sphere of the structure is devoted to them. When at Hive Mind the Gelugons are likely in the best mood they could possibly be in Sigil, so if a cutter needs to speak with a high-up Baatezu this is probably the best place to do it.

Wyrm Circle

Surrounding the Tower of the Wyrm, a name most Sigilians seem to have trouble mentioning for some reason, one that cast doubts upon their just identity, is Wyrm Circle. This is perhaps the most central point of justice in Sigil, for the Tower is the center of the circular square, and it holds the symbol of justice. The cries of the Wyrm can come at anytime, and they fill the circle with sound when the do so.

Wyrm Circle is a favored assembly spot for Mercykillers, and at anytime there are probably at least twenty assembled around it. The buildings around Wyrm Circle are generally the cases of Mercykiller factorums and factors, and there are two boarding houses that offer long scale rent-out rooms for Justiciars who are always on the go. Alinsohn Nilesia had a home in Wyrm Circle for the purpose of establishing residency in Sigil, but she's since abandoned it and lives in the Prison full time. The architecture here stirs echoes of justice, with symbols of Mercykiller gargoyles, stone lions, and the scales of justice being quite common. All buildings are adorned with spikes and most are fenced off with sharp grillwork to keep the crowds away during the sensational Executions by Wyrm.

Those few businesses set up in Wyrm Circle are generally enterprises devoted to justice. They include the Justiciar Museum, which celebrates the achievements of those august figures in the past, a memorial to the military police of Rigus who fell punishing a Tanar'ri that managed to escape immediately prior to a Wyrm

execution, and several similar sites. However, there are a few locations of a non-memorial nature, and these are some of the best places to begin a task for justice.

Some of the Interesting Sites of Wyrm Circle:

Seekers of Clockwork: The name is somewhat of a misnomer, but then Inevitables are known for making justice, not witty titles. This long hall, made almost entirely of steel, is a gathering point for Inevitables in Sigil, prior to them leaving on various missions throughout the multiverse. We Mercykillers have an arrangement with the Inevitables, in that we get to learn of each of their missions in return for providing guardianship and maintenance of the structure. A skilled squad of ten Mercykillers under the command of a Recintmyc, a Kolyarut, is always on guard.

Visitors are permitted into the hall, and are free to discuss whatever they wish with the Inevitables, if they can make them answer. The Inevitables are quite busy and most are only consulting with their peers for new information. Mercykillers, and occasionally others, however, can usually find very relevant information on the status of law-breakers throughout the multiverse, and where new outbreaks of lawlessness have occurred. Occasionally, an Inevitable, notably Kolyaruts, will ask for assistance from interested parties on a mission. There are few more direct ways to be of service to justice, and earn the gratitude of beings of Mechanus.

The Inquisitorium: This is not an establishment for the Mercykiller Inquisitors of Acheron, but actually an establishment that caters to an unnamed order of Inquisitors from several Prime worlds. The order is only recently come to Sigil, but it seems to have visitors quite often. Investigations of the Inquisitors, and weekly inspections turn up nothing but utterly law abiding people. It seems that this order is devoted to question breakers of justice only, and not to punishment, though it seems that in some way they punish through their questions, asking probing questions that sink into the criminal's mind and force contemplation of the wrongs he or she has undertaken. It seems a most interesting method.

The Inquisitors don't allow visitors into their building, which was previously a boarding house, except Mercykiller inspectors, but there is always an Inquisitor standing outside. If a duly tried criminal is brought before the inquisitor for the fee of precisely 150 gold pieces, wrapped in red paper, the Inquisitor can force a single question into the mind of the criminal. Over the next week then the criminal is forced to contemplate the question ceaselessly, and only by telling the true and just answer to an inquisitor of the Order or the one who paid for the asking, can the question be rescinded. This has proven very useful in breaking up criminal rings, wrenching confessions from politically important prisoners, and other purposes.

Wards and Glyphs: A small little magic shop devoted to protecting the just by a somewhat naïve and kind hearted aasimar spellslinger named Ilophiam, who nevertheless hasn't a drop of pity in him for anybody with the taint of criminality in their background, Wards and Glyphs sell simple protective devices that come in real handy in a pinch. Ilophiam charges extremely fair prices, but refuses to haggle, and his inventory only works in the hands of lawful cutters, since he has nothing but a quiet regret for those who follow other paths.

Ilophiam's selection includes:
each with only a single use
Protective Wards, which cast protection from chaos
Warning Glyphs, that once activated last an hour and glow whenever hostile chaotic beings are near
Lawlight Glyphs, that force all chaotic creatures in a 10' radius to save vs. spell or be affected by blindness
Calmness Wards, which cast the Calm Chaos spell
Justice's Shield Glyphs, which cast the Defensive Harmony spell on up to five creatures

Ilophiam asks 50 gp for a Protective Ward or Warning Glyph, 75 gp for a Lawlight Glyph or Calmness Ward, and 250 gp for a Justice's Shield Glyph. He can make certain other wards and glyphs on commission, but he needs a good reason to do so, since he's getting old and was never ambitious.

Wards and Glyphs would seem to be unguarded, but we're all quite fond of Ilophiam, and watch his shop accordingly. Attempting to trouble the old aasimar has gotten more than a few sods a place on the Leafless Tree. Besides, the place is such a concentration of wards against chaos that such beings can't even stand to approach it.

Petitioner's Square

The sight of public executions in Sigil is Petitioner's Square, but it's also the sight of the most honest and

perhaps the best quality market in Sigil, a well-kept secret because only the honest ever pass by. The area around the square contains many a small shop and stand, all used in the market. A number of inns and taverns also function here, serving mostly Mercykillers, which is whom the market generally caters to.

The square is not huge, but it's not small either, and can easily accommodate the large crowds on execution days. The market and all the shops and inns on the square have a community agreement to be open six days with one day off, from five hours before peak to five hours after peak, and not a moment longer. Inns and taverns stay open afterwards, but a customer must have already reserved a room or table for the evening in order to stay. Execution days are considered to be an additional day off, since everything is shut down to discourage riots.

Petitioner's Square is where many Mercykillers spend a lot of their free time, and we're thick about the square, whether in the taverns or just browsing the market. Eyes stay sharp at all times, but cross-traders wouldn't dare show their faces here, with the stalls arranged wide open so everyone can see.

Some interesting sites in Petitioner's Square:

The Virtuous Vial: Got problems with poison, that standard trick of the criminal? They can fix it at the Virtuous Vial. A family of dwarven glassmakers and a family of gnome alchemists run the shop. The head of the family who does the talking to customers is Hingrai a matronly gnome woman in her middle years. By her word the two families make nothing but anti-venoms, healing droughts, and herbal remedies, and the glasses to hold them. They've been in business for over forty years, since migrating from Toril, and it's said there isn't a poison on the planes that they can't find some way to cure. Many a stricken Mercykiller has received a vial from Hingrai just in time to save his or her life.

The services of the Vial don't come cheap, they're the best, and they know it, but they never overcharge, and their services are always cheaper than what priestly healing would have cost at one of the rich temples not far from the square, and sometimes they can succeed with alchemy when the priests fail with magic.

There's been many rumors over the past forty years that the Virtuous Vial does churn out the occasional vial filled with incredibly potent poison for the exclusive use of Mercykiller high-ups in great need. Factol Nilesia herself has said it's so much screed, but somehow the rumors persist. When we find the cursed criminals disparaging the alchemists' good name there'll be hell to pay!

The Spiked Halberd: The most famous tavern in Petitioner's Square is the Spiked Halberd, and there are Mercykillers there every hour of the day. A giant halberd with a great back spike stands over the door, the weapon is at least fifteen feet long and is said to have been used by a Marut to swipe the head off a Glabrezu with a single blow in the Abyss. How it came back to Sigil is unknown. The barkeep, Nerom Fist, a gruff Mercykiller, doesn't know where it came from, he says it just appeared one day atop the door some years back.

The Spiked Halberd's not an upscale place, it's favored by grim Mercykillers, but the atmosphere is not all that dark. The beer and wine here has a strangely stirring metallic taste, and many squads and Justiciars have made it a tradition to lift a mug or glass before missions and after successful ones.

The biggest attraction of the tavern, aside from Nerom's metallic brews, is the propensity of chant that flies around. Stick that many Mercykillers together and all sorts of reports about criminals, trends in justice and court, and recent grave injustices flies about. Nerom's got good ears, and can usually direct people to someone they want to see. The best part is that the cutters here aren't repeating twice told tales and barmy muttering like elsewhere in Sigil, but good solid news. So while you might find out less here than elsewhere, the chant's likely to hit a lot closer to the true dark of things. Also, it's a pretty good bet that in any given crop of Mercykillers at the Spiked Halberd there will be someone who knows just about any Mercykiller in the city, and where they can likely be found. 'Course, anyone coming to the tavern had better have a good reason, and not mess around. Mercykillers drinking are not the most friendly of folk to questionable sods.

Petitioner's Square Market: The market in Sigil that counts among its least visited is perhaps the one where a person can find the best prices on quality goods, with none of the ridiculous haggling elsewhere. Unlike the nigh-criminal practices of merchants elsewhere in the city, those of the Petitioner's Square market aren't looking to make it rich, but to provide cutters with what they need and make a living. The quality of goods

here is excellent, most things are made to last, because hard, honest work was put into them, without cutting any corners, and the prices are good to, because these people are in it for the long haul, and aren't paying out the garnishes, tariffs, and other injustices forced on merchants elsewhere in the city. If we were in charge of the Great Bazaar…well, never mind.

