

Stone and Steel

**A one round High Level Living City tournament (HPL
#3)**

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with special thanks to Lee McClurkin

The case of the Great Machine has been cracked. Ravens Bluff Elite has been asked to start cracking its mysteries.

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This is a non-standard RPGA Network tournament. An eight-hour time block has been set aside for this event. It is a good idea to ask each player to put a nametag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character. For the Ravens Bluff, High Level campaign a minimum of FIVE players is necessary to play the event. RPGA demands four but that would be akin to suicide on the Planes.

The actual playing time will be about seven hours. Make sure you use the last 20 to 30 minutes of the event time block to have the players summarize their characters for each other and vote. The standard RPGA Network voting procedures will be used. Complete the Judge's Summary before you collect the players' scoring sheets. This way their ratings and comments will not influence you.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

A note about the text: Some of the text in this module is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in *bold italics*. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

Tier Structure

To determine the tier, add the level of all the characters. Multi-classed and dual-classed characters count as their highest level plus one for each additional class. In addition, add the levels of any adventuring NPCs the PCs bring, and the full hit dice of any animals which can enter combat on the side of the PCs. Compare the total to the chart below to find the tier.

	<u>4 players</u>	<u>5 players</u>	<u>6 players</u>	<u>7 players</u>
T6:	36-64	45-70	54-77	63-83
T7:	65-76	71-84	78-92	84-100
T8:	77+	85+	93+	101+

DM Summary

This is the first of many missions in which the PCs have the opportunity to aid in deciphering the great machine. In Three Coins in a Well, the PCs helped determine how the machine could be destroyed. This allowed the "skin of the god," or the silver cover of the machine, to be lifted.

Under the skin, artifacts were found on three spiral arms. A'rinthorm determined that if the philosophy or significance of each can be determined, the machine could be activated, and thus destroyed if necessary.

A'rinthorm determines that one artifact is from Acheron and sends the party to find out the lore behind it.

Players' Introduction

As an experienced adventurer, you have become accustomed to strange summons in the middle of the night, chance occurrences in taverns, alleys, and on street corners. Thus, it should come to no surprise to you that you find yourself in one of the favorite hangouts of adventurers, Sharkey's Bar and Grill. You received, via a very unhappy carrier pigeon, a note from Master Fire of the Ministry of Art and a potion of water breathing. The note requested that you join him for dinner and discussion of a new mission tonight at sundown.

Preparing for a Festive night under the sea, you made your way down to the best underground restaurant around. As you entered, you noticed a new edition to the establishment. A small stage has been built and, to your surprise and perhaps dismay, you see Master Fire upon it performing!

There is a 3'x 4' x 2' box on the stage behind Master Fire. Background music emanates from it. Master Fire is crooning an amateurish rendition of the Kara-Turan favorite, "Blue Suede Sandals." Upon inspection, the party can see on a plaque on the box, that the Master Bardess Carrie Okee enchanted it. If checked with a detect magic, it radiates wild magic. If the PCs wish to sing with the box, they will have to put their name on a list at the bar and pick out what song they would like to sing. There is currently a 3-person wait behind Captain Aven Elonis, A Lliiran Priestess, and a sahaugin.

After finishing his number, Master Fire will notice the PCs and invite them to sit at his table. Sitting next to him is his female companion, Sassy, 5' 9" Platinum blond sea elf wearing fish nets (literally). The wizard is short, about five feet tall, with black hair and dark eyes. He is of Kara-Turan descent. He has tattoos over his chest and arm. His chest has arcane designs and his left arm has a slim dragon wrapped around his forearm. Master Fire is in unusually good humor.

After offering drinks for the table, continue with the following.

“Thank you for coming this evening. I thought this would be more comfortable than the Ministry. I have received another summons from our friend A’rinthorm, the githzerai sage. He claims that he has made some progress on the Great Machine and needs help in continuing the investigation. The Ministry as well as the office of the Mayor continues to be very interested that the Great Machine should be investigated and controlled. We would like to continue your retainer and employ your services again to aid A’rinthorm in his research. Will 10,000 gold be enough to retain your services?”

