

CODEX OF THE INFINITE PLANES

VOLUME XXII:

GRAY WASTE OF HADES

Sample

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE PLANES OF EXISTENCE



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VOLUME XXII:

GRAY WASTE OF HADES

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VOLUME XXII: GRAY WASTE OF HADES

"Evil takes many shapes and forms on the grand stage of the multiverse, some more insidious than others. The Gray Waste of Hades holds what I believe to be the most perfect expression of evil, which is the theft of hope, the destruction of belief, and an apathy to life itself. The evil of Hades is not as flashy as the Abyss or as rigorous as Baator, but it creeps into the soul of those that visit, much like the graying that occurs to any color on the plane. It is understated and underestimated, though the fiends of the Blood War seem to recognize its importance. There are more battles between demons and devils on Hades than anywhere else in the multiverse, an interesting facet considering the inherent bleakness of the Gray Waste."

Malakara the Warden

Between the raw destructive evil of the Abyss and the ordered precision evil of the Nine Hells sits a middle ground of apathy and despair. The singular expression of this insidious power is the Gray Waste of Hades, a plane that drains away joy, happiness, and contentment. A special property of the plane drains away color in the same fashion, leeching it away to leave a drab gray in its place.

In a relative comparison of evils, many planar scholars point to the apathy inherent in Hades as the worst to affect mortals. It creeps under the skin and seeps slowly into the soul, poisoning the heart and mind. It's a quiet evil of complacency and despair that crushes hope, and wishes to see others fall down the same path. Hopelessness and apathy fill the air like a stink, and many that find themselves traversing Hades discover the gloom taking over their minds.

Gloom is a perfect word for Hades, which is why it's also referred to as the Three Gloom in reference to the three layers. The first layer, Oinos, is the home of disease, and it also sees the most open conflict out of any Lower Plane. The Blood War, the eternal conflict between the demons of the Abyss and the devils of the Nine Hells, plays out in the gray landscape of Hades' first layer. Fiends of all types on the plane get caught up in the bloody battles which can rage for days, darkening the already gloomy sky with smoke and the shadows of flying monsters.

What draws the forces of the Lower Planes to Oinos specifically? Some planar scholars theorize it's just the polarizing nature of the multiverse to play out in the philosophical middle between the Abyss and Baator, but there seems to be more than just philosophy at work. None of the grunt soldiers on either side seem to know for sure, but whispered rumors in the command positions speak of a prophecy regarding possessing Hades and winning the Blood War.

Yugoloths are just as common on Hades as demons and devils, and most believe the race of mercenary fiends originated somewhere in the gloom. They've since emigrated to neighboring Gehenna and have laid claim to that plane as their own, but a few bastions of their power remain on Hades. The most notable of these is Khin-Oin, also known as the Wasting Tower, a 20-mile high bone

structure seemingly constructed from the spine of some enormous monster.

The creatures that live and hunt in the glooms of Hades are dangerous monsters. Night hags are common, ruling small fiefdoms, castles, and other territories across all three layers. They are frequent harvester of larvae which crawl in the dusty dirt throughout Hades. These larvae are more than just regular worms, however – they are the souls of those lost to the graying despair of the plane. Each is large, averaging about three feet long, with segmented worm-like bodies capped with the same face they had in life. Most of their memories have been drained away just like color, and they form the basis for a dark trade that circulates throughout the Lower Planes. Fiends, undead, unscrupulous wizards and priests, and other darkly associated creatures use larvae as food, as the fulcrum of evil rituals, or in countless other nefarious ways.

Herds of nightmares gallop across the Gray Waste. Something in the insidious nature of the plane warps horses into these coal-black fiends of fire and death, though the strongest among them are the ones created through pegasus corruption. Several powerful specimens have risen up above the herd and have taken to forming plots and goals. Known as the Nightmare Princesses, they are vile and despicable creatures that sell their kind to the fiends in exchange for profit.

The most numerous of the creatures in Hades are the hordlings. These fiends come in many shapes and sizes and seek nothing more than evil for evil's sake. They are untrustworthy and savage, making them poor troops for both demons and devils, but their sheer numbers make them a threat to almost any non-native. Even fiends tread carefully when dealing with them – their unpredictable abilities and self-serving nature make them dangerous.

There are many dangers inherent in Hades, and travelers need to be prepared to face them if they wish to survive a journey through the glooms. Powerful beings have made Hades their home, including many gods of death, and vile fiends lurk in the glooms ready to help push the despair of the plane even further. The depression that emanates from the Gray Waste is palpable and dangerous, and has a tendency to cling to visitors long after they've left.

LAY OF THE LAND

The glooms of the Gray Waste truly earn their name. Everything is leached of color and emotion, though the landscapes vary a surprising amount. Most of the things that lurk across all the layers of Hades are evil and seek nothing more than to drain the life and will out of travelers, so adventurers are cautioned to be on their guard at all times. The Gray Waste is not a forgiving place.

OINOS

The top layer of Hades is a blasted gray wasteland, peppered with rough hills and rocky fields. The landscape has been shaped by the monumental conflicts of the Blood War that have ravaged the already bleak terrain. Craters, crevasses, and canyons pock the ground where violent

eruptions have split the land from the absolute horrific power unleashed by demons, devils, and the mercenary forces that aid both sides. What few lakes exist on Oinos are usually the result of pooling blood spilled from a particularly savage battle.

The River Styx winds through Oinos, though its normally blood-red waters are muted by the plane's graying effect. The river is an important strategic landmark that controls the easiest access to Hades, so it is hotly contended by demons and devils. Owing to their nature, the devils setup regular checkpoints to inspect travelers coming from the neighboring planes of Carceri and Gehenna. The demons do what they do best – throw hordes of monsters to overwhelm their foes and bring utter chaos to the situation.

No wind stirs the dust of Oinos and no sun hangs in the sky. The perpetual gloom and heavy anticipation of a coming disaster makes a thick combination in the air that can quickly overwhelm non-natives. Vision is limited because of the graying sameness of it all, obscuring details beyond 500 feet in any direction despite the lack of natural obstacles.

NIFLHEIM

The second layer of Hades is a vast pine forest stretching into infinity filled with thick curling mists. The trees have an unhealthy look to them largely because of their dull gray barks and thin needles. A chillness hangs in the air, which combined with the mist creates a moist feeling everywhere. The ground rises and swells in low hills marked only occasionally by a lone mountain, though lakes of dingy gray water are frequent across Niflheim.

The creatures that stalk through Niflheim are well-adapted to the mists, which otherwise obscure vision beyond more than 50 feet. Creatures that rely on sight are going to have a hard time in the forests so the native monsters use other senses to track down their prey. The fearsome garmr, wolves of the mist, are completely blind and hunt by scent alone – their fearsome howl can unnerve even the bravest of foes.

The ambient light of the gray sky overhead is the only illumination on Niflheim; the mists seem to actively attack and swallow other sources of light brought into the pine forest. This suits the residents just fine, chief among them the goddess Hel in the Isles of the Cursed, ten islands in the middle of a massive gray lake. Magical forces prohibit flying over the lake.

PLUTON

The lowest layer of Hades is Pluton, a gloom of endless gray sand dunes, rocky outcroppings, and sparse fields of night-black poplar trees. Here the graying effect of the plane also leeches out memories, robbing visitors of their life experiences, and the landscape reflects this property. Everything looks the same and few landmarks stand out to help travelers navigate.

The Blood War rarely reaches to Pluton, and there are very few native creatures. The dangers of the gloom are enough to deter most from visiting willingly. Pluton's primary feature is the Underworld which sits in massive caverns below the sand dunes. This is the realm of Hades, an ancient god of death who shares the name of the plane,

and it is populated by the largest number of dead souls in the multiverse. Hades the god greedily pulls unclaimed souls into his Underworld and uses them as bargaining chips when dealing with other powers. He is the most powerful of the Triumvirate of the Grave, the trio of death gods that ostensibly rule over the plane.

CYCLE OF TIME

There is nothing in Hades to mark the passage of time. Everything seems suspended in a moment of grim hopelessness – the sky alternately looks like twilight or pre-dawn but without the promise of day or night. A feeling of agitated anticipation soaks the landscape and robs time of its meaning. No day or night, no stars, only a perpetual gray cloudiness churned by the occasional passage of monstrous fiendish forces or the will of some morose deity of death.

SURVIVING

There are plenty of dangers across the glooms of Hades. The most prevalent is also the most insidious. Mortal creatures that visit find themselves becoming more and more beaten down by the relentless despair that permeates the very air. Those that succumb to the despair transform into larvae and eventually lose all memories of their former life. This Vile Transformation is detailed under Hazards & Phenomena.

Additionally, the individual glooms offer distinct dangers, including the wasting sickness of Oinos, the clinging mists of Niflheim, and the memory leeching of Pluton. These are also detailed under Hazards & Phenomena.

GETTING THERE

Hades is one of the most accessible planes in all the multiverse. The River Styx flows through the top layer, with numerous tributaries winding into Niflheim. Portals and gates spontaneously appear throughout the multiverse to the Gray Waste, and the gods of death that hold sway over great portions of the plane monitor the flow of souls through astral conduits. Unclaimed souls from across the multiverse end up in Hades, usually in the realm of one of the death gods, and many of these paths remain open far longer than they need to.