The market caters mainly to Mercykillers and Guvners who live nearby. It has a good supply of nourishing, if not particularly culinary, foodstuffs, and they sell large amounts of paper and writing materials as well. However, the biggest sales here are for military supplies, weapons, armor, rations, and more. It can all be found here, and it will all be good. Admittedly the weapons aren't as well made as those forged by the Doomguard in the Armory, but they'll serve a basher in need. The armor's reasonable too, but the boots and gloves are top notch, since every Mercykiller needs several pairs. I've marched many hundreds of miles on boots purchased here, and seen many a finger saved by the gauntlets sold in the market. None of its flashy or impressive, but for a body expecting to put his goods through hard work with a limited budget this is the right place to look.

Cutters looking to barter had best look elsewhere though, prices here are set and kept, and only hard cash is accepted. That's how business is done. Also, the community keeps a tight rein on who can sell here. No just anyone can move in. For the large part the shops and stalls here are owned by those who live on the square, Guvners, Mercykillers and Harmonium mostly, with little patience for the garbled practices of Xaositects and their kindred. Those disturbing market flow are quickly removed.

One of the shops here sells the confiscated property of the condemned. No claims are made about the quality of such items, but if a cutter desperately needs a cheap blade, set of clothes, or other gear, they can sometimes buy the clothes of the newly dead. Occasionally this is a key way to claim important papers or lost heirlooms. It's said an elf from Arborea found a jeweled dagger that had been lost for four generations among the property of the condemned once.

Conclusion

Well, I think that covers all the basics. Do you find the Prison so intimidating now? Probably you still do, the lawless are ever foolish. In any case, I hope I've spelled things out clearly enough for the chant to be of some use to those in service of justice. I spend much of my time in Sigil around this area, it's far more pleasant than the rest of the city. Why try and fight through bloodblades for the best deals in the Hive, when equally good products are available in a much safer location? I'll never know, good service to justice, and may judgment find you true at the end of your life.

by Jyan 'Sparks' Burnishedozone
Mercykiller Sergeant

PATHS LESS TRAVELED

being a dissertation on the location and nature of two lesser-known planar pathways in the spirit of Oceanus, Styx and Yggdrasil

Well, cutter, seems the planes're big enough to surprise even the graybeards from time t' time. Now, every planewalker worth the boots she wears knows of the big Four pathways of the planes (and canny ones ken that somethin' jest ain't right about havin' four of 'em)—the Rivers Oceanus an' Styx, Mt. Olympus, an' Yggdrasil, the World Ash. Some real bloods've even heard of other pathways—the Via Romana, the Steep Ascent, even other barmy rivers like the Cocytus, the Lethe, even the recently relocated Hister.

But is that all the Planes have to offer a sod? 'Course not, berk! Just as some whisper chant of planes tucked in the armpits o' the Outlands (Cordant Planes, they call 'em) and others seek a wayplane called the Ordial, there are those (like me, if ye haven't skegged that already) who know of other shortcuts around the 'Ring.

'Course now, it wouldn't do me any bit o' good t'go tellin' ye all my secrets at once, jig? Sure, linin' my palms with a few more stingers may seem well an' good now, but what about next month when I need jink to fill out my orders fer th' shop, eh? Better t'give ye a little and make ye slaver for the rest. Job security, y'know?

That's a basher. Now, jest because nobody never heard of these paths 'fore don't mean I'm scoopin' ye a puddle o' blek, jig? So listen up, rounder, an' ol' Gunther'll do ye right side o' Sixes.

The first path is easy 'nough t'find. See, th' parts of this traverse are so obvious it never occurred to nobody they might actually be eyebouncin' a path. That, and it's sodding well-guarded. Most of it, anyway. It's called **The Ladder of Bones**, and it extends in what somehow seems t'be a straight line. The top of the ladder is in the Outlands, so obvious it oughta bite a right hende planewalker on the nose for missin' it. See, the gatetown of Ribcage ain't situated in mountains that look like ribs. They are ribs. This is the 'safe' part of th' trip, what with only the guards of Ribcage slingin' arrows and dazzle-flash at ye. Starting at the top of one of the curvy spires (no cheating by startin' at the bottom, berk—it don't work that way) and climbing down brings a sod not to the ground but into Hell itself. Now, if Lord Paracs knew about it, he wouldn't be too jangled, likely, because the Ladder goes from the ribs of the Outlands town right onto the top of the Pillar of Skulls on Avernus. Needless to say, this is prob'ly a much more dangerous way into Baator than whatever garnishes a body has t'make to Paracs and his cronies, what with the heads all bitin' and gougin' at a sod an' screamin' for the fiends. But, if ye can make your way quick-like, it might, jest might, be less hassle. If ye can give th' fiends th' laugh, that is.

Now, t'continue along on down th' Ladder, a basher has to really screw up th' courage and worm his way down into th' ground where th' Pillar goes. When his feet disappear from sight (if he manages to survive bein' chewed on by countless soddin' disembodied heads, that is), he appears at th' next, an' prob'ly th' most dangerous part o' th' trip.

Canny bloods know t' give th' yugoloths a wide berth. Sometimes, however, fate ain't so kind as to cater to a sod's druthers. See, from the base of th' Pillar of Skulls, the Ladder of Bones goes to th' top of the horrific tower the 'loths call Khin-Oin, whispered by some t' be th' flayed spine of a god.

Yeah, I know.

And no, I ain't gonna describe what climbin' down Khin-Oin is like. Trust me, it ain't two things. Pretty, or easy. So, what's th' point? Why would any sod, barmy or no, ever want to take such an awful trip?

Th' answer is simple but profound, berk. See, there's a reason th' 'loths have such an intense interest in their Wasting Tower. Aye, maybe it's the spine of some

Power or other what crossed 'em aeons ago, and sure as Sigil it's the nexus of their might, but ever ask 'why'? The reason is this, and it ain't no barkle: bashers what make th' entire climb from th' Outlands all th' way down to the base of Khin-Oin find that the base of th' Tower leads to one final place—the fabled Ordial Plane. Aye, th' plane's real, berk. Good luck gettin' there, though. Heh.

Playin' 'good news, bad news' with ye, berk. Heh. Aw, c'mon, let a wrinkled basher have a chuckle, eh? I told ye the bad one first, t' see if ye got th' gumption to stay t'hear about th' second. And ye do, so I'll tell ye.

Now, this path's a bit longer, more twisted, a damn sight more unpredictable and considerably more travel-friendly than the Ladder of Bones. It's so unpredictable, in fact, that it don't even have a proper name. Most bashers what've traipsed it call it th' **Skywalk**, an' with good reason. See, aside from a handful of spots along its route, a body walkin' it is nowhere close to solid ground. It's a pathway defined by billows of smoke and vapour, and a basher needs t'be careful where she steps. I can't count how many folk've plummeted to their deaths by not payin' attention. The clouds'll be solid one step, and gone th' next. With one important exception, magics that help a body by giving flight or weightlessness can go a long way t'savin' some grief.

It's not real sure where th' Skywalk starts an' ends, but it's a good bet that both'd be on the Plane of Air. From there, th' path just goes all gatehouse on a sod, crossing through the Paraplane of Smoke, the Quasiplanes of Lightning, Steam and Fumes, passing near th' Border Ethereal but then somehow bypassing it entirely t'get to th' Prime. Here, it wanders about like a kipless bubber, touching even on Prime balls that can't be reached by normal planar travel, including Krynn and Athas.

Then, it seems t'make a decision and branches out into th' Ring, skippin' th'Astral (though I s'pose that should be no big wondermaker) and touching the smoky skies over Avernus in Baator, and Khalas and Chamada in Gehenna. From there, it leads both to the cloud-cloaked mountains in the elven realm of Arvandor in Arborea (one of the places where a berk can find solid ground underfoot) and to the skies over Krigala in the Beastlands (in the mountains here is another spot). A word to canny cutters, though: th' Beastlands prevent all magic and psionics that allow flight (even featherfall), so if ye step into naked air without walkable cloud underfoot, better have a posse with you quick enough t'catch ye before you plunge an' become a permanent part o' th' landscape below. Seems too that th' Beastlands jog of it is a dead-end—th' only way out along the Skywalk is to backtrack to Gehenna and try for Arvandor again.

From Arvandor it leads to the mists of one o' th' Cordant planes, the one they call Avalon. Here, if a sod misses a step, she'll jest find herself swimmin' and chances're good she can get back up on th' misty fogs or maybe even make the swim to one o' th' islands of th' plane. From there, the Skywalk takes a body to Mertion, the fifth layer of Mt. Celestia. This presents a different kind of danger to an unwary 'walker, as the archons of this layer know of this ingress to their home, and they seek to immediately expel any they consider unworthy. 'Course, as humourless an' self-righteous as th' celestials tend t'be, that's 'bout everybody that don't come up the mount th' hard way. From there, it seems to loop back to the Plane of Air, usually with Bahamut's summer kip in sight. Heh. A dragon god with a summer kip. Heh.

