



Fiendish Codex I:
Hordes of the Abyss™

Sample file

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Introduction

“Korata, buraki, tor-knu!” A withered hand tosses yellow dust on the dark circle. The circle glows.

“Mortucorn, sikjata, marilith!” The glow grows brighter. A shimmer fills the air within the circle. Then—a CRACK! as the air splits and the stench of sulfur and brimstone explodes outward. The glow fades.

A female figure appears, but this is no woman. As she raises her head, her snakelike tail unfurls and her six arms, each hand holding a weapon, stretch outward from her humanlike torso.

“You called?” Her voice is raspy, full of contempt. “You wish my service, ‘master’?”

The cloaked figure steps aside and, in a voice as ancient and terrible as death, says, “Not exactly.” He turns his head toward a far corner of the chamber and speaks again. “Come, let us see what we can learn from this one.”

In response, two figures step forward out of the darkness. One bears a shield emblazoned with the symbol of Heironeous. His sword glows with a holy flame as he raises it to strike. The other carries an axe struck with the symbol of Kord. He growls as he leaps forward.

The marilith hisses in pain and fear, her eyes squinting against the holy light. “No!” Her blades sing as they cut the air. “No!” she screams again as the sword falls and the axe strikes. “No. . . .”

The six-armed body falls to the ground, and the cloaked figure speaks to his companions once more.

“Now, quickly—bring it to me. . . .”

THE ABYSS AWAITS

Those who would battle the forces of evil must learn about them and turn their own works against them. *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss* deals with demons and the layers of the Abyss in a frank manner. Demons are no longer simply the biggest bad guys on the D&D block. Rather, they provide a whole new set of challenges for player characters—and new opportunities as well.

This book contains information for DMs who want to run adventures or campaigns featuring demons and the Abyss for all levels. From the quasit that curdles a cow’s milk, to the dungeon passage that seems to go on a bit too long, to the expedition through demonic layers to wrest a soul from torment, adventuring against demonkind can come at any time during a campaign.

The tanar’ri, the loumara, and the obyrith populate this book. Some of the demons described herein are “ordinary” examples of their kind, if that word can be accurate where demons are

concerned. Another chapter is devoted to the demon lords—unique entities of varying power, although even the weakest among them can be a terrible and formidable opponent.

For players, this book offers new feats, prestige classes, magic items, and artifacts that can bring PCs closer to defeating—or joining—the fiendish hordes. The *Black Scrolls of Ahm* teach us about demonkind, as well as the famed *Demonomicon* of Iggwily and other classic works.

The final chapter of this book, and the longest one, provides detailed information about several layers of the Abyss that far exceeds the quality and quantity of any previously published material.

DEMONS IN THE CAMPAIGN

This book discusses how to introduce fiends and the Abyss into the campaign in many interesting ways. It’s important to realize that player characters do not have to be high level to fight demons. Not only are many lower-level demons contained in this tome, but there are also plenty of instances of demonic incursion on the Material Plane that a DM can introduce into his or her game. The book covers this topic further, but it is something important enough to state up front.

THE DEFINITIVE SOURCE

If you have been tainted by earlier explorations into demonic lore, rest assured that *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss* is the definitive DUNGEONS & DRAGONS v.3.5 book on the subject. The material contained in this tome updates earlier material, drawing from earlier sources freely and eliminating contradictions. If you have used earlier sources and you find lore in those books that contradicts *Fiendish Codex* . . . well, demons are known for spreading misinformation. Use the material that works best for your campaign—but be aware that future D&D works will rely on *Fiendish Codex I* for the definitive answers to Abyssal questions.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss makes use of the information in the three D&D core rulebooks—*Player’s Handbook (PH)*, *Dungeon Master’s Guide (DMG)*, and *Monster Manual (MM)*. In addition, it includes references to other D&D supplements, including *Fiend Folio (FF)*, *Monster Manual II (MM2)*, *Monster Manual III (MM3)*, *Epic Level Handbook*, *Miniatures Handbook*, and a few others. Although possession of any or all of these supplements will enhance your enjoyment of this book, none beyond the core rulebooks are strictly necessary.

SWIFT AND IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

Some of the special abilities, feats, spells, and items in *Fiendish Codex I* use these concepts, which were introduced in previous supplements. A description of how they work follows.

Swift Action: A swift action consumes a very small amount of time, but represents a larger expenditure of effort and energy than a free action. You can perform one swift action per turn without affecting your ability to perform other actions. In that regard, a swift action is like a free action. However, you can perform only a single swift action per turn, regardless of what other actions you take.

Casting a quickened spell is a swift action. In addition, casting any spell with a casting time of 1 swift action (such as *exorcism*; see page 92) is a swift action. Casting a spell with a casting time of 1 swift action does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Immediate Action: Much like a swift action, an immediate action consumes a very small amount of time, but represents a larger expenditure of effort and energy than a free action. Unlike a swift action, an immediate action can be performed at any time—even if it’s not your turn.

Using an immediate action on your turn is the same as using a swift action, and it counts as your swift action for that turn. You cannot use another immediate action or a swift action until after your next turn if you have used an immediate action when it is not currently your turn (effectively, using an immediate action before your turn is equivalent to using your swift action for the coming turn). You also cannot use an immediate action if you are currently flat-footed.



Illus by A. Swickel

Sample file

In the beginning, there was light . . . but in the time before that, chaos raged.