Portals leading out of Hades are a bit rarer. They appear as spinning coins, shining brightly in the gray twilight. The color of each roughly determines its location – golden coins almost always lead to Carceri while copper ones lead to Gehenna. Silver coins are more random and can lead to any other plane, though the Lower Planes are more common, and rare platinum coins lead directly to the Astral Plane. Most of these portals are fixed permanent features of the plane, making them prime hunting grounds for the monsters of Hades.

TRAVELING AROUND

Hades is a depressing plane of gray gloom but moving around isn't directly hampered by natural effects. The sameness of it all eventually makes travel difficult as there are few landmarks, especially on Pluton, and the misty pine forest of Niflheim obscures vision and eats light.

Portals between the layers are solid black that appear initially as smooth obsidian stones. They ripple like water when touched but there's no indication where they lead directly by simply looking at them. Orientation on all of the glooms is difficult at best and getting lost is a real problem for travelers that have no magical guidance.

THE POWERFUL AND MIGHTY

Few things can live in the Gray Waste and not be corrupted and beat down by the unrelenting despair that fills the very air. Fiends of the Lower Planes seem immune to this, a virtue of their evil natures, and undead thrive in all the glooms of Hades. The gods that have chosen to live there (or the ones that have been banished there) all eventually succumb to the unrelenting pressure, giving in to their base instincts and reveling in the power that comes with evil for evil's sake. Travelers should be warned to trust no one in Hades, though this point of advice applies in general to the entirety of the Lower Planes.

ABBATHOR THE GREEDY

Gray is not just a color in Hades, it's a way of life and a distinct power that creeps and crawls over everything. The ground, the trees, the rocks, the sky, all gray, all possessed of a subtle menace that threatens life and mind. There are a few places that buck this trend, however, and one of them is the realm of Abbathor the Greedy, the dwarven god of avarice and jealousy. He dwells beneath a rocky stretch of Oinos in a realm called Glitterhell. In Glitterhell, gold shines in the walls, thick veins of the valuable ore running like veins.

Except none of it is real gold. It's all false, placed there and cultivated by Abbathor to trick anyone who happens to get into Glitterhell. Abbathor's greed breeds paranoia and he doesn't trust anyone, including the blind duergar servants that live like savages in the tunnels. It is rumored the dwarven god keeps a secret forge in the bowels of Glitterhell, but his nature suggests this may be a ruse to lure in greedy thieves.

Abbathor keeps a divine eye on anything valuable that happens to drop into Hades. Gold and gems are a specialty but he lusts after magical trinkets of all kind. The machinations of the Triumvirate of the Grave, the death gods that hold the most power over the Gray Waste, do not concern Abbathor – he sees little value in the souls of the dead.

BLOOD WAR

Hades sees the most open conflicts in the ongoing Blood War between the chaotic demonic forces of the Abyss and the ordered devilish armies of the Nine Hells. Thousands upon thousands of battles have been fought throughout Hades, mainly focused on Oinos on regions surrounding the River Styx, but the foggy forests of Niflheim have seen fiendish troop movements as well. The gray sands and desolate oases of Pluton have seen very little action as part of the Blood War, perhaps owing to the great influence of Hades, god of death that rules over the Underworld.

Evidence of the Blood War is all over Oinos, ranging from pools of blood, bloated fiendish corpses crawling with monstrous scavengers, carrion birds fighting over scraps, along with lost or retreating forces of both sides scattered and separated from their main host. The Blood War Aftermath table under Hazards & Phenomena provides a list of random incidents that can be encountered by travelers throughout Oinos.

Why has Hades seen the most open conflict in the Blood War? Philosophically, Hades stands at the midpoint between the Abyss and the Nine Hells so if one side wins control over the Gray Waste they gain greater control over territory in the Lower Planes. Some have theorized that there is something more to it than just claiming lands. Certainly the rank and file soldiers on each side don't know why they fight on Hades, and even the generals seem only have the barest idea.

DEMONIC HORDES

Owing to their very nature, the demons from the Abyss send wave after wave of gibbering hordes into Hades. There is little to no coordination between the efforts as individual demon lords send their fiends out to simply overwhelm the devils and control Hades by virtue of being the last left alive. However, there are a few demon lords that seem particularly vested in the Blood War on the Gray Waste.

Eblis of the Unbending Knee is a powerful demon lord who controls a vast swath of Pazunia, the first layer of the Abyss. He is obsessed with warfare and has been known to travel via the River Styx into Hades personally to launch himself against the devilish forces on Oinos. Eblis is a brilliant if unorthodox tactician who knows how to use his demons to be the most effective; many of his battles are surprise attacks on infernal strongholds along the River Styx, vital strategic locations for both sides in controlling the flow of battle. He has sent numerous packs of demons into the glooms of the Gray Waste in search of the Obelisks of Ash, which he believes are key to controlling Hades. Eblis has a poor relationship with the Triumvirate of the Grave but he generally steers clear of their territories.

Barbu is another demon lord with a vested interest in the Blood War on Hades. She is much less concerned with the actual control of the Gray Waste than in fighting devils – she is a wild but fierce combatant with a reputation for ruining any peace accord or truce established. Barbu is known as the Unwelcome Guest by everyone, and her flying hordes of deranged vrocks strike fear in the minds of demon and devil alike when they darken the skies of Oinos.

DEVILISH LEGIONS

The rigid march of devils from the Nine Hells of Baator shake the ground, but they know they lack the sheer numbers of their demonic foes. They close this gap with a greater reliance on tactics, a deeper understanding of war, and better trained and equipped soldiers. The devils use sound battle plans to trap and defeat their enemies on the fields of Oinos and beyond, though the wild unpredictability of the demons turns some of those plans upside down.

Zariel, Lord of the First, is the infernal archduchess charged with taking Hades in the name of Baator. As a fallen angel she fought countless battles on Oinos against fiendish forces, and her fall from grace gives her a unique perspective on strategies for claiming Hades. She rarely leaves Avernus and has little time to devote to actual war planning due to infernal politics, so she placed a competent underling in charge. Duke Jornakesh is one of the finest military minds in the Nine Hells. He knows the landscape of Oinos in intricate detail and has won more than battles than he has lost against a greater numbered foe.

Duke Jornakesh uses yugoloth mercenaries more than Zariel would prefer, and this reliance on outside forces may be his undoing. He tries to needlessly risk yugoloth lives in the Blood War and his brilliant strategies has won him many ultroloth allies who believe the devils are destined to win out over the demons. Nonetheless, some – including the powerful Lord of the Wasting Tower – are beginning to grow weary of Duke Jornakesh's promises of victory. Yugoloth loyalty is bought with treasure and if the rumors are true regarding the powerful duke's coffers being depleted by conflicts on other fronts, the yugoloths may renege on their existing contracts.

THE DEMENTED

It is widely believed that the yugoloths originated on Hades and then emigrated to Gehenna thereafter. The main evidence for this are the baernoloths, ancient and powerful yugoloths that have largely cut themselves off from fiendish politics to dwell in solitude across the glooms of the Gray Waste. They are believed to be immortal while living on Hades, further proof of their origin, but their self-imposed exile makes them difficult to find and deal with.

Except for a small group referred to in whispers as the Demented. This loosely organized group of baernoloths believe they can take an active hand in the destruction of the multiverse. The main tool for their machination is the Blood War, so the Demented offer their advice and guidance without charge to any demon or devil commander willing to listen. Their advice is sometimes sound and brilliant, and other times rubbish and dangerous, but their end goal seems to be pushing the boundaries of the conflict to the greater multiverse.

The savviest of fiendish commanders recognize the Demented as being possessed of a special form of madness, and there are students of the Blood War who discount their presence as nothing more than a fluke on a grander stage. But the creatures are old, as old as the yugoloth race, and their penchance for offering advice for free makes taking it tempting for any general or leader looking for an edge.

OINOLOTH OF THE WASTING TOWER

The most influential and individually powerful of all the yugoloths in the multiverse is the oinoloth, who sits at the top of Khin-Oin the Wasting Tower, a 20-mile high bone-like structure stretching up from a barren patch of the Gray Waste. In theory, the oinoloth rules over the yugoloths and directs their actions, working towards the betterment of their fiendish race against the other powers in the multiverse.

In theory, at least. Most don't realize that the oinoloth is a title given to any being that reaches the top of the Wasting Tower and defeats the current oinoloth. Yugoloths are usually the only ones to care to even try, but some demons, devils, and even mortals have entered Khin-Oin with the intent of claiming the lofty title. With it comes a host of powers, including control over the Siege Malicious, a great throne with the power to create disease and spread them throughout Hades (and beyond, or so it is rumored).

The current oinoloth is Mydianchlarus, an incredibly paranoid ultroloth who defeated the previous oinoloth to claim Khin-Oin as its own. Mydianchlarus receives ambassadors from the Abyss, the Nine Hells, Carceri, and elsewhere in special chambers but he never greets them in person. Instead, he speaks through a special magical link with powerful zombies that see to the needs of the ambassadors. Very little is accomplished in these meetings as Mydianchlarus refuses to utilize the powers of the Siege Malicious on any scale helpful to either side in the Blood War, but the visitors and the oinoloth continue to put up a charade.