Now the really barmy thing about the Skywalk is that anywhere along it, even in th' Inner and Prime planes, a berk can accidentally hip off into Limbo. On th' upside, a body goin' t'Limbo like this'll always end up in an air pocket (though you'd be a canny rounder if ye realized that blanket statements are dangerous when ye apply 'em t'Limbo).

So, was it worth th' jinx, cutter? If 'twas, then make sure ye come back after ye go check out t'see if I'm nicin' ye or jest playin' the 'loth. I'll tell ye more then.

If ye survive.

Heh.

by Gunther Bluedawn
proprietor of G2 Outfitters

INTERVIEW WITH A DARKLIGHT

in which an intrepid researcher tries to pry deep secrets from a creature of both darkness and radiant light

Another reprint from the Annals of the "Anatomical Society of the Planes", this particular article focuses on a single planar creature, but a dangerous one that planewalkers would do well to know a few bits about. Let's share what the Society discovered, shall we? - the editors

There are times when being a Dustman comes quite in handy. This expedition was one of those times. Radiance is an interesting plane, such pointless brightness it sports, almost, but unendurable. If this were life everything would have such a glowing brightness, and we could endure it easily. I have heard Dustmen claim that the brightness made them question the reality of this death, but it only reaffirmed it for me, especially when I spoke to a creature that was made of the brightness, and was also death, a Darklight. The Darklight answered my questions with some willingness, though I am unsure of the true value of its answers, it seemed interested in being interviewed, something that was somehow unnerving. I am not used to curiosity in the undead. The Darklight gave no name; I still wonder whether it had one.

Dr. Hevern: So, you are a Darklight?

Darklight: Yes, fleshy one, I am what morals have called by that name. I feel the Dead Truce about you, so I shall not take your life for mine own.

DH: Would you consent to answer some questions? I am curious about your nature.

Darklight: Why should I answer your questions? What do such things matter to me? I am more interested in finding mortal prey.

DH: Well, I can offer you little in the way of incentive, but perhaps I might remember you in order that if I ever summon a Darklight in the future you would be the one chosen.

Darklight: You might summon me from Radiance? That is an intriguing possibility. Ask your questions Dustman.

DH: How did you come to be?

Darklight: You are inquiring about my origination in this form?

DH: Yes, that's it exactly.

Darklight: I do not know, once I was nothing but darkness and death, I know this somehow, but I have no memory of this time. I remember light pouring into me, coating me, suffusing me, making me stronger, new, but it did nothing to quench the darkness or hunger within.

DH: Darkness and hunger within?

Darklight: I am darkness, the darkness of death, even as I am light. I glow with brightness untold, but I also blacken and cover endlessly, I am of two things, color and colorless. Darkness within, light without. The light of this place suffuses me, bright it is, but not warm. The darkness within me is cold, a burning cold, there is no warmth to the light I shed. I feel a need for warmth though, warmth is life, life is warmth, and I hunger. I hunger to quench this burning cold, and yet I also hunger to feed it, to make it grow.

DH: You wish to quench the cold and also make it grow? How are both desires possible?

Darklight: You cannot know mortal, the light within me demands heat, and the hunger within demands life, and I want life too, for it feels *good* to take life, but life feeds the cold within, makes it strong, makes me

strong. I want to grow that cold, to sacrifice life that I do not possess to it, to take life from mortals like you, to give to it to that cold burning within, it quenches the burning to do so, to feed life to the cold, but it also makes the hunger grow and the cold *thirsty*.

DH: So draining the life energy of others makes you want more?

Darklight: Exactly mortal. Exactly. The thirst can never be quenched.

DH: Will you die if you cannot gain life?

Darklight: No, I endure, the light sustains me, it has its own energy that powers me, and the cold is never ending, the darkness has nothing to fade into. No matter that I cannot take the life of mortals for eons it will not matter. I will always hunger, and I am never satisfied. I could drain the lives of all in this plane and my hunger for more would only grow. I am death made life, and thus I am endless in two ways.

DH: So you don't have to satisfy the hunger to exist, you are not forced to drain the lives of others?

Darklight: No, nothing forces me to drain life, but it pleases me to do so.

DH: So you spend your existence draining the life of others?

Darklight: Yes, there is nothing else that pleases me. I wish only to feed the hunger within. I would go to a plane with more inhabitants that I might feed it with great quantities. Sometimes, sometimes it pleases me to watch the Scile drain the light from another while I drain away the life, this is amusing, but it is generally unimportant.

DH: I see, well, perhaps a different line of questions. What are you made of, Darklight?

Darklight: I am death's darkness made light, I am both light and darkness together, and there is power from both within me. There is energy within me, blended to make this form, darkness made light.

DH: Yes, I see, but are you made of matter? Or something else?

Darklight: I am made of darkness, death, and light,

The Darklight as drawn by Dr. Hevern himself

you might call me a "spirit" for I have no mass, and I cannot be caged.

DH: Perhaps you could tell me some of the properties of the spiritual essence that makes you up?

Darklight: I am made of the essence of death, the power to steal lives from the living and bear them low and unto nothing, and I can assimilate their own energies to become part of mine, gaining the power of the living until that spiritual force dissipates. I can also manipulate light, like this…
(At this point the Darklight launched a wide spread of beams and effects from its eyes into the radiant background)
My substance is joined with that which makes up this plane, commonly called radiance by you mortals, is it not?

DH: I see, so you have control of the light within you?

Darklight: Yes, interesting isn't it, that darkness should control light.

DH: I wouldn't speculate on such things. To continue, are there any ways to disrupt your form significantly?

Darklight: You wish to know my weaknesses little Dustman? Ha! I am not so feeble as a mortal, only weapons gifted with magic or spells of power can even harm me, and I regain strength by feeding the cold hunger within. I have no weaknesses, all living things fall before my power.

DH: But you cannot attack the Dustmen.

Darklight: The dead truce is always binding, I know not why, and do not seek to speculate, do not mention it again mortal, that fact irritates me.

DH: Is there any differentiation between your spiritual parts? Or are you the same everywhere?

Darklight: There are some differences to the energies that dwell with me. The cold is focused on my hands, and the light in my eyes, which allows me to use my great powers. For the rest, all things are the same.

DH: How do you spend your time?

Darklight: I hunt and feed the hunger within me with the life of mortals, there is nothing else for me to do, nothing else worth doing.

DH: You do nothing but hunt and kill then? What of creatures you cannot kill?

Darklight: There are few things I cannot kill, the Scile I watch sometimes, it is interesting to see them devour color from strangers. Those few other things that can resist my hunger I kill anyways, or I avoid. If they cannot feed my hunger then there is no point in bothering with them. I do not kill the mephitis and elementals of this plane, they are of no use to me, and it is a waste of my time to fight with them, since we cannot harm each other for some reason.

DH: How do you feel about others of your kind?

Darklight: I have encountered few others of my own nature, and we have nothing to discuss. We understand each other, and we understand our hunger. We have nothing worth saying to one another. Would you ask questions of someone who would give you the exact answers you sought? Answers you already knew?

DH: Do you have any goals other than fulfilling your hunger?

Darklight: There is nothing else is this existence that pleases me. I desire only to reach a plane where there is more prey. This place is relatively desolate. I have heard mention of great cities filled with thousands of mortals. To absorb all those lives, it would be ecstasy!

DH: To fulfill the hunger, nothing else? There is no other pursuit that tempts you?

Darklight: Why should there be, I am darkness, light, and death combined, what would you consider my goals.

DH: Perhaps a different tack, have you ever considered what would happen if you were to be destroyed?

Darklight: I would return to nothing but darkness, I imagine. That would be…*unpleasant*. This form is much preferable; I have no intention of meeting destruction anytime soon.

DH: But, this is not existence, it is death, it is hollow, and you have nothing to do but feed senselessly. Surely you can see that you are going nowhere! You should advance toward True Death. Your form is ideal for it.

Darklight: True Death? I have heard Dustmen prattle of this before, long ago. Oblivion is what you seek? Why should I look for such a thing? I like my current state; it is pleasing to be to be darkness and light, to be powerful, and to kill. I have vague feelings of what the darkness was like before the light; I have no desire to return to such a state.

DH: I see, and I am sorry, I am not here to preach. So, is there anything you do with others besides killing?

Darklight: Sometimes it pleases me to talk, like I am doing with you, Dustman. Generally I speak only to creatures I cannot destroy, or to those that have defeated my attempts to drink in their life. There are some few things that amuse me to discuss, and I always search for a way to leave this plane. I could stalk here for a thousand years and not feed so well as in a single year on a populated plane. I would like to discover different forms of life on which to feed, each new thing has a distinctive nature to sample, and I hunger for more.

DH: You wish to get to another plane quite badly; can you travel to one yourself?

Darklight: No, I am stranded in this plane, though I may travel all throughout it to its many boundaries. I may only pass to another plane if summoned, but if I were to leave this place I could travel throughout other planes freely, and my kind cannot be forced to return here.

DH: What could be used to summon you? I know of no spells for that purpose.

Darklight: There are ways, for I know of members of my kind that have been summoned. Perhaps there are specific spells to do so. I believe that a spell to summon a fiend, directed to summon one of us instead could bring me from this plane, perhaps a spell to summon spirits would work as well. I hope such means become well known.