If asked, this is considered a mission “for the city.” Master Fire knows little more than what he has told the PCs. He knows that the silver hull has been removed from the machine, but does not know the specifics of what is behind it. He will give the PCs passes to use the Ministry’s gate and informs them that they will be met in the Astral tomorrow at noon by Courmtamor and given safe passage to the Astral Fortress. Beyond this, there is little that he can tell the party except to use their best judgment and caution in all dealings and to report back to him fully upon return.

The PCs will, of course, be able to spend as much or as little time as desired in Sharkey’s. The potions of water breathing will last 8 hours. The next day, they will have ample opportunity to change spells and make necessary preparations. If the PCs attempt to contact A’rinthorm through divinations before they go, he will tell them that he must show them the machine before telling them any more of their mission.

Act I-The Search for Stone

Scene I- To aid a Gith...

The gate itself is a large cleared area three hours north of town. There is a stone slab ten paces in diameter. It is surrounded with twelve wooden beams that are around fifteen feet high. They are completely carved with magical runes and glyphs. Next to the slab is a barracks. There are a number of apprentices moving around the gate preparing it, cleaning off the beams and the slab. Guards in chain and wielding spears patrol at a discreet distance.

Travelling through the Ministry’s gate north of town, they will arrive in the Astral plane. There are about a dozen githzerai waiting here, and two will split off to guide the characters to where they wish to go. Once the characters state they desire to travel to Fortitude, they will escort the characters through to a convenient color

pool. They say that they will wait for one subjective week before they return to their post. If the characters mention that they have their own way home, the githzerai leave.

The githzerai are sullen and quiet. Their answers to questions are as simple as possible, to the point of using single words or emphatic grunts. If asked if the githyanki have attacked them again, they reply “always”, and a reply of “quiet” if asked about caravans that have escorted to the Outlands. They have no interest or friendliness to the characters, as they know that the characters did not side with the githzerai in the adventure Three Coins in a Well. They will be respectful and polite, but will only do their contracted jobs of being Astral guides.

On your way to the gate, an old man crosses your path and asks, “Alms for the poor.”

This old man is actually Ilkaren, the githyanki representative of the entity known only as Silver Mask. If the PCs give him anything (or even if they don’t), he will respond with:

“Thank you young ones.” The old man pulls back his hood to reveal the angular face of the gith known as Ilkaren.

“I am pleased to see you once again. Perhaps you could see your way to being generous in another manner.

I understand that Ar’inthorm wishes your aid in finding some information about the machine. My employer, Silver Mask, is most interested in any information you can provide.”

Ilkaren will inform the party that aside from another favor, Silver Mask is willing to help them on their journey. If the party simply calls out his name at any time (unless they are in the Abyss), he will come to answer a question. This power is to be adjudicated similar to a *commune* spell. He will be able to tell them the “right” answer to any dilemma. Actually, Silver Mask will tell him and then it shall be relayed to the party. Note, Ilkaren wears a *ring of mind shielding*.

Ilkaren will be willing to answer most questions. For the most part he is a depressed but affable person. Neutral evil, he is willing to do anything for his profit or to protect himself but he realizes the usefulness of civility and respect. Currently his behavior is constrained by Silver Mask, and he will deal honorably with the characters. He is a member of the Bleak Cabal, a faction of planars who feel that life has no meaning.

They sometimes do good deeds though, unlike other doom-laden factions.

How did Ilkaren know the party's whereabouts?

His master, the Silver Mask told him. Ilkaren received his instructions and traveled here. He is very glad to have arrived in time to meet with the party. He really wants to complete his mission so that he can return to his other duties.

Is Ilkaren a githyanki or githzerai?

If a character asks this straight out, Ilkaren will be a bit surprised and laugh. Commending them for their courage he states calmly that his is a githyanki. He is surprised that they can't tell the difference, it's very obvious to the gith, but is not offended at their asking. Unusually, he has no great passion for or against the two races. He does not comment on his loyalties to the githyanki lich-queen and becomes grim if it is mentioned. Just as strangely, he doesn't care that the githzerai have captured an Astral githyanki fortress. He knows nothing about the party's meeting at the Planar Institute or the other factions contact with them.

Who is the Silver Mask?

The Silver Mask is an entity of great power that Ilkaren has chosen to serve. It has great powers of perception and has an interest in the Great Machine. Somehow it knew that there was going to be a party of adventurers coming here and Ilkaren was sent to speak with them. The Silver Mask has no tie to any plane, except perhaps the Astral. That is where it is most often found. The Silver Mask currently has the appearance of a tall, black-skinned male elf with curly black hair. It wears a gray toga with purple trim and a featureless silver mask to cover its face. It has no distinguishing physical marks.