The previous oinoloth, Anthraxus, though he was defeated and deposed from Khin-Oin, managed to survive and now wanders the Gray Waste as a free agent. He is an experienced ultroloth with a wealth of knowledge and a knack for betrayal, a fact that has started to get around. Anthraxus' work prospects of late have been few and far between.

NIGHTMARE PRINCESSES

Nightmares gallop across the barren stretches of the Gray Waste in great herds, their burning hooves scorching the ground and leaving a trail of black soot in their wake. The powerful beasts are coveted by wicked minded individuals across the multiverse as the mount of choice but taming them is a difficult and timely endeavor. Those that run free on Hades are prized above all others but they swear fealty to an enigmatic group of leaders known only as the nightmare princesses.

Three princesses are known to planar scholars, but it is widely believed there are more. They are each a powerful specimen capable of telepathic speech with mortal creatures, and each travel in a herd with hundreds of fellow nightmares. They are willful, proud, and stubborn, characteristics normally bludgeoned by the unrelenting gloom of Hades, but their nature keeps them strong and running free.

The nightmare princesses have witnessed much in the Gray Waste and they are an excellent source of information – if you have something they want to trade. They are not interested in mortal trinkets or golden treasures,

but they're always in the mood for larvae to devour or a celestial to crush beneath their hooves. The known three are Calaphone, Zadite, and Alyndia, and each frequents Oinos as their layer of choice.

The nightmare princesses meet irregularly at the Dreaming Bones, a great hill filled with nightmare skeletons on the gray sand dunes of Pluton. Nightmares regularly go to the site to die and be reborn again, but the nightmare princesses discuss other matters. Some say they meet to keep up the strength of the herd on Hades, while others say they come to receive the blessings of the Triumvirate of the Grave or some other power that presides over them.

TRIUMVIRATE OF THE GRAVE

Death is no release on Hades. Those unfortunate enough to die in the Gray Waste either return to the earth as larvae and quickly lose what memories they had, or they get snatched up by one of the prominent death gods of the plane, known collectively as the Triumvirate of the Grave. The three deities that make up the group are Arawn, Hel, and Hades, and each claims death as the major part of their divine portfolio.

However, rather than fight or quarrel amongst themselves, they united under a common purpose – to get as many souls into Hades as possible. Two of them keep to Niflheim – Arawn rules the Isles of the Cursed while the Halls of Hel belong to the goddess Hel. Hades, the most powerful and active of the Triumvirate, rules the Underworld on Pluton, a realm nearly as vast as the layer itself. The three meet regularly to discuss topics of mass death across the multiverse and to share plans on subverting souls from their destination across the planes and into their respective realms.

Each of the gods of death that make up the Triumvirate of the Grave are self-serving and greedy, but they have been known to treat with mortals that come to visit on specific purposes. Arawn claims a mortal as his wife who becomes his queen for 10 years before she passes, though rarely are the arrangements mutual – more than one mortal lover has come to the Isles of the Cursed to free their beloved from Arawn's clutches. Hades rules a vast Underworld with thousands upon thousands of servants, but his eye gets caught by the image of a beautiful woman or man from time to time. Hel is impressed only by a warrior's prowess and she works to claim the bravest and most competent souls for her fog-enshrouded realm.

TROLL KING OF FINNVANG FOREST

The fog that chokes Niflheim is thick and gloomy, like everything in the Gray Waste, and it hides multiple secrets. One of those is Finnvang Forest, a stretch of pine woods where the trees are skeletal remnants of their former selves, reaching out with claw-like branches to grasp and scratch at the unwary. This realm is run by Zulkaz the Troll King, an immortal troll with an iron crown intrinsically tied to the forest. Zulkaz has legions of trolls of all types in Finnvang Forest that obey his every command, which is to dig through the dirt in search of his missing organs.

Though immortal, Zulkaz can still lose parts of his body, and a dire curse placed on him means his organs don't regenerate like a normal troll. A hero once sought to free his love from the clutches of Arawn, god of death that rules the Isles of the Cursed, and the price the god put on such an endeavor was to lose the heart, eyes, liver, and other organs of the Troll King. The hero completed the trial and tossed the grisly trophies into the forest where Arawn's magic made them disappear.

Weakened but still alive, Zulkaz has ordered his trolls to scour Finnvang and beyond in search of his missing parts. They have found one eyeball so far and his spleen, but the greatest missing piece is the Troll King's heart. Once he claims all his missing parts, Zulkaz vows to send legions of trolls into the Isles of the Cursed to wreak terrible vengeance upon Arawn.

CREATURES & DENIZENS

Dangerous monsters prowl the Gray Waste of Hades looking to take advantage of weakness, sickness, and despair. Demons, devils, and yugoloths can also be found in great numbers, especially on Oinos, so there's another reason to be cautious if traveling to Hades for any reason.

BLEAK RAT

The despair that fills the air of Hades is more than just an emotional burden. Many of the monsters that live in the Gray Waste perpetuate the cycle of apathy, and few embody this concept more than the bleak rats. These savage rat-like fiends are 3 feet long with gnarled gray bodies completely devoid of hair. Their eyes are narrow slits of yellow intensity – smarter than most rats in the Material Plane, yet still very low on the food chain. Enormous incisors protrude from their distended mouths.

Food for Fiends. Bleak rats are the main source of food for hordlings, diakka, and rakkix that prowl the Gray Waste. They are cannibalistic by nature, devouring each other whenever other food sources become scarce, but they always seem to bounce back in population. They are considered mere vermin by most demons and devils, but most yugoloths enjoy the savory taste of roasted bleak rat. They say the flavor is reminiscent of the hopelessness that permeates Hades and should be enjoyed with a fine goblet of aged blood wine (made from only the fattiest of mortals).

Endless Warrens. Bleak rats are found in great numbers on Oinos and Niflheim, though they are almost non-existent in the gray sands of Pluton. They create narrow warrens beneath the surface, cramped and maze-like in their intricacy, through which they hunt and feed on lesser vermin. Bleak rats do not form familial bonds but do have strong combat instincts on taking down larger prey. When they manage to bring down a larger creature, bleak rats fight each other over the choicest bits of food before gnawing on the bones in their underground warrens for weeks.

BLEAK RAT

Small fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 13 (3d6+3)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Stealth +4

Damage Resistances acid, fire

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Abyssal and Infernal but can't speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Keen Smell. The bleak rat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Pack Tactics. The bleak rat has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the bleak rat's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or suffer disadvantage on attack rolls until the end of the bleak rat's next turn.

DIAKK

A diakk (plural: diakka) is a large, flightless bird-like fiend that lives exclusively in the Gray Waste. They have greasy gray feathers matted down to their jet-black skin by a natural oily secretion, and their beaks end in a long piercing bill capable of great damage against unarmored foes. Their long stork-like legs are thin but capable of moving them with rapid speed across the landscapes of Oinos, Niflheim, and Pluton. Diakka are not very intelligent and serve as a food source for many other creatures in Hades, but they have a number of magical defenses they can bring to bear against unprepared foes.

Flock of Diakka. Diakka gather together in flocks, as few as 4 or 5 but as many as a hundred, pecking away at the soil for insects, bits of forgotten flesh, bleak rats, and other sources of meat. The leader of a flock is the largest and strongest diakk, rarely the smartest, so the creatures tend to move in predictable ways. Some night hags have observed a diakk flock leader exhibit stronger magical power than its brethren, with particular danger around its psychic and enfeebling attacks on intruders. Whether these variants are naturally occurring or the result of some diakk "hive mind" isn't known.

Fiendish Culinary Staple. Most fiends find the taste of a diakk to be pleasing, believing the creature's low intelligence and muscular build provide a close comparison for mortals of the Material Plane (usually a preferred meal choice). Roasted diakk is a common dish in the Abyss and Nine Hells, where fiendish chefs prepare the birds with all manner of variants – stuffed diakk with a flesh-marmalade glaze, diakk breasts cooked in the rib cage of a human soaked in a plum wine reduction sauce, and diakk spit-roasted over a viper tree fire are all staples in the kitchens of demon lords and devil princes.

DIAKK

Medium fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d8+12)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	5 (-3)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages --

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The diakk's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material or somatic components.

At will: *jump*

3/day each: *dissonant whispers*, *ray of enfeeblement*

Magic Resistance. The diakk has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Bill Stab. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12+6) piercing damage.

GARMR

The foggy pine forests of Niflheim are populated with dangerous beasts of all kinds, each uniquely adapted to their gloomy terrain. The mournful howl of the garmr, lost in the fog and coming from seemingly everywhere, sends a shiver down even a fiend's spine. Garmr resemble wolves, larger and leaner with a more pronounced jaw, with ghost-gray fur covering their surprisingly lean frames. The eyes of a garmr glow a dull orange and are usually only visible in the Niflheim fog moments before the powerful predator leaps out to savagely attack a target it has marked as prey.