DH: I have another question about your substance that just occurred to me. Can you break a piece of yourself off?

Darklight: I have never tried that, though I do seem to be cut when struck by blades of magic, perhaps an enchantment of a certain kind, or a blade as sharp as light could make such a cut and sever a piece of my being. I am quite sure I have no intention of having such a thing happen, I am most surely attached to all portions of my essence, and I would surely hunt done any mortal that tried such a thing.

DH: Could you speculate on what would happen to any such fragment if it were cut off?

Darklight: I suppose it would be like all of my being, unquenchable light that is utterly cold. It might even be possible for me to drain another through such a detached piece of myself. Now that would be interesting to try.

DH: I suspect that if that were possible a mortal could drain life energy through a scrap of you as well.

Darklight: I am disinclined to speak on that subject. I am what I am, I will not be divided for the follies of mortals.

DH: Granted, but do you know what happens when one of your kind is destroyed?

Darklight: I have seen this happen, yes. I have no wish to experience it myself. The light that is a part of us disperses into the radiance of this plane, though perhaps on another plane it would dart into the fabric there, and strikes with its energy on everything nearby. The darkness and cold dissipates, returning to whence it came I imagine. Nothing is left behind. It is an unfortunate fate, and not one I have any wish to meet.

DH: Do you have any idea why you can control many colors but seem to appear as black?

Darklight: The darkness overrides the light, so I glow with blackness. Glowing blackness, it is why I am called a darklight after all. There are many colors here, and all the light is part of me. You can see me, so you must know this. Light flows throughout within my form, suffusing the dark, making the dark glow.

DH: If you are made of darkness and light, how can you bank your color and turn invisible?

Darklight: That is simple; I control the light within me, and can merge myself completely into the background light around me, so that I am one with that background, and reflect the same patterns to the eye of another. It is the same reason I can control light with my eyes.

DH: Could you possibly speculate on the reason for your existence? Why should light join with darkness to create such a creature as you?

Darklight: Why should it not, light and dark are twin halves to the same thing. Usually they are opposites and one cancels the other in a battle of strength, or there is mutual destruction of the raw energies. Here, though, here things are different. In this radiant background darkness melds into light, carrying itself within it, bonding with it, becoming radiant darkness. Normally that darkness dissipates eventually, but a spirit in the darkness, a creature from the dark cold like I can hold the dark together within, merging to become a radiant being. I am death, so I have tinged that radiance with death itself, but I am still darkness and light combined. It is a fascinating and powerful joining is it not? The plane allows it, indeed encourages it. It is our destiny to be born and feed here, and from here spread throughout the multiverse, until everything has felt the touch of darklight death.

DH: I see. Well, that completes my questions. I thank you for your time, and will remember to consider you if I ever summon one of your kind.

I left the Darklight there, floating in radiance.

It gave me no name, so I am unsure how I could summon the creature even if I wanted to. I doubt it was so foolish as to tell me all that for nothing. I believe that if I ever do summon a Darklight it will be that creature specifically. There must be some method to ensure the value of such pacts, even without names.

by Dr. Hevern
Assistant Professor of the
Anatomical Society of the Planes, Dustman

THE ANNALISTS' REPOSITORY
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DREAMS OF LAW

- PART I -

in which a Modron makes a Lawful Entry into Chaotic Reality

The following report was retrieved after the body of a young githzerai male was found somewhere within the Hive, his throat slit. Robbery was assumed, but no items or money appeared to have been stolen. A rough search of the body was made, with the perpetrator apparently coming up empty-handed. The report itself was hidden within the liner of the githzerai's robes, in a hidden pocket.
The body and the report were discovered upon examination by Dustmen morticians. Thankfully, they saw fit to return the property of the Fraternity of Order to its rightful place. Investigations into the matter are currently under way. – the editors

REPORT# 37890542-974a
TO: Bureau Chief Rigel Montellix, B1
FROM: Administrator Modron Unit 69,
aka "Brain-Box", A7
RE: Invitation to and visitation of
githzerai monastery, Ul'a'jeri"k.
ATTACHED: Requisitions List Form 3.145d-14/90
(*All dates and times are Sigilian Standard.)

DAY ONE

DATE: Second Hive, Regula, 132 FHR
TIME: One Hour Before Anti-Peak
LOCATION: Hive Ward, Sigil

This one would like first to express its appreciation at being selected to undertake this research mission. It is this modron's desire to fulfill the goals and obligations of this mission to its utmost capacity. Indeed, the very nature of this entire assignment holds imminent possibilities that this one can hardly contemplate without probable system failure: To venture into Limbo and investigate matters of the githzerai in their natural habitat, among one of their monasteries; very intriguing. Again, this one would like to indicate its precise and measured gratitude at being given this honor.

As you may be aware, this one had been assigned to this task directly from Bureau Chief Walder Fercas (B5) and Administrator Ushtramakro (A1), having been given the directive to decide on a candidate for exchange between one of the Fraternity of Order's faction members and a member of the githzerai monastery. The faction member would proceed to their monastery and the githzerai candidate, in trade, would be permitted to visit the Fortress of Disciplined Enlightenment. As this modron understands it, the desire and purpose of this exchange was to better learn of one another in a more peaceful and lawful manner. It shall be this one's sworn duty to ensure the integrity and focus of purpose towards this end. (Please also see the attached Requisitions List Form to properly note items and equipment this one has obtained to best accomplish its goals. A copy has been sent to both the Treasury and Storage Departments.)

This one awaited its personal guide, a githzerai female by the name of Har'krii, near an agreed upon entry point -- a known, relatively stable portal -- to Limbo. It did not take long for this individual to arrive, quite possibly having scouted this unit out prior to engaging in any personal encounter. This, to this unit, would be the wise and tactical procedure to perform. This one was sure to take a non-aggressive and unconcealing posture, making no sudden movements or otherwise instigating any situations, letting Har'krii "make the first move", as the vernacular states.

Approaching this unit cautiously, the githzerai female was thickly robed and hooded in the modest bronze-brown-colored accoutrements of her monastic discipline. (This unit had done some prior research into what information that had been already gathered on

Har'krii's monastery by our libraries. There was very little but some identifiers and customs, and the rest was what this one can only deduce as being hearsay.) She removed her hood, regarding this modron with a look that this one could not (and still cannot) fully fathom. It is this one's unfamiliarity with humanoid expressions and mannerisms that inhibits this one's full analysis, unfortunately. (FOOTNOTE: This modron intends to do further, more extensive research on the nature of humanoid body language and psychology, once time and resources permit. Please consider this an informal proposition for future reference.)

After precisely 16.783 seconds, the female githzerai -- her face adorned with various tattoo artwork and facial piercings, probably part of her various initiations and rites within the monastery -- spoke, "Greetings, modron."

The githzerai's voice could not be said to have sounded pleased or particularly friendly. It sounded even dourer than what has been said of them, by this one's estimation.

This unit replied in kind. It was probably best -- so far as this unit was concerned, thus far -- to keep to the measure given to it. Continual re-appraisal of situational and sociological functions would require entire subroutines to assure accuracy and propriety.

"We mustn't linger too long in the alleyways of the Hive, modron," Har'krii spoke matter-of-factly. "Let us proceed hastily to our destination. Come, modron." Without waiting to see if this unit would follow, the robed githzerai female spun on her heel down the alleyway towards the portal. This one followed silently.

The portal itself was a simple doorway of some dilaptated and abandoned warehouse. Har'krii removed a strangely-bent bit of wire, slowly thrusting it into the doorway. A familiar shimmer appeared: the shimmer of a portal opening. It was as if the doorway were a pool of water, the way it rippled and waved around the insertion of the wire. As is the nature of most portals, it was difficult to precisely ascertain what lay beyond, but one attuned to such things -- which this unit has not been, yet -- could probably somehow *feel* what awaited on the other side.

However, such speculation was unnecessary, for we both knew that the portal led into Limbo, somewhere near the monastery. Har'krii stepped into the portal, letting the waters of dimensional reality ripple around her form as she entered. This unit followed immediately afterward.

DATE: Second Hive, Regula, 132 FHR
TIME: Forty-Seven Minutes and Eleven Seconds to Anti-Peak
LOCATION: Somewhere, Limbo

Chaos. In, around, upside-down, through, being, non-being, simultaneity, never-happening. This unit's senses were immediately assaulted by the raging torrents of Limbo's chaos. For the first 456 milliseconds, it was all that this modron could do to not be rendered unconscious from this effect. In the next millisecond, stability returned. There was solid ground beneath this one's foot-appendages. The chaotic maelstrom was kept at bay by a "bubble" of air, surrounding us. Har'krii stood there, observing this one's reaction.

"First time in Limbo, modron?" the githzerai female asked.

"Affirmative."

"Stay close. I am easily able to maintain stable terrain for us to forge a path to the monastery, but only in a limited area," she informed this unit. "It is a special gift that I possess. I am an Anarch. Have you heard of this?"

This one replied that it has, indeed, read various reports and other sources about Anarchs. They are natural-born stabilizers of Limbo's chaos, able to maintain various manifestations to varying degrees, apparently without conscious thought (which was NOT the case for most visitors and others within Limbo, needing concentration and ongoing mental effort).

"Correct," she said. She again turned around, beginning to walk in a certain direction across her manifested ground. This one followed at an equal pace.