As to why Ilkaren always refers to Silver Mask as an "it", he replies that it is appropriate once you meet it. It "feels" like an "it".

What does Silver Mask want?

In general, to gain wisdom; in specific, to learn about the Great Machine. That is all he knows.

Why does Ilkaren serve the Silver Mask?

No one's concern but Ilkaren's. He will not answer this line of questioning.

Regardless of how the party responds, Ilkaren will wish them well on their journey and assure them that they will meet again.

Approaching the gate, a wizard with the crest of the Ministry of Art comes up to you. Handing over your papers he nods and gestures towards the gate. There is

a wagon and drover team already on the stone slab. After collecting the appropriate fees, several magicians begin chanting. The scenery fades as you are translated into the Astral plane. There are a number of githzerai here, waiting to escort various caravans to their destinations. They acknowledge you with friendly smiles and nods. Also here is Courmtamor, the githzerai warrior. He glides over and shakes your hands, somewhat awkwardly as if the custom was unfamiliar.

Courmtamor leads you through the void of Astral space. You cruise through a silvery-gray void with spots that darken to black. Infinitely distant, some spots even seem to move. Eventually Courmtamor raises his hand and slows his movement. Then, as you glide forward the great fortress appears like a great ship sliding out of a silvery fog. Great towers reach up from a vast oblong stone the size of a mountain. At the base of the towers are arrays of domes that are clustered together like soap bubbles. Courmtamor leads you through the base of a tower and through long hallways. Soon, you are in the Hall of the Machine.

A'rinthorm, the githzerai sage, is present with two of his assistants. "Welcome!" he says as he glides toward you. "Thank you for coming. Things have been very exciting here ever since the delivery of your information. Through my experiments, I discovered that the hull of the Great Machine could be removed. Having been fashioned from the same ore that is found in this deolith, this 'skin of a god' could be retracted once the operator knew what it truly was. Watch." A'rinthorm glides over to the dais and holds his hands over the crystal tops of the pylons. After a moment of concentration, you see the silver glimmer, and then slowly slide down into the ground. Now, alcoves in the wall are present where each spiral glyph was, and fine golden filaments stretch between them and to crystal spheres to either side. Turning to you, A'rinthorm says, "Note the alcoves behind the spiral glyphs. For each glyph there is an artifact. These items are what make the Great Machine what it is." Starting at the top arm and working inward, the depicted items are as follows:

*Top Arm:
Gold Filigree Crown
Large Convex Lens
Curved Bloodstained Claw
Brown Feather*

*Left Arm:
Metallic Gear
Engraved Spearhead*

***Stone Hand Holding a Stone Ingot
Ever Changing Stone***

Right arm:

Humanoid Statuette

Blood Stained Coin

Black and White Iron Chain

Black Hole on a Broken Talisman

Center:

Flagstone with carvings of Knives

A'rinthorm continues. "The Great Machine can be utilized if all of the parts can be accessed. Each part can be accessed if the philosophy behind it is known. Thus, the story and circumstances about each part must be determined. I have discovered that the stone hand is from Acheron. Please, go there and discover the significance of this part.

I will send you through a color pool to the gate town of Rigus. There, you should seek out an acquaintance of mine, General Drakus. He has lived in Rigus all his life and knows much about Acheron. Perhaps he will be able to point you in the right direction."

A'rinthorm will answer what questions he can. He will not describe how the knowledge of the philosophy will specifically trigger each part, as he has not figured that part out. He only knows that the pieces are philosophically and magically tied, and if manipulated properly with the information, the piece can be deactivated. Once all the pieces are deactivated, the Great Machine can be either destroyed or used to its full extent. What that extent means is as of yet unknown.

If the characters ask, he will give them a tuning fork for the Astral Plane for the plane shift spell. Also, he will give them a scroll with plane shift written upon it. Either or both, however, will only be given if the party does not have the capability to return themselves. The characters will be led to the color pool. The Rigus color pool is a pale brown and a little lopsided.