Hounds of the Gloom. Garmr are found exclusively in Niflheim, and are known as hounds of the gloom by the deathly members of the courts of Hel and Arawn. Their knack for moving swiftly and silently in the obscuring fog makes them difficult to track and most try to avoid the known garmr territories. Unfortunately, the boundaries of these territories are notoriously difficult to discover, and more than one visitor to the Halls of Hel or the Isles of the Cursed have fallen victim to a pack of garmr in the pine forest wilderness.

Hunting Pack of Hel. Hel, one of the goddesses of death that makes up the Triumvirate of the Grave, has keeps a kennel in her realm where savage garmr are raised and trained to hunt for their mistress. These beasts are unusually large and ferocious, and work together as a team to take down larger foes as chosen by Hel or one of her chosen hunters. The hunters that keep the garmr are undead barbarians just as savage as their beasts – no leashes or collars are used, and the hunters are just as likely to join in the savagery with bare hands when they fall upon prey in the Niflheim forests.

GARMR

Large fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d10+24)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)	5 (-3)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses truesight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Giant but cannot speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Fog Jump. While heavily obscured, the garmr can use a bonus action to teleport to an unoccupied space it can see within 60 feet.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The garmr has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. The garmr has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the garmr's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. The garmr makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 10 (1d12+4) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 11 (2d6+4) slashing damage.

HORDLING

Hordlings are the most numerous occupant of Hades and can be found on all three layers. They are misshapen, twisted fiends, no two exactly alike, with a hatred for life and a knack for terror. Hordlings come in all shapes and sizes – tall, thin, short, stocky, winged, snouted, and more. They hop, leap, climb, crawl, walk, or run on two or more legs, and some visitors have noted a hordling spontaneously change their appearance under unknown circumstances, sprouting wings or flippers in a monstrous shift. They travel in packs, falling upon creatures in a wave whenever they find them, using their numbers to overwhelm foes.

Reborn Fiends ... Sort Of. It is widely believed that hordlings are the echo of fiends that have died on Hades. When a fiend dies in the Gray Waste, the gods of the Triumvirate of the Grave do not get to collect the fallen soul for the fiend has no soul in the traditional way. Instead, the fiend is usually reborn on their native plane, but Hades claims a portion of their power in the form of a new hordling. Because the Blood War has ravaged the plane for countless centuries, hordlings are near limitless.

Minions and Pawns. Hordlings are self-serving creatures that delight in nothing more than misery for its own sake, which makes them easily coerced minions for greater powers. Demons, devils, and yugoloths have all conscripted great numbers of hordlings in the past, though this is usually done out of desperation. Hordlings rarely follow any plan more complicated than “go eat that thing” and are liable to turncoat on their “masters” at the first self-serving opportunity. They care only for the spreading of suffering, but a clever general can twist this nature to their own purpose.

HORDLING

Medium fiend (hordling), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8+10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)	9 (-1)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances fire

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Hordling

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Magic Resistance. The hordling has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Mutation. The hordling has one of the following mutations, determined randomly by rolling a d20 or chosen by the DM. The hordling's mutation can change at any time as determined by the DM.

1-2: Amphibious. The hordling can breathe air and water.

3-4: Blindsight. The hordling has blindsight out to a range of 10 feet.

5-6: Hop. The hordling can hop up to 20 feet in a straight line by using only 5 feet of movement.

7-8: Flight. The hordling has grotesque misshapen wings and a flying speed of 30 feet.

9-10: Spider Climb. The hordling can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

11-12: Long Arms. The hordling's claw attack has a reach of 10 feet.

13-14: Hammer Fists. The hordling's claw attack deals bludgeoning instead of slashing damage.

15-16: Keen Hearing and Smell. The hordling has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

17-18: Digging Claws. The hordling has a pair of extra arms used for digging, giving it a burrowing speed of 30 feet.

19-20: Two-Headed. The hordling has two heads. It has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, or knocked unconscious.

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 8 (1d10+3) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Belch (Recharge 5-6). The hordling belches out a cloud of dangerous energy in a 30-foot cone. Roll 1d6 to determine the type of damage – 1: acid; 2: cold; 3: fire; 4: lightning; 5: poison; 6: necrotic. Creatures in the area must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, suffering 14 (4d6) damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.

LARVIATHAN

Enormous, mindless, and incredibly dangerous, the larviathan is a monstrous creature that burrows through the Gray Waste in a never-ending quest for food. It appears as a massive maggot, nearly twenty feet long, with a grayish-yellow pallor to its thick undulating hide. The larviathan's bulk is moved by hundreds of appendages along its belly that each resemble small human arms. Its head tapers to a point with a mouth that drips lethal poison from rows of fangs. Its mouth is too small to swallow a creature whole but the larviathan is nothing if not patient – it can chew slowly on food for days, reducing it to a mushy gray paste, before finally devouring the resultant slurry.

Born of Mass Death. Larviathans are born when a great number of mortal creatures die at once in Hades. The souls normally spawn as larvae, but when so many happen at the same time – more than a hundred though the number isn't exactly known – they congeal together and create a larviathan. Some night hags and liches have tried to force the birth of these monstrous creatures in order to capture and control it, but most of these experiments have resulted in abject failure. One particularly ambitious night hag succeeded beyond her wildest imaginings, and the resultant larviathan was so huge she was crushed beneath its bulk.

Seeking Food. Larviathans feed on living creatures with emotions. They typically ignore bleak rats and diakka that form the basis for the food chain on Hades in favor of demons, devils, and mortals, and though its most potent attacks are largely ineffective against fiends, the larviathan is nearly immortal while on Hades. More than one demon and devil force has been scattered by the sudden appearance of a hungry larviathan desperate for food and driven to the surface in search of sustenance.

LARVIATHAN

Gargantuan fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 232 (16d20+64)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	9 (-1)	19 (+4)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	2 (-4)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, prone

Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages understands Abyssal and Infernal but can't speak

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Magic Resistance. The larviathan has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Regeneration. If the larviathan is touching the ground on the Gray Waste of Hades, it regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn. The larviathan dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Sense Emotions. The larviathan automatically detects the exact location of living creatures within 60 feet unless they are magically shielded from having their thoughts or emotions detected.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The larviathan makes three attacks: two with its claws and one with its bite.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 35 (4d12+9) piercing damage plus 18 (4d8) poison damage.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. **Hit:** 20 (2d10+9) slashing damage.

Despair Cloud (Recharge 5-6). The larviathan releases a 60-foot cone of nearly invisible vapor from its mouth. Living creatures in the area suffer 33 (6d10) psychic damage and must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become filled with despair. Creatures that fail lose half their movement speed and suffer disadvantage on all attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws. They are allowed an additional saving throw at the end of their turn, ending the effect on themselves with a success.

PYRITE SLUDGE

The dwarven god Abbathor lives in a secretive underground realm below Oinos known as Glitterhell. It is a trap-filled maze with numerous false entrances, and Abbathor never invites creatures inside. However, that doesn't mean that creatures don't escape from time to time. Pyrite sludges are believed to have been a creation of the greedy dwarven god that got away from him, for they have been found all over Hades and neighboring planes as well. They appear as rich veins of golden ore when plastered against stone, but like their name suggests there is more than meets the eye.

Hungry for Metal. Pyrite sludges eat metal of all kinds and seek it out wherever possible. They quickly break down metal they come in contact with, leaving colorless flakes in their wake that drift about in the breeze. It isn't uncommon for some woodland realms across the multiverse to use pyrite sludges as guards against unwanted intruders; the elves of Arvandor on Arborea are especially fond of protecting their most sacred sites with imprisoned pyrite sludges, kept starved for metal to keep them ferocious.

Pests of Glitterhell. Do pyrite sludges originate in the depths of Glitterhell, or are they simply drawn to it like the moth to a flame? The debate rages but regardless they are found throughout Abbathor's realm. They slither through Glitterhell, devouring Abbathor's precious veins of rich ore, sending the greedy dwarven god into an ever-deepening pit of madness. His fits of rage shake the foundations of Oinos, though few witness them because of the god's relative isolation. Much of his time is spent hunting down pyrite sludges and stopping them using a combination of wooden weapons and his fists, and the insatiable oozes have become large enough problems to force Abbathor to seek outside help. Begrudgingly.

PYRITE SLUDGE

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 75 (10d10+20)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	7 (-2)	14 (+2)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	2 (-4)

Damage Immunities acid, fire, cold, lightning, slashing

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages --

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amorphous. The pyrite sludge can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Corrode Metal. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal that hits the pyrite sludge corrodes. After hitting, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal that hits the pyrite sludge is destroyed after dealing damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The pyrite sludge makes two pseudopod attacks.

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10+4) bludgeoning damage plus 16 (3d10) acid damage. In addition, nonmagical armor worn by the target is partly corroded and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

Magnetize (Recharge 5-6). The pyrite sludge magnetizes its form to draw in metal objects. Metal objects (including coins) that are not held within 20 feet of the pyrite sludge are automatically drawn into its space. Creatures holding metal objects (like weapons and shields) within 20 feet must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or have any held metal objects pulled into the pyrite sludge's space. Creatures wearing metal armor suffer disadvantage on this saving throw, and if they fail the save they are drawn 10 feet closer to the pyrite sludge. Any metal object in the pyrite sludge's space is subjected to its Corrode Metal ability.