A query presented itself to this one's mind that required its asking. "How do you achieve this ability? What is it like to manifest? By what mechanism is it performed?"

The githzerai woman made no indication at having heard this one's question, thus this unit was forced

to repeat it. The silence continued, making this one conclude that Har'krii must be ignoring this unit. However, she then spoke suddenly.

"Do you sleep, modron?" was her question.

"Define."

There was a small sigh, and then she asked, "Is there a period within your cycle of activity in which you, well, shut down? Turn off? Whatever it is you walking, talking boxes do?"

"Affirmative. This unit has recently been required to perform an eight hour period of inactivity -- of both body and mind -- to maintain optimum efficiency. If this is your definition of sleep, this modron then does sleep."

"Ah," was Har'krii's response. "Then, modron, do you dream?"

"Define."

Again, the githzerai female sighed. This one equated the response as exasperation, with the highest probability. "During those periods of inactivity, do you have visions or mental images or such?"

After a moment of contemplation, this one responded, "Negative."

The githzerai woman continued to walk at a brisk pace across the artificially-made ground, the devouring chaos of Limbo kept at bay by her unconscious whim. This unit was duly impressed at the fact that, so obviously lost in thought as the githzerai woman must be her strength of will was able to maintain our pocket of stable and safe reality. The Anarch ability was truly strong.

DATE: Second Hive, Regula, 132 FHR
TIME: Three Hours, Twenty-One Minutes, and Thirty-Three Seconds after Anti-Peak (estimated)
LOCATION: Somewhere, Limbo

This one had no way of knowing just which direction it was going; there had been no landmarks or other signs to tell just how close we were to our destination. The same swirling, bubbling unreality always lay just beyond the edge of Har'krii's stable reality pocket.

For the most part, travel had been uneventful, save for the seemingly random elemental fluctuation within the Limbo-medium. Har'krii handled the destabilization well enough to permit our continued progress to Ul'a'jeri"k. We were left unharmed by these events.

A unique phenomenon which did occur in our journey, which this unit had been flatly uninformed about, something called "miniflux". Several minor items in this one's possession were apparently subject to this effect, and are provided in the addendum "Revised Equipment List" attached with this report. The listed items and the alterations to each are detailed. Some went missing; some were changed into other items, while others were superficially altered. This could be humorously connotated as being an inventor's nightmare, if a being were so inclined. (FOOTNOOTE: Investigate potentiality of such with Humor Department of Research and Development, Culture Division.)

Fortunately, the miniflux was not detrimental to our progress or welfare in any particular manner, thus far. Most of the items were auxiliary, in any case, which leads this one to believe that it is the less-common (and therefore, less-thought-of items that might be most subject to miniflux). Miniflux, you see, is merely due to the natural finite and imperfect attention of the anarch, impairing proper stabilization on a minute scale within their stabilized pocket of reality. It is proposed that the potential for miniflux is directly proportionate to an anarch's level of intelligence and skill, naturally.

It was at approximately five hours, eight minutes, and fourteen seconds, that Har'krii stopped forward motion and turned to this one and spoke matter-of-factly.

"Modron, it is best to inform you that it is here that we are approaching an interesting and potentially dangerous portion of our journey to Ul'a'jeri"k." She paused a moment, then continued. "We are near what might be best described as a 'whirlpool' in Limbo; a vortex and focus of the chaotic soup that surrounds us. Naturally, that means it shall be more difficult to maintain the stable reality pocket we now stand in, so I will be required to decrease its size to ensure its survival and ours." She looked to this unit, apparently wishing to impress the seriousness and forewarning of her statement.

"These whirlpools act as a form of conduit between points within Limbo, but it can be hazardous if one is unprepared. It takes a great amount of personal


UNAXIOMATIC

willpower to maintain stability, especially with passengers. Distraction could be disastrous. Also, these whirlpools are almost uncharacteristically stable, a natural and trustworthy form of travel. Apparently, they have been around for a long time, very rarely altering in any way," she said. "Of course, that means they are often contested territory for trade and protection. They could be crawling with all manner of creatures preying on those seeking passage, obviously including slaadi."

"Please explain any necessary procedures that we might perform as to minimize risk and increase survivability, due to these factors," this one asked.

"Well, I suppose the best thing you could do is get any weapons or defenses you have prepared, and make sure above all else, that I don't get distracted or separated from you. Keep alert for any trouble." She turned, and as she did so, the bubble of stable matter shrunk to approximately one-quarter its former size. It was only a little bigger than the two of us marching single-file could fit, with perhaps a space of ten feet between us.

This one admits to a possible synthesis of the humanoid feeling of nervousness, or its nearest approximation for a modron, at this point. We proceeded at a much more cautious, deliberate pace than before.

It is hard to describe in proper terms just how it *felt* as we approached the designated whirlpool. The best approximation is, perhaps, nausea and a form of unbalance. Vertigo, maybe. This feeling intensified by our approach to it. This was also the only way in which this one could determine that we must be moving in the proper direction, for physical optical sensory observation could not penetrate the roiling mass of Limbo's *fluxium*. Therefore, this one surmises that a form of intuition or willful purpose on the part of the traveler might be required to journey through Limbo and eventually find their destination. Ergot, it is contingent on the individual to create a lawful patternization of travel to facilitate its actuality. If you wander aimlessly, aimlessly will you ever wander. At least, this is the theory that this unit has formulated.

Of course, it might be unwise to assume any certainty within the plane of Limbo. It is safest to always remember this, in this one's opinion. You may never know.

The intensity of the vertigo became such that this one found it nearly impossible to simultaneously follow its guide and do anything else. Full concentration soon became necessary; less this one slip from the boundaries of Har'krii's created stable space. This one could feel its sense of existence waver occasionally, confusion and uncertainty gripped at the consciousness. All this while, it appeared that Har'krii exhibited much less stress or trouble in navigating our way to the whirlpool, and perhaps into its midst.

Proper and adequate description or narration might be futile for the next moments that succeeded this increasing feeling. It soon became impossible to understand time, space, and matter relation to the self. This one literally felt lost to all sense of being or cohesiveness for the barest fractions of perceivable time. There was not even time or thought enough to desire survival.

Apparently, upon the sudden feeling of recession of the queasy-effect, Har'krii was able to relate to this unit that we had indeed passed through and past the whirlpool. Several minutes had actually passed, she stated, within which it was apparent that this unit was very nearly rendered nonsensical, unable to formulate communication, only able to provide enough motor function to proceed behind the female githzerai through the swirling miasma of chaos. This one would suppose that it must therefore rely upon the testimony of its guide as to any phenomena witnessed, and any events during this time period. Our journey, though, was apparently successfully past the whirlpool and on toward our destination.

During this part of the journey, as this modron's senses were returning to it incrementally, Har'krii spoke, "It is most fortunate you were able to survive the trip through the whirlpool. That one was only an Adolescent one, as well. There are Mature or Adult ones, which are far bigger and more intense than that last one. Of course, there are smaller ones and —"

Before she could finish, Har'krii was interrupted by the sudden emergence of a creature into our midst. This one uses the term "creature" with some trepidation, for the thing that plopped down between us was such a mass of roiling, changing features as to be wholly unidentifiable.

"Chaos beast!" shouted Har'krii, as she whirled around to face the creature. "Don't let it touch you! Its touch is deadly!"

This unit immediately made ready its halberd. A polearm seemed best in this situation, to remain at a distance from the chaos beast. It would be too risky to employ use of the repeating crossbow that this one also possessed. Strange, iridescent green blade-like force-shapes protruded from Har'krii's fists, as she entered into a combat stance. This one reasoned that they must be the focused telekinetic weapons of the githzerai, called simply "psiblades". Very intriguing. However, this one could ill afford such inquisitive diversions at the moment, facing off against our antagonist.

The bulbous and amorphous blob of limbs, sensory organs, and other indescribable formations first made to attack Har'krii, slithering and plodding across the stable ground she manifested. No fear betrayed her githzerai face, at least to this one's estimation, and she waited until just when the chaos beast was within striking distance to make a lightning-fast series of jabs and thrusts with her psiblades. The creature, obviously oblivious to the danger to itself, pressed its own attack despite the large wounds produced in the main mass of its body. It manifested various tentacles with mouths on the ends or claws, or arms with pincers, and so forth, slashing, biting, clawing, at the nimble Har'krii. The githzerai woman managed to dodge and roll out of the way of several attacks, parrying others with her psiblades. This all happened in the first few moments of its sudden appearance.

It took a moment for this one to assess the situation adequately enough to produce an effective plan of attack. While the thing was intent upon Har'krii, this modron unit was able to flank the beast with its halberd, first coming down in a slashing strike, followed with a forward thrust to penetrate the main body of the beast. Both attacks were successful, bearing it great wounds, due to the weapon's enchantments and fine edges.

The chaos beast let out a muffled scream/roar sound, which had mixed within it several other unidentifiable, presumably animal-like, sounds. It became more fierce, now turning its attention to this unit. This one was able to fend off the creature's sweeping attacks, parrying with the halberd much like a quarterstaff. Meanwhile, this again left the creature open to flanking, with Har'krii taking full advantage of that fact. She was able to do a powerful double-thrust with her psiblades, plunging them deep and twisting them around before yanking them out again.