Scene II-Rigus

Stepping through the swirling gate summons the now familiar sensation of having your insides inverted and stomped upon. When your senses return to normalcy, you step out from a gate, which is embedded in a heavily fortified wall. The scene is a bustling encampment, which seems to go on for miles. In the distance, you see another wall and perhaps another behind that.

Before you can take in the rest of the scenery, a patrol of six heavily armed humanoids marches toward you crying, "Name and Rank, berk."

These guards are members of the gate patrol in Rigus. Their job is to primarily assess all visitors for harm, and direct them to their proper destination. Their demeanor is excessively orderly and military, just like everyone else in Rigus.

Everyone in Rigus has a rank. Most, from baby to businessman are simply "citizen." Citizens can be promoted by the Great Generals to a higher rank: private, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, or general. Law-breakers and captives from other raids get stuck with the rank of "slave-soldier." The primary law in Rigus is to follow the commands of superiors. Any disobedience is treason, and only one punishment exists for treason: being put in the dead-book.

Fortunately, visitors are not held to these exacting standards. Presuming the party tells the patrol that they are not natives, they will be given slate plaques to wear around their necks on heavy iron chains, so natives can see that they're in the dark about the laws. But make the wrong officer upset, and he'll rip off or otherwise destroy the plaque, leaving the PC open to the laws of Rigus. If a PC, in any way, is insubordinate to ANY CITIZEN, they will lose their slate. If they are insubordinate in ANY WAY without their slate, they will be subject to the Mercykillers, who will exact immediate punishment.

Patrol

Mercykillers Lieutenant, EG (Earth Genasi) m F13; Int Very; AL LN; AC -9 (Full Plate, Shield +2, Ring of Protection +3, Dex); MV 6; hp 115; Dmg 1-8+12 (Bastard Sword+4, Str.+Specialized); THACO 1; #AT 5/2; SA Blow of Justice (see below); SD Nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 15;

Mercykillers Fighters (4), t (tiefling) m F9; Int Ave; AL LN; AC -5 (Full Plate, Shield +2, Dex); MV 6; hp 84; Dmg 1-8+6 (Bastard Sword, Str.+Specialized); THACO 9; #AT 2; SA Blow of Justice (see below); SD Nil; MR nil; SZ M; ML 15

Mercykiller Priest, hm P11; Int Very; AL LN; AC -3 (Full Plate, Shield, Dex); MV 6; hp 70; Dmg 1-6 (staff); THACO 14; #AT 1; SA Blow of Justice (see below) and spells); SD Nil MR nil; SZ M; ML 15

1st- *command* x3, *remove fear*, *cure light wounds* x3; 2nd- *hold person* x4, *know alignment*; 3rd- *dispel magic* x3, *prayer*, *locate object*; 4th- *detect lie*, *compulsive order*, *protection from lightning*, *cause*

serious wounds; 5th ~~true seeing~~, plane shift, transmute rock to mud; 6th -heal

Blow of Justice-Mercykillers may employ this 2x per day. Any damage he causes in that round, via spell or sword, is doubled. The Mercykiller will, however, take ½ of this damage himself.

If asked, this patrol will, after consulting a map, direct the party to the abode of General Drakus: 227 Piton Way, in the fourth ring. Rigus is a huge, permanent military encampment, rising wall upon wall and battlement upon battlement to dominate this part of the land. The camp's divided into seven stacked rings, each built all the way around a great hill. The largest ring's set around the bottom of the hill, and the smallest (called the Crown) is set around the top. Octagonal walls of iron separate each ring from the others; a wall surrounds the bottom ring too, to block Rigus off from the rest of the Outlands.

As you make your way through the streets of this permanent military encampment, you see many creatures marching in perfect cadence one direction or another. All the citizens, be they human, githyanki, orc, tiefling or hobgoblin looking as if they are either going to battle or just returning.

Finally making your way to the proper address, you see a two-story iron fortification heavily guarded by tieflings and humans. At your approach, you are once again hailed: "State your rank and purpose."

This human guard (Franz), a Mercykiller, is fiercely loyal to General Drakus. He will ask their names, rank, and purpose for wanting to see the General. After attaining this information, he will write a note and send it along with a messenger to be inspected by the General's Colonel. Unless the message contains something about A'rinthorm, official Mercykiller business, or a rather large sum of money, the party will be denied entrance. If the party attempts to force entry or for some other reason attacks, a contingent equal to the border patrol will arrive in 1-3 rounds and attack the party. As with any such mark of disobedience, it will not be tolerated. As many patrols as are needed will appear.