RAKKIX

Rakkix are malevolent spider creatures that spin nearly invisible webs across Oinos and Niflheim on Hades in order to snare the unwary, whether it be fiend, celestial, or mortal. They have large bloated bodies, completely gray like most things on Hades, with intricate patterns marked in black along their abdomens. They live in secluded nests, usually in narrow canyons on Oinos and high in thick pine trees on Niflheim, and while rakkix live with others of their kind they do not work together. Each rakkix is responsible for their own food, resulting in fierce competition over the things that get ensnared in their fire-proof webs.

Genderless Immortal Fiends. Rakkix have no gender. They are asexual fiends that reproduce by laying a clutch of eggs, but those eggs are fertilized from blood by specific types of creatures. Some rakkix eggs require demon blood, some devil blood, and some even the blood of celestials. With the Blood War constantly raging across Hades, there is no shortage of hosts, but the rakkix just need to set their webs up to capture the right victim. They also seem to be immortal – there are no reports of rakkix dying of old age, only rakkix getting bigger, more intelligent, and hungrier.

Fight for Dominance. A rakkix nest is a hotbed of simmering hatred as each fiend fights for dominance over the next meal. Some rakkix are looking for blood from a specific type of creature to fertilize an inert clutch of eggs, giving them an edge over their fellows, but all rakkix are hungry all the time. Creatures caught in rakkix webs and escaped have told tales of the spider fiends fighting one another before descending down to target their victim, giving the ensnared an opportunity to escape.

RAKKIX

Large fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d10+6)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)	13 (+1)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +3, Survival +5

Damage Resistances acid, lightning

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Magic Resistance. The rakkix has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spider Climb. The rakkix can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the rakkix knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The rakkix ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 12 (2d6+5) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) psychic damage.

Web (Recharge 5-6). Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. **Hit:** the target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 10; immunity to bludgeoning, fire, poison, and psychic damage).

YUGOLOTH, BAERNOLOTH

Baernoloths occupy a strange place in the yugoloth hierarchy. They are powerful fiends, intelligent and resourceful, but they remain outside the typical power structure of the yugoloths. Baernoloths are found almost exclusively in the Gray Waste of Hades, having never emigrate to Gehenna like the vast majority of other fiends, and they tend to be solitary loners, living off of suffering and fear that permeates the gray realm around them. Physically, their scrawny bodies and gangly limbs bely a supernatural strength, and their long faces carry distinct goat-like traits. They almost never carry weapons or wear gear, preferring the savage joy that comes from tearing into an opponent with their massive claws or sinking their teeth into their flesh.

Respected Elders. Baernoloths may be separate from most of yugoloth society, but they are still consulted from time to time by others, mainly ultroloths and arcanoloths. These fiendish fellows come to the baernoloth due to the creature's immense age and experience – most believe baernoloths are immortal and trace their heritage back to the origin of the yugoloth race. Because of this, they have accumulated a wealth of knowledge, more practically applied than the scholarly knowledge of the arcanoloths, with an inherent wisdom tempered by experience. They have witnessed countless generations rise and fall on Hades and across the Lower Planes and have seen the Blood War unfold in real time around them.

Perpetrators of Suffering. To a baernoloth, suffering is the only purpose in the multiverse, and to inflict suffering on others is to fulfill their highest calling. They are master torturers, and in their twisted towers and cavernous lairs, baernoloths develop new methods of inflicting pain and anguish on imprisoned victims. Of course, they rely on the old standbys as well, including the use of magical and mechanical devices common across the multiverse. The here and now is usually all that concerns a baernoloth, and they rarely plan out their actions beyond the immediate infliction of pain to any around them. Screams and the cries of the anguished are music to their fiendish ears.

BAERNOLOTH

Large fiend (yugoloth), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 133 (14d10+56)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	17 (+3)

Skills Deception +7, Insight +8, Perception +8, Persuasion +7

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Abyssal, Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 10 (450 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The baernoloth's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). The baernoloth can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *alter self, darkness, detect magic, detect thoughts, suggestion*

3/day each: *cloudkill, fear, heal, symbol*

Magic Resistance. The baernoloth has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The baernoloth's weapon attacks are magical.

ACTIONS

Multiaction. The baernoloth makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 24 (4d8+6) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8+6) slashing damage.

Teleport. The baernoloth magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

REACTIONS

Open Wound. The baernoloth chooses a creature it can see within 30 feet that it has damaged with one of its weapon attacks in the last 24 hours. The creature immediately suffers 18 (4d8) psychic damage as the wound bleeds fresh and pain shoots out from it.

HAZARDS & PHENOMENA

The Gray Waste has an insidious way of getting under the skin of travelers and infecting them with an apathy towards life and existence in general. It's a subtle evil, much less overt than the fire and brimstone found in the Abyss and the Nine Hells. Staying alive and sane in Hades is a challenge for the stoutest of minds and hearts.

BLOOD WAR AFTERMATH

Oinos sees the most activity in the long-standing Blood War between demons and devils for control over the Lower Planes, and the aftermath of those battles litters the first layer of Hades. Skirmishes and open battles are frequent and can certainly sweep up characters, but just as often a party traveling through Oinos only encounters the aftermath. The below table can be used to highlight the impact the Blood War has on Hades, and to create potential adventure seeds for future exploitation.

1D20 BLOOD WAR AFTERMATH

- 1 Shards of green steel swords forged in the Nine Hells scattered about
- 2 A noxious cloud of yellowish vapor containing the dissipating remnants of spectral faces
- 3 A field of mangled demons dissolving into the gray earth
- 4 Clouds overhead churning in a vortex pattern after a demonic force retreated
- 5 An altar dedicated to Asmodeus hastily constructed of demon bones dimming with fading power
- 6 An impact crater hundreds of feet wide with a single devil corpse crushed in the center
- 7 Black ichor drizzling from the sky from a great aerial battle
- 8 A ruined infernal war machine from Avernus crashed into a crevasse, the hull smoking
- 9 Great iron chains lay strewn about, still wet from where they cut into fiendish flesh holding back some monstrosity before it was released
- 10 Enormous shards of black ice studded into the ground, melting into the gray dirt
- 11 Blackened scorch marks in the ground that create an enormous symbol of the demon lord Eblis when viewed from the sky
- 12 A copse of twisted leafless trees burning with emerald green fire
- 13 The twisted skeleton of an enormous devil monstrosity, the bones still smoking
- 14 Pools of bubbling acid slowly being absorbed into the gray dirt
- 15 The bat-like wings of a colossal demon draped across the ground

1D20 BLOOD WAR AFTERMATH

- 16 Several melted mangonels constructed of black steel and decorated with yugoloth symbols
- 17 Broken masonry scattered about the rough structure of a ruined keep still smoking
- 18 A series of huge hoofprints marking the dirt where gigantic war beasts trod
- 19 A pack of yugoloth deserters leaving the area
- 20 Scavengers! Roll on the random encounter table to determine what creatures are picking through the rubble

THE GRAYING

Hades isn't known as the Gray Waste without good reason. On every layer in almost every realm, all colors have been leeched away, leaving only shades of gray over the entire landscape – the skies, the ground, the hills, everything. The River Styx's normally blood-red color dulls to near black while it flows through Oinos.

Anything brought into Hades eventually discolors to a shade of gray, an effect known as the graying. Brighter and more vibrant colors can take a full week to lose their original shade while duller colors take less time. This effect is largely cosmetic, and there are wizards in planar trading cities that specialize in restoring lost color to things found or left on Hades too long.

NIFLHEIM: CLINGING MISTS

The gray pine forests of Niflheim are largely obscured by thick, grasping mists that envelop the entire layer. They curl around the trunks of the gray trees, between the tufts of gray pine needles clinging to the branches, and help hide the natural pits, lakes, and swamps that dot the layer. Anything more than 30 feet away is heavily obscured by the mists, and vision is completely blocked at a distance of 60 feet by the pine trees and mists.

The mists also resist attempts to disperse. A spell like *gust of wind* can swirl the mists for a short period of time, clearing an area, but as soon as the spell effect ends the fog rushes back in and reclaims what it lost. Some planar scholars claim an intelligence sits behind the mists – perhaps Arawn or Hel, or a combination of the two, but few give credence to these ideas. And the mists certainly don't respond to anything that would suggest a sentience behind its thick, flowing movements.

OINOS: WASTING SICKNESS

Diseases are rampant on Oinos owing to the perfect combination of hundreds of thousands of combatants fighting an eternal war and soaking the ground with blood, sweat, and tears. However, there's something more that Oinos has the many travelers don't realize – Khin-Oin the Wasting Tower, bastion of the Oinoloth and greatest stronghold of the yugoloth in the multiverse. Khin-Oin's worst kept secret is the Siege Malicious, a great throne that sits at the top where the Oinoloth rules. It's not just

ornamental, however. The Siege Malicious is a powerful disease machine that can infect the entire plane given the right circumstances – and beyond if the rumors are true.