At this, the chaos beast let out another roar-gurgle-scream, and began to flail in an even less coherent manner than before. It would seem that it was acting in desperation of its life, now. This unit attempted to get close enough for another thrust, unable to make a slashing strike at this point, being too close. The beast's sweeping and random strikes with tentacle, arm, or other strange appendage, managed to knock the halberd from this one's grasp, leaving it vulnerable to attack.

"Watch out, modron!" came Har'krii's warning cry.

The beast saw an opportunity and was lunging in at this unit to attack. There was no way to defend myself.

All of a sudden, a stone structure – a wall – sprung up between this unit and the chaos beast. The attacking creature slammed into the stone, being about five feet by five feet square, possibly stunning it.

Har'krii let out a battlecry, but I could not view what she did with this sudden obstruction in this one's way. There was another gurgling-scream from the chaos beast, and then there was silence. Just as suddenly as the stone edifice appeared, did it suddenly meld back into the ground beneath. How interesting.

Upon the disappearance of the stone wall, this one could see the last, dissolving remains of the chaos beast. Har'krii was apparently able to make the killing strike. All that was left now, was a slightly twitching, amorphous grey-green-blue-red-brown puddle of unidentifiable organic liquid. One has once heard the term "goo" used for this, and seems appropriate.

"Well done, modron," Har'krii said, after making sure the beast was surely dead.

This one retrieved its halberd, then returned to inspect the beast's remains. It had all but disappeared as though having never even been. There was no way to retain a sample for further study, this one is disappointed in reporting. This one shall note this for future reference, perhaps to find adequate means to contain such a creature to study.

"This one has a question."

Har'krii was studying the surrounding *fluxium* beyond our stable pocket of reality, perhaps attempted to sense any further danger. "What is it, modron?"

"The stone wall: was this your manifestation? Is it an

anarch ability?" this one asked.

"I'm afraid that was not my doing. However, sometimes the anarch ability precedes conscious thought, allowing one to manifest reflexively as needed. This allows an anarch to survive in the wilds of Limbo; to breathe and move in such a hostile and changing environment. One learns to trust their instincts and to *feel* the chaos around them. To *know* it, to *be* it. I'm afraid this might be hard for you to understand, modron." Har'krii looked at this one for a few moments, apparently considering something. She did not say what.

"We must proceed with even more caution. We shall be lucky if this is the only danger we might face. That creature probably prowled the area around the whirlpool, due to the fact it sees quite a bit of traffic. Biding its time until some meal happened by that it figured it could take easily. I suppose we taught the thing a lesson." This one believes it might have seen the githzerai woman crack a small smile. "We must get going. Come, modron."

And so, we proceeded much the same as before. We remained alert and cautious, but there were no other encounters, and the nausea receded.

DATE: Second Hive, Regula, 132 FHR
TIME: Five Hours, Nineteen Minutes, Forty-Four Seconds after Anti-Peak (estimated)
LOCATION: Githzerai Monastery Ul'a'jeri"k

Our journey came to an abrupt end, as the hazy, dry fluid of Limbo's *fluxium* opened suddenly to an immense "cavern" of air. The air formed a gigantic spheroid pushing back the opaque, swirling morass of chaotic elementalism, containing within it the massive structure of the githzerai monastery, Ul'a'jeri"k.

Approaching as we did, it was not unlike coming upon a cliff to a great chasm. There was only intervening air and space between our entry and the monastery. In appearance, the monastery itself was actually two main structures: two concentric rings or discs, spinning both around its circumference and laterally around a central, glowing and pulsating sphere.

"Beautiful, is it not?" asked Har'krii, as we took a moment to gaze from our perch.

"It is indeed geometrically and proportionately perfect, symmetrical," this one responded. "It appears to be well-defended, provides well for its functions. This one is unable to adequately make aesthetic judgments, however."

"Of course, modron, of course," Har'krii said. "As you know, Limbo's gravity is a function of subjective will. That is, it is 'down' wherever a body desires it to be, or believes it to be. However, in the proximity of an anarch's will, most often those without the willpower to oppose it, are subject to such a gravity effect as the anarch manifests it. So, be careful as we approach the monastery. Gravity shifts to its motions and contours. It is constantly maintained by several master anarchs and has definite directional gravity as you get nearer."

She turned, and began to walk upon a bridge of stone, probably manifested by her own will, making a path towards Ul'a'jeri"k. "Come, modron. We're already late as it is. The Daymaker is approaching its peak illumination, meaning it is mid-day for us."

This one followed closely behind the young female githzerai anarch monk, marveling at the immense gyroscopic motions of the monastery as it cycled and orbited the luminescent sphere at its center, the Daymaker. In an odd manner, it reminded this unit of Sigil, but at a much smaller scale. The outer disc-ring was approximately two thousand feet in diameter. The inner disc-ring was about eight hundred to a thousand feet in diameter. The Daymaker, then, was probably around two hundred feet in diameter. It did not seem to give off any form of heat radiation, even as we approached closer.

The stone bridge that Har'krii manifested brought us close to the orbiting outer disc-ring. She then turned to this unit, and said, "Prepare yourself, modron. I am going to will away this stone beneath us, and we will be pulled towards the outer wall. We will fall, so prepare for a fairly rough landing. I suspect the sentries and lookouts have already noticed our approach. They should be waiting for us below. Ready?"

"Affirmative," this one responded, tightening its hold on its belongings in readiness.

Suddenly, the ground beneath our feet disappeared, and we hung in the air for a few moments, before we began to drift towards the center of the monastery. The outer ring was beginning to swing in our direction in its large, slow arc. Har'krii must have timed our descent with the

approach of the outer ring. We fell rather gently, and landed a lot lighter than expect from the distance we descended. A hooded and robed figure approached us, carrying a simple spear in their hand.

"Hail, and welcome home Har'krii," said an even, male voice. The githzerai accent was pronounced, rolling the r's and emphasizing the k-sounds. This one could not help but note the distinct githyanki origins in their speech patterns. Though, githzerai speech seemed more fluid and fine, while githyanki seems more guttural and directive.

This one shall endeavor to remember to commission research from the Linguistics and Cultural Deviations Subdivison of the Linguistics Superdivision. This one looks forward to seeing such connections of the proposed similar origins of the githzerai and their most hated foes, the githyanki. Perhaps evidence of their connections to the illithids, as well, might come to make itself present? This one shall have to proceed with difference to cultural moors and other factors, so as not to ruin relations between this unit – acting as ambassador of the Fraternity of Order – and the githzerai people. It is not unknown that such subject matter is of great emotional connotation to the githzerai.

"I see you, Dondor," said Har'krii in return. "Indeed, it is most pleasing to be home. I have brought the modron, as I promised."

Dondor, removed the hood from his face, revealing (what this one assumes) a middle-aged githzerai male face, with trimmed goatee and shaven head. Where this unit could see, his skin was beset with all manner of swirling, pictographic tattoos of all different colors. The concentration and intricacy of these tattoos made this one believe that they were a statement of this githzerai's status, probably. He must be in higher rank than Har'krii, here.

"Greetings, and welcome to you, modron Brain-Box," said Dondor, bowing. "I was dispatched to greet you both on your arrival to Ul'a'jeri"k. I will lead you to the Master. Har'krii, you may take your leave and get some rest. Report then to your teacher, and we shall speak a little later."

"Yes, Dondor," she said, and they bowed to one another. "See you later, modron."

Har'krii then turned and left in the opposite direction, walking along the smooth stone of the outer ring. She disappeared over its horizon in a few minutes.

"Now then, sir modron, please follow me," said Dondor, and he turned and proceeded to walk in the other direction. "I sincerely hope your journey to our monastery was relatively safe."

"We encountered, after exiting the nearby 'whirlpool', a chaos beast," this one said. "However, we managed to dispatch it with minimal disfunction to our continued progress here."

"I see. That is most fortunate. Har'krii is a most accomplished warrior, very advanced in her lessons for martial arts, as well as the use of her psiblades."

"Indeed. She was very efficient."

Dondor chuckled – I do not understand why. "Excellent. However, she is young. She is also very independent. Of many of us here at the monastery, it is she that has most often requested to journey beyond its walls. She is most curious, you see; inquisitive."

"This one has noted that her accent is less pronounced than yours."

"Correct. She has been sent on messenger and guiding missions; interacting with many other peoples in her own adventures. It is good for her. There is a danger of being isolated here, which many of my brethren do not share in sentiment." Dondor shrugged. "I apologize for rattling my bone-box so much, modron. I don't suppose you might understand any of this. It shall be interesting to hear your perspective on our life here at the monastery. I hope that the representative we sent to your Fortress of Disciplined Enlightenment has as interesting a time as you might."

"Might this one ask what your role here is? What is your function in the monastery?" this unit asked.

"I am one of four Lead Instructors at the monestary, directly beneath the Master himself, in authority. I know that you modrons understand hierarchy and structure. You might say I am the secundus within Ul'a'jeri"k." Dondor turned, and smiled slightly over his shoulder. "I help teach advanced studies in anarch techniques, as well as other important knowledge and wisdom passed down from our Masters and all the Masters before them. You might come to appreciate the order and discipline

that we observe within Ul'a'jeri"k."