To study fiends is to study the Abyss. Rage, hate, and roiling chaos enshroud all ancient fiendish lore like a darkmantle engulfs its prey. As such, students of demonic mythos are not usually claimed by madness, but by the subject matter itself. A loremaster who tempts the Abyss with his curiosity might find it looking right back at him, hooking its shadowy tendrils into his soul and clutching at his very being with a strength that predates the eternal. But madness? No, he will not survive to know madness.

That said, I study the lore of demons, and somehow I endure. I have neither wrestled the Abyss directly nor allowed my many encounters with the fiends that serve it (yes, I said they serve it!) to quench my thirst for knowledge. Those who come after me might be more careful, if less skilled, and they can continue the dark journey from the end of my steps. But, alone in my explorations, I have uncovered truths they could not hope to discover firsthand.

Most importantly, I have learned that the Abyss is the darkling chaos from which all things come. This genesis has nothing to do with good or evil—just pure, churning chaos, in its simplest form. Who could have believed that the origin of life—of earth, of tree and stream—spawns from such turmoil? Yet, it is true. It is only through the imposition of order that the gods create, and they must work the stuff of chaos to build their thrones above man's domain. They create law and force order, twisting what was pure into something . . . else—something more suited to their survival

and their dominance over us. As such, they are not ultimately responsible for creation, but only for helping the essence of life take shape.

Therefore, is it any wonder that demons hate and envy the divine? The gods corrupt the pure chaos of the fiends' spawning grounds and leave them thrashing around in what is left. These deities then ascend to higher planes, often taking credit for the creation of the universe, or individual planes, or mankind, or any number of wonders over which they had little influence. The chaos and evil of the Abyss is all the fiends have left, which is why the demonic now wage war against the divine.

It is my hope that I shall discover much more before I am myself overcome by the Abyss. However, the fiends have learned of my quest for knowledge, and they fear my power. Soon, the battle will come. I can only pray to gods I no longer worship that my learning survives me. Forge on.

—Surviving excerpt from the Black Scrolls of Ahm

Not all who study the ways of demons or the origins of the universe maintain as thin a grip on sanity as did the author of the *Black Scrolls*, Tulket nor Ahm. Still, as he predicted, few loremasters in his field have ever surpassed him in skill—though some certainly bested him in caution. Luckily, his theories on fiends and the origins of the universe survived his gory death and have formed the basis of many continuing works on the subject.

THE BLACK SCROLLS

When Tulket nor Ahm compiled his knowledge of fiends, he knew his work would attract the attention of his subjects, if not the Abyss itself. Ahm believed that all life in the universe derives from the chaos of the Abyss, thus extrapolating that the Abyss itself must be alive as well. Still, even Ahm never ascribed intelligence or sentience to the Abyss. He firmly alleged that nothing alive (or even undead) could comprehend the nature of the Abyss's existence. However, he did posit a motive for it—a return to chaos. Ahm deemed it possible that the intelligence of the demonic creatures spawned in the Abyss were, in fact, its own intelligence, working toward this goal. Through their ultimately chaotic efforts, he believed that the fiends would bring about the Abyss's desired outcome—the end of all things mortal and immortal, and a universe that could, once again, live wholly without order or purpose.

Few loremasters have read even parts of the *Black Scrolls of Ahm*, and fewer still can understand what they have seen transcribed in Tulket nor Ahm's spidery, wandering hand. While many of the *Black Scrolls* survived Ahm's destruction (and the destruction of his entire kingdom, as well as a good deal of the landscape surrounding it), that devastating force scattered his writings to the four corners of the world, and beyond. Some say Ahm's demonic assassins cursed his chronicles, ensuring that they would never again be collected in one place. Others who have read more than a few of the stained and torn parchments believe Ahm himself enchanted them, forcing them to move about the cosmos so the demons could not collect his work and destroy it.

If any of the demon princes know the true answer to this question—and at least one must, for Ahm's power grew as he worked, and no mere pit fiend

or marilith general could have overseen his demise—they refuse to speak it, even under dire compulsions. Again, some see this as Ahm's handiwork, but none know for sure.

As is true of many works of magical writing, transcribing all but the smallest and most innocuous parts of the *Black Scrolls of Ahm* remains impossible. Still, the authors of this text have reproduced carefully selected excerpts in the hopes of passing on Ahm's knowledge of fiends. But be warned. Should you come upon one of Ahm's original scrolls in your thirst for knowledge, peruse it carefully, lest something out of the darkness come to devour you.

THE ORIGINS OF DEMONS

The boundless Abyss and its countless layers spawn innumerable hordes of fiends, which shriek their hatred of all things until the tumult becomes unbearable. To describe a single demon cannot sum up the diversity of the species—if “species” is even the correct term. Chaos evokes variety, so demons cannot be easily described collectively.

If Ahm is correct, demons manifest as extensions of the chaos and evil left in the Abyss after the deities, devils, and other powers had “ascended” to other planes and begun forging their own domains, or occupying places created out of the chaos. Spawned directly from and by the forces of chaos, there are incalculable kinds of demons in the universe, and even Ahm categorized the attributes of only a small percentage of them. In fact, the more this ancient scholar learned of individual demons, the more he despaired of ever quantifying their physiology. However, this escalation of data did

allow him to recognize and establish a few of their commonalities.



Some believe demons formed out of the Abyssal ooze