The presence of the Siege Malicious combined with the unhealthy factors of the Blood War creates a wasting disease that can infect any creature that spends time in Oinos and interacts with the natural environment. This includes drinking or falling into water, getting dirt into fresh wounds, or traversing underground. Creatures in these circumstances must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or contract the wasting disease of Oinos. The wasting disease has four stages.

The first stage starts at infection, and the victim loses 1d6 points of Charisma. These lost ability score points only return when the disease is cured and the victim has spent a long rest outside of Hades. The wasting disease can only be paused while on Hades, but it can flare up easily, forcing the victim to make additional saving throws as if they were contracting the disease for the first time. In these circumstances, the disease skips previous stages and moves to the next.

For most victims, the second stage of the wasting disease occurs at the next long rest after the onset. The victim automatically loses 1d6 points of Dexterity and Strength (roll separately for each) as the disease quickly attacks the muscles. The third stage is far more insidious – it strikes 1d20 hours later as the victim's skin becomes paper-like, gray, and flakes off in great chunks. The fourth and final stage occurs 1d6 hours after the third stage, and results in death.

The wasting disease is particularly nasty around Khin-Oin. Creatures unprotected from disease can contract the wasting disease by just being within 1 mile of the yugoloth tower, and the stages are more rapid (second stage occurs after the first short rest, third stage is 1d4 hours later, and fourth stage is 1d6 minutes).

PLUTON: MEMORY LEECH

The gray sands of Pluton are vast, endless, and supremely boring. Every sand dune looks like the last sand dune, and the horizon blends nearly perfectly into the sky to create a featureless gray haze in all directions. The stunning dullness of Pluton on the surface hides the insidious power of the layer, which steals away memories from travelers. After every long rest on Pluton, creatures must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw. On a failure, they lose memories dear to them – friends and family are forgotten, hometowns hold no special meaning, and even the reason for coming becomes vague and undefined.

After a creature has failed four of these saving throws they lose all memories and are drawn inexorably to the Gates of the Underworld where they are drawn without having any idea why. Hades, the god of death that rules the Underworld, welcomes these memory-less travelers as menial labor and puts them to work on projects around his realm. The memory leeching of Pluton does not occur in the Underworld.

It is possible to restore lost memories. They return on their own, slowly regenerating, over a period of time based on how many failures the victim accumulated. Memories lost over one failure come back after 1 day

outside of Pluton, while two failures require 1 week and three failures require 1 month. If a creature that has failed four saving throws can somehow be directed outside of Pluton, they remain memoryless for 1 year. The death god Hades has an instinctual link to creatures restoring their memories and usually sends cults and servants to drag the victim back to Pluton to finish the leeching process.

VILE TRANSFORMATION

Larvae are mortal souls that have been reborn as disgusting wriggling grubs in the soil of Hades. They serve as food and commodity for the residents of the Gray Waste; night hags are especially fond of rounding up larvae and selling them on black markets across the multiverse. Larvae are created in one of three ways – through horrendous magical transformation spells known only to the highest-ranking servants of the Triumvirate of the Grave; by the gods of death diverting unbound souls and releasing them into Hades; or by a vile transformation that affects mortal creatures on the plane.

The vile transformation is deceptively simple. Every long rest spent on the plane, mortal creatures (fiends, celestials, and elementals are immune) must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they gain a level of exhaustion. These levels of exhaustion cannot be removed while the victim remains on Hades. When a victim gains their sixth level of exhaustion through any effect while on Hades, the victim's body dies and they are reborn immediately as a larvae. This process is irreversible, at least to common thinking, and transformed larvae quickly lose all memories of their previous lives.

MYSTERIOUS SITES & TREASURES

The Gray Waste hides multiple sites and relics of power, many of which are the direct result of the Blood War between the demons and devils of the Lower Planes. There must be some reason for adventurers to head into the dangerous and deadly realms of Hades!

CHASM OF PLAGUES

Khin-Oin the Wasting Tower is a dominating sight on the otherwise featureless horizon of Oinos. It towers over the landscape, and considering the dangerous disease that radiates out from it, few go near it. But nearby, roughly ten miles from the tower itself, yawns the Chasm of Plagues, a darkness-filled gorge cut into the Gray Waste itself. It is patrolled by servants of the Oinoloth at all times, for within its depths is rumored to be the source of Khin-Oin's disease-generating power.

The Chasm of Plagues is a jagged scar in the ground, roughly 500 feet across at its widest and almost a mile long. The sides are steep and cloaked in darkness and few know exactly how far down it goes – the shadows become a physical force, like liquid darkness, after descending a mile down. Strange gray moss and fungi cling to the rocky sides which are climbable by an experienced traveler, though the yugoloths and slasreths (monsters normally native only to Gehenna) patrol regularly and have orders to destroy any intruders.

The moss and fungi supposedly grant creatures resistance or immunity to Khin-Oin's worst wasting disease, but there are rumors the Chasm of Plagues holds the source of power for the Siege Malicious itself in its depths. Few have even attempted the journey into the black chasm, and those that have and lived to tell the tale say there is a living disease of monstrous proportions that moves and flies in the shadows.

DEATH OF INNOCENCE

Squatting in the pine forest of Niflheim sits the isolated frontier town, Death of Innocence. The people that have drifted into its wooden-timbered buildings and muddy streets all share the viewpoint that death is the only release from suffering, but they are too selfish and too arrogant to die by their own hands. It is a grim town, with clawing mists as thick as anywhere on the layer hanging around it, but it does offer some respite for those lost to Niflheim's heavy pine forests.

Death of Innocence is positioned relatively close to the Halls of Hel, and the goddess of death does not look kindly upon such a settlement so near her sacred borders. She has sent packs of garmr led by her most experienced hunters into the town to wipe them out, which happens frequently, but something in the site attracts more people and before long the buildings are back up and Death of Innocence stands again. It's happened so many times the residents actually look forward to the razing.

What about the site attracts travelers and draws the ire of Hel? There have been strange occurrences in Death of Innocence witnessed by travelers, including glowing lights, distant laughing voices, the tinkling of bells. Is there a gateway to the Plane of Faerie, the Feywild, hidden somewhere within, below, or even above Death of Innocence?

DREAMING BONES

Herds of nightmares thunder across the landscape of Hades. They are common on Oinos, rare on Niflheim, and almost never seen on Pluton. The only time an unaccompanied nightmare has been seen in the gray sands of Pluton it has been on a pilgrimage to the Dreaming Bones, a great mountain in a sandy valley completely comprised of bones – the bones of nightmares.

Nightmares come to the Dreaming Bones to end their physical form, but that is not death for them. They are reborn after giving themselves over to the grisly pile, re-emerging somewhere on Hades with new life and vigor. The Nightmare Princesses are the only ones that know the exact location of the Dreaming Bones so in order to die and be reborn, a nightmare must seek out one of these powerful but fickle individuals and request the location. Most of the time, the Nightmare Princesses oblige, and if the whim strikes they may send an honor guard on the trip – or accompany the nightmare themselves.

It is said that the Nightmare Princesses must rejuvenate their own bodies at the Dreaming Bones every so often, but their rebirth is different. They die as Nightmare Princesses but return as regular nightmares, and in the cosmic scales another nightmare on Hades is chosen

to be elevated. Is this the work of Hades, the god of the Underworld? The god does seem to favor the nightmares more than the other two of the Triumvirate of the Grave, and it would not be out of the ordinary for the fickle Hades to distribute such power randomly.

FINNVANG FOREST

Finnvang Forest is a stretch of pine woods in Niflheim that seem to the untrained eye as any other patch of foggy wilderness on the layer. It is the realm of Zulkaz the Troll King, and the legions of immortal trolls and ogres that live in the forest scour the region without end looking for the missing organs of their liege. Zulkaz had his organs, including his eyes and heart, removed by a hero looking to free his love from the clutches of Arawn. The hero succeeded, but Zulkaz – being an immensely powerful and immortal being – did not die. Instead, the Troll King lives on in agony, and the search for his parts continues without end.

Zulkaz's forces have orders to bring any trespasser into Finnvang Forest to the Troll King's dreary gray stone castle. There, Zulkaz questions the prisoners without end, demanding to know where his eye, heart, and liver are located. Most planar scholars that study the history of Finnvang believe that the Troll King's missing body parts are not actually on Niflheim at all, but Zulkaz refuses to believe this. The greedy self-absorbed Troll King jumps at any opportunity to get his body parts back, but he is quick to betray any alliance and break any agreement at the most opportune moment.

FOG LABYRINTH OF CRALFUM

Not all of the fog in Hades is found in Niflheim. One particularly dangerous stretch of rocky terrain in Oinos descends into a shallow valley completely filled with thick, choking mists. Known as the Fog Labyrinth, it is the home to an insane lich named Cralfum who is attempting to unlock the borders between the layers of Hades. His ultimate goal isn't exactly clear, though Cralfum believes the unwinding of the borders will result in him achieving great power and taking a seat on the Triumvirate of the Grave.

Cralfum may be insane, but his power and mastery over planar gates is well regarded across the multiverse. The Fog Labyrinth actually pulls in the mist from Niflheim, so the entire area has the same Clinging Mists feature as the second layer. The lich's personal sanctum sits in the center of the Fog Labyrinth – a domed structure covered in arcane sigils. Inside, he tinkers with magic that sits at the crossroads of the multiverse. He has regular correspondences with other powerful spellcasters that share his interest in planar magic, and some of his spells have become known to planar scholars in distant realms.