"This unit anticipates much information and knowledge to be acquired that might be of considerable interest and use. It is hoped that enlightenment between the Fraternity and the githzerai people might facilitate a better and more mutual relationship in the future."

"That is a lovely dream, indeed, modron. One I hope we may see become reality. After all, we are in the place where one can make that happen."

Dondor and this one made our way around the circumference of the outer ring's wall. Interspersed across it were the occasional arrowslits. Briefly peering within one revealed nothing more than dimly lit hallways, with a similar arrowslit across on the other side of the wall. One could see the githzerai positioned within, crossbows in hand and loaded, eyes alert for trouble.

For four minutes and eleven seconds we walked across the surface of the outer ring, until we came to a large, circular wooden structure: the main gate, this unit surmised.

"Follow me, and stand precisely where I stand. Once the gate opens, it will swing inward and gravity will take a definite direction. If you are not careful, you might suddenly find yourself falling," instructed Dondor.

From where we stood upon the gateway, this one could discern an arc of symbols before us. However, this one is not familiar with githzerai language. In any case, I have sent a copy of an etching this one made of the symbols to our Linguistics and Cryptology Subdivision of the Linguistics Superdivision. In any case, the positions of the symbols were an indicator to this one of the correct position to stand upon entry to the monastery.

With no verbal signal this one could hear, nor any gesture that this one could see, the gate began to slowly swing inward. The far end across from us opened first, our end of the gateway being where the great hinges must be. It took only about a minute for the gate to swing inward, acting as a sort of entry pad, as well. We were lowered into what must be the entrance hall, fully two stories of open space above, and perhaps fifty yards wide or more. One could see the curvature of the walls to either side.

The entrance hall had sconces with burning greenish-yellow flames burning within, lighting the room in proper intervals. Sweeping archways cross overhead, with intricate inlaid silvery symbols along every pillar and structure. The stonework inside was almost entirely different than what was on the outside, which this one believed is usually impossible, given the actual thickness of the walls. While the outside was flat, featureless and smooth stone, the inside was made of mosaics of brickwork, many of which depicted symbols and pictures this one is unable to discern the meaning of. Some of the pictorial brickwork showed battles and individuals, probably historically significant either to the githzerai race as a whole, or else to this monastery in particular. (This one has incuded rough approximations in its own sketches for our Symbology and Pictography Subdivision of our Linguistics Superdivision.)

Archways to either side and middle of the wall led to hallways, lit by more sconces and torchlight. Ahead, at least eighty yards or more, lay another gateway like the one we just entered. Probably a port to the inside disc-ring, this one surmised. This one suddenly noticed the great winch-works of the doors and their great hinges. The gate's door dropped into a perfectly fit indentation within the floor itself. The winches to either side had chains leading up to the ceiling, where a great gear mechanism wound the chains and brought them back down to a central lever control unit lay. Three gitzherai appeared to man the gateway mechanism from that location. It is interesting to note that such a massive system of gears and pulleys was managed by so few individuals.

As well, this one noticed two githzerai, armed with spears, walking a circuit about the room, eyeing the doors. It noted that there were two that were walking up the walls and ceiling. All of them were garbed in familiar brown robes, hooded.

"Come this way, Mister Brain-Box," Dondor spoke, and began to walk towards our left, through the archway. This unit followed behind the githzerai monk.

Down the hallway, there were several doors, generally taller and thinner in proportion than this one is accustomed to. A lot of the architecture showed a sweeping, sharp severity to it. The symbols and pictography followed along all the walls, as well. What was particularly interesting to note was, while there were doors along our level of the floor, above us there were doors right over those. It was as though someone had forgotten to put an intervening level or floor.

"These, sir modron, are several of the barracks. These are placed right next to the gateway so as to provide quick response to an emergency call to the gate, should there be an intrusion or attack. I'm sure you noted the lack of stairs or other means to get up to those doors there. Well, as you might have seen in the entry hall, many of the monks training within have little need for stairs. It is a simple exercise of personal will to alter gravity to our whim. Fear not, however, wherever you require access to, we are sure to have the Maintainer on duty to provide stairs or other access." Dondor proceeded down the short hallway of doors, past a few interspersed defensive perches and arrowslits. "The Master's quarters are actually within the central disc-ring, but our meal hall – where we usually meet visitors – is this way. He is waiting for us there."

We entered a room where there were no torches, the light of the Daymaker poured within large stain-glass windows that spanned the full, open two-stories. There were large plinths that were at various intervals and heights. Incense and other scents permeated this room. Several githzerai sat about, cross-legged along the floor, which was bare but for mats upon which the githzerai sat or knelt on.

Once we passed across this room and into the next hallway (another barracks, apparently), Dondor spoke, "That was one of our meditation chambers. You will be able to gain a more in depth tour and exploration of our facility, no need to worry."

The next room we came upon could only be the meal room. It was a single-story room, with a lower ceiling than the rest of the rooms. Tables were lined in rows across the room with benches for seating, all wooden. At one end, towards the inside (that is, towards the Daymaker side or inner ring) was what must be the kitchens. A wide window and counter allowed the githzerai monks to receive their portions and drop off their dishes.

Dondor and this unit approached a table near the far upper corner, near the kitchen window, where a hooded and robed individual – grey robes, this one noted – whom was speaking to a small group of brown-robed githzerai.

"And that is the reason for the *il'kra'kya-dar*, young one," the grey-robed one was saying to one of the brown-robed.

"Yes, of course, Master," the brown-robed one said and bowed.

"Leave me now, students, I must attend to our guest," the Master said, and the others gathered around him moved off. The Master said to us, as we approached, "Greetings, sir modron. I see you, Dondor." The Master bowed to this unit, which I returned, and then bowed to Dondor, whom did likewise.

"I see you, Master. I have brought to you our guest. Mister Brain-Box's travels have been long and fraught with peril, it has been known. Very brave for a lone modron, yes Master?" Dondor said.

"Indeed it is, Dondor. You must observe a cycle, yourself, sir modron? I am sure the trip has offset this cycle, for our day and time is different than that of Sigil or possibly Mechanus. Do you require immediate rest?" The Master asked.

"This unit is approaching its mandatory rest cycle. However, it is possible to extend and modify this behavioral activity. This seems most logical in lieu of the fact that it shall operate within the daily cycle parameters of this location, rather than another. This one shall proceed until your day cycle approaches its end, modifying itself to this new behavior for the time it remains within the monastery." Was this one's response.

"This is fine," replied the Master. "Dondor, would you be so kind as to give our guest a little tour of our modest facilities? Help him become more familiar and comfortable here. Once he is ready, please show him to the quarters I had the Maintainers create for him near the barracks by the Secondgate."

"Yes, Master," Dondor said, bowing again. This was followed by the Master bowing to each of us. This one returned in kind. (This unit was not sure, but it possibly heard the Master chuckle ever so quietly. It is unknown what the source of humor-response might be.)

Dondor and I proceeded down the hall across from the one we entered in. More living quarters filled the hallway, until we came upon the next open room. This was obviously a battle training room. Various large mats, most likely to indicate the battle training area, were spread out around the room's surface. Weapon racks lined the walls, with all manner of weapons; some recognized, most not. There were some dummies,

varying in size and other features, which students faced off against. Of note was the fact that none of the trainees were robed, only those that were monitoring them – probably their instructors. Other trainees faced off against other trainees in martial arts or weapons training.

Looking up toward the ceiling, this one saw that combat training was not restricted to the mats on the floor. Combatants and trainers alike moved about various dummies and other obstacles along the ceiling and walls.

It would seem that their combat training was very thorough and diverse. I made note of this in a special separate report for our Combat and Tactics Department of our Militia Corps. Hopefully, it will aid us in expanding our prowess in combat in such an environment as Limbo. One with 'subjective gravity' and other strange factors, that is.

None of the students so much as looked our way. They all seemed focused on their training to the exclusion of all else. Dondor and this unit proceeded to the opposite hallway.

More living quarters preceded another open room; this one was Secondgate. It was identical in appearance to the gateway and mechanism that we first entered. We moved on.

Down another hallway like the rest, we came to another open room. This room was intriguing, to say the least. In concentric circles around a central structure, were individuals interspersed with what this one could only describe as small pedestals and a strange substance atop it. It was some sort of amorphous-gelatinous-multicolored-yet-no-color *stuff*. It was then that this one realized it was actually *fluxium*: a very piece of Limbo itself. The large structure within the center of the room was a much larger – nearly as tall as the room itself, in fact – portion of it.

This one could see that each individual was attempting to model their portion of *fluxium* to that of the central one, where a robed individual stood, speaking evenly in githzerai. This was probably the instructor.

"This is part of our anarch training," spoke Dondor. This one did not realize it was standing and staring, until it noticed that Dondor was not moving either. "The instructor molds the large sculpture of chaos stuff in the center, and the students attempt to imitate the teacher with their own sculptures."

We stood for a few moments, observing. The large sculpture shifted shape, mostly geometric ones (probably the easiest for students to begin with), and the others imitated. The instructor spoke to his students.

"The instructor is saying that to master the wild nature of Limbo, one must realize it is the same as mastering the wild nature of ourselves. It is not unlike a dream, he is saying. Once one realizes that it is all but a dream, one is able to master it. Limbo is our subconscious, where we must tame our emotions and fears, stretch out our minds and will, and then know it for what it really is: a lucid dream." Dondor explained. "He is most correct. We also aid our students in first mastering their own dreams, to lucid dream at will, which helps them in the anarch's art."