As you wait for entrance to the fortification, you notice that the soldiers here seem to be properly gearing up for battle. The walls are being barred, the hot oil is being heated on the roof, and foxholes are being dug.

If the party asks Franz about the preparations, he will reply that one of the other orders in town is heavily rumored to be making a power play for position within

this rank. He does not know which order or when the attack will come.

After several minutes of waiting, the guard motions you inside. He leads you up a wide staircase to the General's War Room on the second floor. Over the doorway a large sign captioned "The Eight Tenets of Justice" hangs.

Give out Players Handout 1, if the Players are interested.

The General and his officers seem to be discussing defensive plans as you enter. A large map of the city is sprawled out on the table in front of them.

"General Drakus, the Clueless are here to see you." With military efficiency, the guard leaves the room.

The General is an average sized human with stony features. His medium build supports a frame, which has obviously seen much battle. His chipped and battered armor tells the tales of many wars. With a gruff voice he addresses you: "Well, if you're from A'rinthorm, then you must have the 3,000 gold that he owes. Set it on the table and be gone with you."

Now A'rinthorm actually does owe the General 3,000 gold. If the party wishes to make good on his debt, then A'rinthorm will be most grateful. However, the General will not be receptive to much else.

He is currently preparing for a defensive stand against another military order on the third ring. He does not have time for treasure-hunting adventurers. General Drakus is, however, worried that his defensive may not be successful. His intelligence states that his opposition has many soldiers and several powerful spellcasters. He believes that he is ill equipped to deal with them.

He does have information that the party will find useful in learning about the glyph and he can also lead them to the gate to Acheron. However, he will only do so if the party agrees to aid him in his defensive.

"Well, I hope you're as good as you think. I can use your help defending the rear of the fort. There is one main door on the first floor and four iron-barred windows on the second floor. The property extends for 400 feet to the road. You can be assured that no attacks will occur beyond that line. The laws of the land forbid that you do the same. If the defense is successful, I will give you the information that you seek."

Scene III-Drakus' Defense

- The laws literally forbid any combat outside of the theater of operation, so the PCs will be disobeying a direct order if they fight outside that perimeter.
- General Drakus expects the attack at any time (although it will actually begin 26 rounds after the above text).
- The area the PCs are to defend is marked on Player Handout 2.
- The PCs will not be given any aid from Drakus' forces, as he cannot spare them from the frontal assault.
- The PCs are free to make any sort of embattlements or modifications to the grounds as they wish, although anything permanent should be dismantled afterward.

The force opposing the party will be a relatively small, elite contingent whose main purpose is to breach the fortification itself. If the PCs get in the way, they will be killed. The force is under control by the High Priest of Set in Rigus. This offense is considered a key battle in the control of Rigus. Thus, the priest has been granted a terrible power, a quest spell, *spiral of degeneration (thought)*. This spell is intended to be used against the most powerful opposition in the battle. The priest WILL NOT use this spell until such time as he sees the PCs as an imminent threat to the battle. (i.e., in the early rounds, if the PCs are wiping out his forces, then he will unleash it. In later rounds, he will unleash it only when it is evident that the PCs alone stand between his forces and victory). Please pay attention to the area of effect of the spell.

Whenever the spell is unleashed, read the following text:

The priest rears back his serpentine head and raises his arms to the sky. "By the infernal power of Set I summon the power of Degeneration." With this command, a channel of gray light funnels from the ground, through the priest, and toward (insert name or area here) and explodes in a 50-foot diameter sphere of discord.

Tactics:

- The tiefling soldiers are under the effects of a *disguise* spell. They are disguised to look like orcs armed with short swords.
- Without resistance, it will take the troops 4 rounds to cross the field and reach the door.
- Their chief objective is to get in the back door or the windows and take control of the fortification.
- The wizards have many spells specifically prepared to gain entrance (knock, disintegrate, etc.) These

spells are to be used for that purpose and with that goal in mind.