Those seeking Cralfum had best be prepared, however. Some quirk of the magic that created the Fog Labyrinth actually creates near-solid walls that shift, dissipate, and reform at random. Cralfum found a tribe of minotaurs on another plane, killed them, and then animated their bones as powerful skeletons that retain some measure of their former intelligence. The skeletal minotaur guardians of the Fog Labyrinth are merciless and loyal only to the lich.

GLITTERHELL

Beneath the rocky Gray Waste of Oinos sits a vast complex of narrow tunnels and cramped passages known as Glitterhell. This is the realm of Abbathor, the dwarven god of greed, and he keeps vast amounts of wealth secreted away within his tunnels. He employs traps of all kind to keep thieves and robbers out, and he knows where every last copper coin sits in Glitterhell. A rampant paranoia fills Abbathor so he trusts nearly no one, but he does keep a small number of blind duergar miners and priests to help do the menial work in Glitterhell.

There are numerous openings on the surface of Oinos that supposedly lead into Glitterhell, but the vast majority of these traps of insidious design. Some dump the intruder into vats of gray acid, while others crush them beneath heavy blocks that shoot out from the walls, ceiling, and floor. The divine power of Abbathor keeps the graying that affects the rest of Hades at bay in regards to physical items, so gold, silver, and other metals keep their original luster within Glitterhell.

Abbathor is not without his foils, however. Pyrite sludges ooze through his traps and climb through his carefully prepared setups to devour the god's precious hoarded metals. Are the pyrite sludges created as a natural thwart to Abbathor's greed? Or were they introduced by some other engineering power to teach the greedy dwarf god a lesson? Abbathor's mind reels with the possibilities and his rantings fill the halls as he hunts the dangerous pyrite sludges down with wooden hammers and spears.

GRIMPORT

There are very few points of actual respite in all of Hades. This is especially true for Oinos, where the eternal Blood War flares up with blood results near constantly. The only stable point on the layer, perhaps even the entire plane, is a ramshackle port town on the River Styx known as Grimport. The ruler of Grimport is a spectral force in a tattered black cloak who speaks only in a harsh whisper; locals call it the Grim Specter but no one really knows its name, origin, or purpose beyond keeping Grimport neutral and safe from marauding demons and devils.

The Grim Specter uses fantastic powers to keep fiends and celestials civil in its bleak, crooked streets, and most don't even try to raise problems anymore. The forces that invade Hades meet in Grimport to discuss plans, reconnoiter the landscape, and to hire mercenaries, as the yugoloths have taken up most of the running of the river port town. This seems to suit the Grim Specter just fine, and the yugoloths have a vested interest in keeping Grimport decidedly neutral in the Blood War. How else would they conduct their business of mercenary work for both sides?

Merrenoloths are especially common in Grimport, and there are few more stable locations on the River Styx in all the Lower Planes. A traveler seeking a ferryman for the dangerous river journey can usually find a merrenoloth or other captain willing to book passage – for the right fee. Sometimes, the cost is a soul coin or two per passenger, other times the merrenoloth wishes for some other trinket. What drives these mysterious fiends is beyond most.

The taverns around Grimport's docks are the shabbiest, dingiest, dirtiest dives in all of Hades and they serve the most vile and despicable drinks imaginable, but they can also be a source of information. Travelers looking to learn about the latest movements in the Blood War, or upcoming skirmishes that might affect their travel plans, can do worse than asking around at Grimport's dockside taverns. The Grim Specter usually only intervenes when large scale violence threatens Grimport itself, so visitors must still be careful to avoid asking the wrong questions and provoking the dangerous patrons into taking lethal actions.

HALL OF HEL

Hel's realm in Niflheim is noticeably colder than the rest of the fog-enshrouded pine forest, and she always keeps regular patrols of fiercely loyal frost giants on guard to ensure no one gets in or out without her express permission. The center of her realm is a massive timber building several miles long that serves as the Hall of Hel. The interior is dominated by an expansive banquet chamber, filled with dozens of long tables, but there is no merriment or festivities that occur here. Poisonous sap drips from the ceiling at irregular intervals and the chill of the outside is nothing compared to the icy frost of the inside.

The people that sit at the tables are the souls bound to Hel against their will. Sumptuous food is laid out at all times, served up by skeletal servants, but to eat any of it is to invite wracking convulsions and horrific pain. Hel herself sits at a throne that overlooks the banquet hall where she passes sentencing on those that have been doomed to her grim Niflheim realm. Sometimes, she pronounces judgement on those that were caught trying to infiltrate her realm as well, though just as often she leaves the grisly duty to her fierce packs of garmr and attendant keepers.

Behind Hel's throne is her personal treasure chamber which is said to hold ancient relics from across the multiverse related to glorious death in combat. Hel herself is a coldly beautiful woman of giant-size with a morose, sullen look on her face. She seems to take no pleasure in her duties, though that does not mean she slacks at all in trying to ensnare souls for the good of Hades and her realm. Giants of all kind can be found in the Hall of Hel serving as guards to their mistress, but the chambers below the great hall are said to hold the souls of unworthy giants, chained forever and bound to cook and clean for the residents of the great hall.

ISLES OF THE CURSED

There are countless lakes in Niflheim's pine forests, but most are oily gray waters less than a mile in any direction. The largest lake on the layer is Annwn, and its fog-cloaked banks hold the secret realm of Arawn, one of the gods of death in the Triumvirate of the Grave. Arawn's personal domain is a series of ten islands in the center of Annwn known as the Isles of the Cursed, and getting there is quite a challenge. Magical impediments and divine decrees prevent any creature from flying over the waters of Annwn – travel is only permissible by boat. Serpents of all kind lurk hungrily in the gray depths, and the choppy waters are difficult to navigate.

Travelers that make it to the center of Annwn are greeted first by a massive fortress made of countless bones, with a singularly huge skull sitting at the top, its eyes ablaze. This is the Fortress Annoeth and serves as the lighthouse for the Isles of the Cursed – seeing it, a traveler knows they have entered into Arawn's Isles of the Cursed.

The ten islands are bleak places devoid of cheer or camaraderie, though they are populated by the depressed dead owned by Arawn. They toil in endless drudgery, working for the sake of work without producing anything of value or note, all for the enjoyment of the realm's ruler. Arawn himself is far more animated with the other Triumvirate of the Grave members, and he has a fondness for all of those that have been doomed to live on his cursed islands. Historically, he has also been the most willing to work with mortals that make the journey across the water of Annwn to see him for whatever reason.

Arawn's personal castle is the center of civility in an otherwise gray and dismal plane. The god forces courtly manners and etiquette by magical decree upon any who come to the castle seeking an audience with Arawn. Though everything retains a gray shabby color, the members of Arawn's court are forced to act happy, though it is clear from their vacant eyes, hollow smiles, and taut skin that no one is truly enjoying themselves. Arawn doesn't seem to care or mind.

KHIN-OIN THE WASTING TOWER

It's hard to miss Khin-Oin the Wasting Tower. It stands about twenty miles high, stretching high into the gray clouds over Oinos, and appears to be constructed entirely out of the spine from some enormous beast. This is the center of yugoloth power in Hades, and likely their birthplace as well, though most of the fiends have relocated to the volcanic slopes of Gehenna. Most yugoloths still recognize the individual power of Khin-Oin and its master, the Oinoloth, as a force to be respected and coveted.

Khin-Oin is known as the Wasting Tower because of the disease that ravages the body of unprotected travelers as they come closer to the tower's base. The Oinoloth at the top of Khin-Oin sits on a massive throne called the Siege Malicious that actually creates and spreads the wasting disease, and under the right circumstances it is said that its myriad diseases can be spread across the multiverse. Few Oinoloths have even attempted this, preferring instead to consolidate their power, for by yugoloth law any creature of any kind can challenge the current Oinoloth for their

position and title. They just need to pass through Khin-Oin's lower floors and survive.

Khin-Oin is filled with traps, imprisoned fiends, and hazards accumulated from centuries of yugoloth paranoia. Each Oinoloth adds their own special flavor of horrible to the rooms that make up the tower. The Wasting Tower is roughly 250 feet in diameter, which tends to be much smaller than most people think, though its sheer size straight up is daunting enough.

It is also widely known that Khin-Oin descends an equal height into the ground of Oinos. What horrors lurk there few can guess – most that come into Khin-Oin seek the Siege Malicious and the Oinoloth and thus head up as soon as possible. Some say the dungeons below the Wasting Tower hold prisoners captured by the yugoloths across the multiverse, while others say they contain the warped early drafts of the fiends before the night hags that birthed them settled on a final design. Or all of these could be true, with nearly twenty miles of tower, the possibilities and dangers are nearly limitless.

OBELISKS OF ASH

Why is Hades the hotbed of the Blood War? What draws demons and devils, and the accompanying forces that both oppose and support them, to the Gray Waste to fight endlessly? One of the more popular theories points to the strange stone slabs found across the plane. They are referred to by many names among the fiends but most refer to them as the Obelisks of Ash, and at least one demon lord believes controlling these sites are the key to harnessing the latent power of Hades and winning the Blood War.