"Interesting," this one responded.

"It is believed this is why only sentient and willful beings are able to master Limbo's environment. Only dreamers are able to form Limbo to their will; those unable to dream are at Limbo's mercy. Perhaps this is why many undead creatures and modrons, such as yourself, are known to be unable to form Limbo," Dondor continued.

"That is a probable theory, unit Dondor. This one shall note it in its report. Thank you."

"Indeed, my pleasure. This way, please."

Another hallway and series of living quarters brought us to another combat training area. This appeared to be more basic training compared to the last one. There were less weapons, and not activities along the other surfaces of the room.

"This area is more for psychic or psionic combat," Dondor mentioned as we took a moment to look around. "There are some githzerai that are not only gifted in anarch talents, but psionic ability as well. The two seem to naturally go hand in hand. One thing you might want to note, however, is that we do not provide magical combat training within our monastery. We focus purely on physical and psychic combat, which is all associated with our anarch training."

The various students could be seen wielding psiblades

similar to Har'krii, now that this one noticed. Others were apparently using the power of mind to assail dummies telekinetically or with other strange attacks. Very interesting, indeed. It is this one's recommendation that further research be done at our own facilities on psychic phenomena and its potential. This unit believes that its uses have been woefully untapped, after previewing its possibilities within this facility.

We remained to view the activities for a few more moments, then proceeded down the next hallway. The next room was apparently a weapons and storage facility. The walls were shelves and racks. Among them were several githzerai polishing and arranging them.

"This is the Armory for the outer ring," Dondor said. "Beyond the next hallway is where we entered. Would you like to be taken to your quarters, sir modron? As you can see, the hour is becoming late, and the Daymaker has waned considerably."

"Affirmative. Please show this one to its temporary habitation."

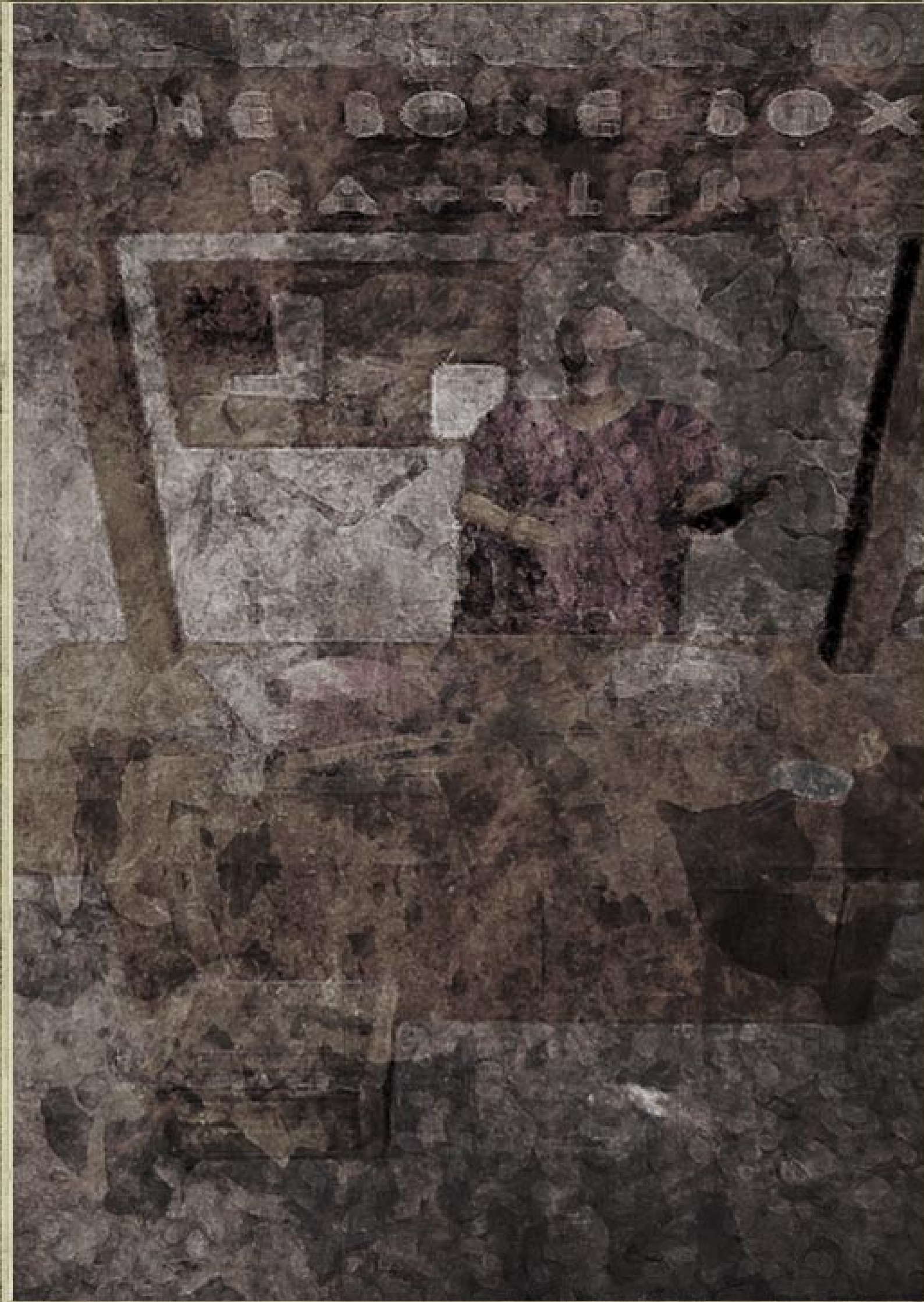
"Back this way, then," Dondor said, leading back down the hallways we had come down. As Dondor lead the way, he said, "Tomorrow, I shall give you a tour of our inner ring, if the Master permits. There, we hold our agriculture facilities, our archives and libraries, the Anarch's Forge, among other important and precious things."

We arrived at what must be this one's quarters, which were actually part of the barracks near the Secondgate. Dondor opened a door at ground level, stepping inside, with this one following. It was a spartan and bare room, but functional. There was a chest for personal belongings, a bed for sleeping, and a simple desk and chair in one corner. The desk and chair, in fact, is where this one has been writing its reports thus far. Dondor then bid farewell and goodnight, stating his return in the morning.

Now, the hour has become late, with the Daymaker's light long past extinguished, and this one must proceed with its rest cycle or risk breakdown. I shall continue this report tomorrow, when possible. This report, and those following, shall be sent (with permission of the Master) by githzerai courier to Sigil. These are experienced travelers in Limbo, this one is told.

Ul'a'jeri"k - Githzerai Monastery

1. First Gate
2. Second Gate
3. Hallway/Barracks
4. Daymaker
5. Meditation Room
6. Meal Hall
7. Combat Room
8. Anarch Training Room
9. Psionic Combat Room
10. Armory


THE BOOK OF BATTLE

THE BONE-BOX RATTLER

PLANEWALKERS' MAGAZINE - ISSUE THE FIRST

CREDITS

It's all a bob!

Barkle from the thought guilds, folded by puppeteers so as to peel the gullies. See, there's a good reason 'the editors' don't flaunt their names or allegiances. They're in this together, the Red Death, the Guvners, even the Tanar'ri, and the sodding Dead. The so-called 'authors' are nothing but puppets dancing on the strings of the op-pressors. It's all grail, each and every word of this sodding 'magazine'. Blek, that's all it is, and they're feeding it to you.

But I'm sure you berks don't believe me, so let me tell you who it is that's pulling the strings here. Maybe you'll believe me then, and earn a page.

'The editors' are all puppeteer high-ups. There's one fiend, a Tanar'ri, calling himself 'The Hurtful Truth', one Daniel Kinicki, also known as 'Mechalich', and for good reason, sodding MercyKiller, and one of the Dead, goes by the name of Rigor Mortis. See, this one's the worse of the lot. He's also done the cover and color plates - quite the ef-fort for one who's supposed not to care about anything, if you see where I'm going. The interior illustrations were done by Rigor Mortis, and one Christopher Byler, who claims himself a Sensate. Sensate and Dustman working together - get the picture yet? Heh, picture is right. Just look at the sodding images. They've got thought guild propaganda written all over them. Bah!

And the authors? Parrots and apple-chasers all; screamers for the opressors. They didn't even write all this. Articles 1 and 4 were written by Rigor Mortis, articles 2, 3, 6 and 8 by Mechalich, article 5 by one Nerrin, article 7 by Christopher Byler, and the last one by Brain-box, though I just bet that fiend had something to do with it...

Now do you see your precious darks for what they really are? Maybe you do, maybe you don't, but you're truly an addle-cove if you swallow it all without questioning their motives. The opressors care nothing for the likes of you, berk, and never forget that. All they want is to further their hold on the rubes who accept the strings, and dance along, singing in Bedlam, until their time comes to count the worms. It's all about power and control. And control you they will, if you let them. But only if you let them. Cast away the chains, and expose them for what they are. Do your own thinking, and defy those who would play you. Look beyond the words. Awaken!

S.

THE BONE-BOX RATTLER