- The troops have two battering rams and grappling hooks.
- The wizards have improved invisibility and fly cast upon them. They will move around as necessary and as tactically effective.
- The Firbolg (s) is also disguised, but to look like an ogre with a club.
- If possible, the priest will cast *Champion Strength* on one of the Firbolgs, drawing from as many troops as possible. (1 per 2 levels of the priest.) Treat all troops as if they had 17 strength.
- At minus 15 rounds before attacking, two wizards will watch and scout the area. The attacking force will know any spells cast openly, during this time. All spellcasters carry *dispel magic* and will attempt to use this to their full effectiveness.
- At minus 3 rounds from the attack, a scouting party will be able to see the approaching "orcs."
- Remember the rules for casting in the Outlands, especially elemental spells.

Tier 6

Priest of Set hm P13: Genius; AL LE; AC -5 (Full Plate, Shield, Dex, Prayer); MV 9; HD 13; hp 85; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8+6 (Khopesh+4, Outlands); SA Spells; SD *Stoneskin 8, Prayer*; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 18.

Spells: 1st-*detect magic (cast), cure light wounds x 5, 2nd-aid, hold person x3, heat metal, chill metal 3rd-strength of one, prayer (cast), dispel magic x3, protection from fire (cast), 4th- disguise (cast), cure serious wounds, dimensional folding, protection from lightning (cast), 5th- cure critical wounds, dispel good, 6th-heal, harm; quest-*spiral of degeneration (thought)**

Wizard of Set hf W14: Int Genius; AL LE; AC -1 (Bracers AC3, Dex); MV 12, 21 (fly); HD 18; hp 53; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4-1 (dagger + strength); SA Spells; SD *stoneskin 10, improved invisibility, ironguard, fire shield (cold)*; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 14.

Spells: 1st- *unseen servant, mount, shield (cast), detect magic (cast), magic missile, 2nd- knock x2, glitterdust, esp, 3rd- protection from normal missiles (cast), flame arrow, dispel magic, fly (cast), 4th- improved invisibility (cast), stoneskin (cast), polymorph other, fire shield (cold, cast), 5th-ironguard (cast), wall of force, cone of cold (w/spell key to outlands), chaos, 6th- true seeing (cast), repulsion, 7th- finger of death (w/spell key to outlands),*

Firbolg F10: Int Ave; AL LN; AC 2; MV 12; HD 10; hp 105; THAC0 7; #AT 2; Dmg 2-20+7; SA None; SD

Can Swat away incoming missiles on a roll of 6 or better on 1d20 (2 per round); MR15%; SZ L; ML 16.

Fighters (30) tm f4:Int Ave; AL LN; AC 1; MV 12; HD 4; hp 28; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8+1 (Long Sword); SA Overbear; SD Nil; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 13.

Wizards (3) hf W9: Int Genius; AL LN; AC 6; MV 12, 21(fly); HD 11; hp 40 ; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SA Spells; SD *Stoneskin (7), Improved Invisibility*; MR nil; SZ M; ML 12.

Spells: 1st- *shield (cast), detect magic (cast), magic missile x2, 2nd- knock x2, glitterdust, 3rd- flame arrow, dispel magic, fly (cast), 4th- improved invisibility (cast), stoneskin (cast), 5th-cone of cold (w/spell key to Outlands),*

Tier 7

Priest of Set hm P15: Genius ; AL LE; AC -5 (Full Plate, Shield, Dex, *Prayer*); MV 9; HD 15; hp 87; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8+6 (Khopesh+4, Outlands); SA Spells; SD *Stoneskin 8, Prayer*; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 18.

Spells: 1st-*detect magic (cast), cure light wounds x 5, 2nd-aid, hold person x3, heat metal, chill metal 3rd-strength of one, prayer (cast), dispel magic x3, protection from fire (cast), 4th- disguise (cast), cure serious wounds x2, dimensional folding, protection from lightning (cast), 5th- cure critical wounds x2, champion strength, dispel good, 6th- heal, harm 7th-creeping doom quest-spiral of degeneration (thought)*

Wizard of Set hf W16: Int Genius; AL LE; AC -1 (Bracers AC3, Dex); MV 12, 21 (fly); HD 16; hp 6; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4-1 (dagger + strength); SA Spells; SD *stoneskin 13, improved invisibility, ironguard, fire shield (cold)*, ; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 14.