There have been six Obelisks of Ash seen, mostly on Oinos but a few on Niflheim and Pluton as well. They are each rectangular, 100 feet high and 25 feet thick, constructed of a solid piece of stone. The stone itself is gray and defies all attempts to categorize or identify – it is indestructible, impervious to elemental damage, and doesn't chip or scrape. The surface is covered in intricate pictogram, though no single source has managed to capture all of the images on a single Obelisk of Ash. What has been seen by planar scholars suggest the obelisks are ancient as the pictograms depict Hades under completely different circumstances – as a lush, vibrant realm where sinister monsters lurk and stalk.

The Obelisks of Ash are especially tricky because they constantly change position, never remaining in a single location for more than a day or so. Diviners in the Lower Planes have tracked these movements, and the arcanaloths of the Tower Arcane on Gehenna possess the most complete records of the obelisks movement – but it doesn't seem to help in identifying positively where they are going to show up. Eblis of the Unbending Knee, a chief demon lord waging battles in the Blood War, has dedicated his troops and resources to finding the obelisks and possessing them, but he has relied on unreliable intel and chaotic power, and hasn't had much success.

Who built the Obelisks of Ash? What are their purpose? What does controlling one actually look like? These questions and more continue to baffle planar scholars.

SEA OF MISERY

The gray desolate fields of Oinos are rocky, with little natural vegetation struggling in the bleak landscape, and what little water exists can usually be traced to the River Styx. The largest such body of water is the Sea of Misery, connected to the River Styx by underground channels. This broad shallow sea is less than fifty feet deep at its maximum, but it spreads out over a hundred miles in diameter. Several rocky features jut out from its dismal gray waters, and the entire area has become a natural flashpoint for conflicts in the Blood War.

The demon lord Eblis of the Unbending Knee throws wave after wave of demonic forces at the Sea of Misery, as the great lake has seen numerous appearances from the Obelisks of Ash, while the devils see it as controlling a major resource in the otherwise unending grayness of Hades. Sea monsters of all kinds dwell in the shallow waters, feeding off of the fiends that fight overhead, and hydroloths are common sightings even outside of the Blood War.

For travelers, the Sea of Misery does not hold the same memory-draining power as the River Styx, but its waters still carry dangers. The wasting disease prominent in Oinos is rampant here, so anyone swimming or otherwise coming into contact with the Sea of Misery must check immediately for contracting it. The sheer number of battles fought overhead means there is quite a bit of detritus at the bottom of the lake, so scavengers of all kinds have been encountered in and around the waters, looking for the choicest bits of scraps.

UNDERWORLD

Pluto's most powerful denizen, and perhaps the most powerful in all of Hades, is the god of death for whom the plane is named after. Hades is the strongest of the Triumvirate of the Grave and its undisputed leader, and on Pluto his realm of Underworld is the largest and most dominating force. It sits beneath the gray sands of the layer, accessible only via a massive gate guarded by a monstrous three-headed hound comprised of thousands of squirming living bodies.

Beyond the gate, a set of stairs descends into the cool ground until ending at a yawning opening leading to the vastness of the Underworld. This is not a cavernous underground realm, however. It is a land of night-black poplars, wilting olive trees, scrub grasses, and twilight skies. Larvae souls squirm and writhe before finally giving up the last vestiges of hope and succumbing to the gloom of the Underworld, transforming into a wispy shadow drawn towards the dominating feature of the landscape – the House of Hades.

Hades the god lives and rules from the House of Hades, a massive palatial fortress constructed of polished black marble. It is artfully decorated with exquisitely carved statues and iconography, and Hades considers himself to have the finest of tastes when it comes to art and sculpture. Honored guests from across the multiverse come and stay in the palace before meeting with the god, who is not altogether the cackling maniacal evil figure most believe him to be. Hades is calculating, cold, and distant, but with

a pragmatism that puts the balance of existence over the needs of "good" and "evil."

His skeleton priests that tend to the Underworld are less concerned with the balance, however, and they drive the larvae and imprisoned souls past the brink of desperation. Hades does not allow residents to leave, and his disappointed wrath can spread across the planes to enact vengeance upon those that do manage to escape.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Despite the gloomy desperation that permeates every facet of existence in the Gray Waste, adventure can still be found for those willing to seize upon it. Hades contains arguably the most concentrated evil in the multiverse so there are plenty of opportunities for positive heroes to make a big difference.

TIER 1 (LEVELS 1-4)

Hades is a dangerous place for inexperienced characters to visit, even though it's one of the most accessible of the Lower Planes. Nonetheless, the plane's gloomy influence spreads across the whole multiverse, and its pervasive evil requires good heroes to rise up against it at all opportunities.

... A local tavern has become unusually gloomy, with the staff walking around in a depressed haze and the few patrons drinking as if to drown themselves in alcohol. The relative of one of these patrons asks the characters to investigate, and the party quickly learns a supernatural power is behind the despondency. Bleak rats have infested the cellars through a small gate to Hades, requiring the heroes to put an end to the planar vermin and close the gate.

... The local temple of healing has suddenly become overrun by hordlings! The characters stumble into the adventure when they visit the temple on an unrelated errand and wind up facing the mutated fiends from Hades. The sudden arrival of the hordlings is traced to a puzzle box unlocked by a neophyte, purchased in the market square recently. Was it a deliberate plan by fiendish forces to sow fear and despair? Who was the mysterious merchant that sold the puzzle box?

... A terrible sickness strike a town, forcing it into quarantine to keep the disease from spreading. The characters are locked in and must find a cure before the wasting sickness overruns the entire town. Yugoloth infiltrators have targeted the town with plague bombs containing concentrated strains of the wasting disease emanating from Khin-Oin. The cure can only be found in Hades, in a black herb that grows in the Field of Nettles on Oinos.

TIER 2 (LEVELS 5-10)

Though Hades remains a dangerous and insidious place for travelers of all kinds, experienced characters should have resources that protect them from the worst effects of the plane. Nonetheless, traveling through Oinos, Niflheim, and Pluto are not for the unprepared.

... While exploring a cave the characters stumble upon a natural one-way gate leading to Glitterhell, and find themselves facing pyrite sludges and blind duergar slaves of Abbathor. The greedy dwarven god confronts the heroes and demands to know why they're here, but at the same time recognizes the opportunity before him. He needs pyrite sludges cleared out of his halls and offers to release the party safely if they comply with his demands. Can they trust Abbathor? What dangers lurk in Glitterhell?

... The characters are asked to seek out an audience with a baernoloth on Hades regarding the nature of a planar problem vexing a great sage. The baernoloth's twisted lair is dangerous, but the fiend meets with the party and hears them out. The monster requires something in return before it offers the information they seek, however – he wants a green steel sword lost in the Sea of Misery. Does the baernoloth hold up his end of the deal?

TIERS 3 AND 4 (LEVELS 11+)

There are few higher callings to action for high-level heroes than stopping the machinations of evil in Hades. Great heroes require great challenges, and few greater challenges to the peace of the multiverse can be found than in the Gray Waste.

... Due to their experience the characters are asked by a band of guardinals from Elysium to help stop a force of demons and devils from recovering a potent artifact on Hades. The artifact is an engine of destruction thought destroyed long ago on the fields of Oinos, but the guardinals have reason to believe fiendish forces are moving to reclaim it again. The characters accompany the celestials to Oinos, through open warfare, and to the engine, which is a titanic structure buried in the ground. They must crawl through the engine and remove its heart while battle demon and devil forces looking to claim it for themselves.

... A person with information relevant to the party's interests dies suddenly, and all attempts at resurrection fail. It turns out their soul has been claimed by Hel, and the characters must travel to Niflheim to recover it. They must face garmr hounds, giants of all kind, and get into the Hall of Hel in order to negotiate for the soul's release. What does the goddess of death require in exchange for the soul?

RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLES

The below tables can be used by the Dungeon Master as a source of inspiration when a party of characters are traveling through the Gray Waste of Hades. Though each layer has its own unique flora and fauna, the table below can be used on almost any of the layers to throw challenges at a band of characters. Look at each one as a springboard for new adventure ideas, or as a means of highlighting the nature of the plane for the players.

GRAY WASTE OF HADES

1D100	GRAY WASTE OF HADES
01-05	A pack of barlgura on their way to a fight
06-10	A legion of merregon devils waiting for their commander
11-15	A thundering herd of nightmares
16-20	Two larvae wriggling out of the dusty ground
21-25	A herd of diakka pecking at the earth
26-30	The gibbering of nearby hordlings
31-35	Massive webs spun across the landscape
36-40	A night hag hunting for larvae
41-45	Swarms of bleak rats scouring the bones of a traveler
46-50	A succubus watching with hungry eyes
51-55	The yagnoloth agent of the Oinoloth on a mission
56-60	A brigade of mezzoloth deserters
61-65	Garmr with a frost giant hunting down escapees from Niflheim
66-70	Vrocks flying overhead intent on picking a fight
71-75	A pyrite sludge waiting in a shallow crevasse
76-80	A larviathan passing underneath
81-00	Blood War Aftermath