Spells: 1st- *unseen servant, mount, shield (cast), detect magic (cast), magic missile, 2nd- knock x3, glitterdust, esp, 3rd- protection from normal missiles (cast), flame arrow, dispel magic x2, fly (cast), 4th-improved invisibility (cast), stoneskin x2 (cast), polymorph other, fire shield (cold, cast), 5th-ironguard (cast), wall of force, cone of cold x2 (w/spell key to outlands), chaos, 6th- true seeing (cast), repulsion, geas, 7th- spell turning (9 levels), finger of death (w/spell key to outlands), 8th- abi-dalzim's horrid wilting,*

Firbolg (2) F10: Int Ave; AL LN; AC 2; MV 12; HD 10; hp 105; THAC0 7; #AT 2; Dmg 2-20+7; SA None; SD Can Swat away incoming missiles on a roll of 6 or better on 1d20 (2 per round); MR15%; SZ L; ML 16.

Fighters (40) tm f5:Int Ave; AL LN; AC 0; MV 12; HD 6; hp 37; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8+1 (Long Sword); SA Overbear; SD Nil; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 13.

Wizards (4) hf W10: Int Genius; AL LN; AC 6; MV 12, 21(fly); HD 10; hp 39 ; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SA Spells; SD *stoneskin (7), improved invisibility*; MR nil; SZ M; ML 12.

Spells: 1st- *shield (cast), detect magic (cast), magic missile x2, 2nd- knock x2, blindness glitterdust, 3rd-dispel magic, fly (cast), 4th- improved invisibility (cast), stoneskin (cast), 5th- wall of force, cone of cold (w/spell key to outlands),*

Tier 8

Priest of Set hm P17: Genius ; AL LE; AC -5 (Full Plate, Shield, Dex, *Prayer*); MV 9; HD 17; hp 91; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8+6 (Khopesh+4, Outlands); SA Spells; SD *stoneskin 8, prayer*; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 18.

Spells: 1st-*detect magic (cast), cure light wounds x 5, 2nd-aid, hold person x3, heat metal, chill metal 3rd-strength of one, prayer (cast), dispel magic x3, protection from fire (cast), 4th- disguise (cast), cure serious wounds x2, dimensional folding, protection from lightning (cast), 5th- cure critical wounds x3, champion strength, dispel good, 6th- reverse time, heal, harm 7th- creeping doom, energy drain, quest-spiral of degeneration (thought)*

Wizard of Set hf W18: Int Genius; AL LE; AC -1 (Bracers AC3, Dex); MV 12, 21 (fly); HD 18; hp 58; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4-1 (dagger + strength); SA Spells; SD *stoneskin 13, improved invisibility, ironguard, fire shield (cold)*, ; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 14.

Spells: 1st- *unseen servant, mount, shield (cast), detect magic (cast), magic missile, 2nd- knock x3, glitterdust, esp, 3rd- protection from normal missiles (cast), flame arrow, dispel magic x2, fly (cast), 4th-improved invisibility (cast), stoneskin x2 (cast), polymorph other, fire shield (cold, cast), 5th-ironguard (cast), wall of force, cone of cold x2 (w/spell key to outlands), chaos, 6th- true seeing (cast), repulsion, geas, 7th- spell turning (9 levels), reverse gravity, finger of death (w/spell key to outlands), 8th- maze, abid-dalzim's horrid wilting, 9th- crystalbrittle*

Firbolg (3) F10: Int Ave; AL LN; AC 2; MV 12; HD 10; hp 105; THAC0 7; #AT 2; Dmg 2-20+7; SA None; SD Can Swat away incoming missiles on a roll of 6 or better on 1d20 (2 per round); MR15%; SZ L; ML 16.

Fighters (50) hm f6:Int Ave; AL LN; AC -1; MV 12; HD 6; hp 49; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8+1 (Long Sword); SA Overbear; SD Nil; MR Nil; SZ M; ML 13.

Wizards (5) hf W11: Int Genius; AL LN; AC 6; MV 12, 21(fly); HD 11; hp 40 ; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); SA Spells; SD *stoneskin (7), improved invisibility, fire shield (cold)* ; MR nil; SZ M; ML 12.

Spells: 1st- *shield (cast), detect magic (cast), magic missile x2*, 2nd- *knock x2, blindness glitterdust*, 3rd- *flame arrow, dispel magic, fly (cast)*, 4th- *improved invisibility (cast), stoneskin (cast), fire shield (cold, cast)*, 5th- *wall of force, cone of cold x2 (w/spell key to outlands)*,

If the party is successful in repelling the attack, the entire battle shall be won.

A grateful and bloody General Drakus greets you in the ready room. “The day is ours! You have proved yourselves very valuable to me. Please, feel free to keep the spoils of your battle. And I shall now hold my end of the bargain. You must go to Acheron. Once there, seek passage to the second layer of Thuldanim. There is an old duergar sage who makes his home in an abandoned cube. His name is Gheldoin. For a price, he may have the information you seek.

If the PCs ask him what he means by cubes, Drakus will tell the party of the physical nature of the plane.

- Acheron is mostly comprised of great, suspended cubes. These cubes float along in the layers and sometimes even collide.
- The inhabitants of Acheron constantly fight for territory, food, and pride. The plane itself stresses order over evil.
- He does not know how to access the second layer. The gate will only take them to a random cube on Avalas, the first layer.

If any PC has shown interest or seems deserving from their behavior both while on Rigus and in the Battle itself, General Drakus will sponsor them for the Mercykillers. The PC must exhibit the following before being asked:

1. Must be of lawful alignment.
2. Must not have ANY criminal record. (i.e., if the characters have served jail time in Ravens Bluff or have a Sigil exile, they are not eligible).
3. He must swear to the Eight Tenets of Justice of the Red Death.

Any interested PC must return to Rigus and go through the induction after the adventure.

After the party is ready to proceed to the gate...

The General bids you farewell and places you in the hands of his colonel who leads you away. He leads you up to the top of the hill of Rigus, also known as the Crown. You are led through a complex series of streets, more than once avoiding patrols moving toward certain battle. At an isolated corner, the colonel pushes aside a secret door in the wall to a cavern. “Follow this staircase down and you will arrive at the gate.” With that, he turns and leaves.

Presuming the party goes down, the staircase leads down into the depths of the plane.

The staircase continues into virtual emptiness for over a mile. The stairs finally empty into a huge chamber, which contains an archway of bones. Inside the archway is what looks like a gigantic cat’s eye: a swirling mass of green-yellow color, with a thick stripe of black running down the middle.

This is the gate to Acheron. The chamber has several other entrances and exits, none of them marked.

Act II – Endless War

Scene I – Entrance to the Iron Realm

Stepping forward you enter a vast gray expanse. The sky casts a dull gray light from no discernable source and the ground is a flat plate of iron that reaches off to the horizon. It is cold, your breath clouds in the still air. Cracks and fissures are scattered throughout the ground, and all of the fractures follow square angles. To your left an indentation in the iron ground is littered with cubic iron gravel. Above, you see large cubes slowly tumbling through the air. On the plain ahead of you is a large fortress comprising of a low wall and a single tower in the middle. Lights present in the tower tell you it is inhabited. There seems to be many beings surrounding the tower.

Turning around, you see the last member of your party stepping out of a large sphere imbedded in the ground. You stand at the edge of the world. Not five feet away the ground drops away into the endless gray void. The sphere silently vibrates, and after the last person comes out the vibrations cease.

(Ask if anyone looks over the edge)

Down below is another smooth plane of iron, similar to the one you are standing on. Floating in space is another immense cube of iron, blocking a third of

your vision. You come to realize that the cube and the iron block that you are standing on are slowly drifting towards one another!

Characters may be interested in determining when the cubes will collide, but it is probably that they have never had any experiences that could allow them to comprehend two thirty-mile-across cubes slamming together. If a character has an Intelligence + Wisdom + Level (highest class only) total of 40 or more, and some kind of mathematical or navigational skill, they will be able to estimate that the cubes will collide in about two hours.

Cubic gravity is determined by the side you are standing on. The only fluctuation points are the edges. If a character crosses the edge without precautions, it takes a successful Dexterity check to cross over to the other face. If this is failed, the character tumbles off into the void. On a second Dex check, the character is able to “swim” back into a random gravity field and takes 1-6d6 falling damage. There is little to tie a rope to, but two or more people cooperating should be able to cross to a new cube facing without much problem.

Scene II – Fortress of Woe

The party will soon realize that the fortress is moving away from them. It is moving at a rate of 12”. It will take six turns of accelerated movement, either through *haste*, potions of Speed, Running proficiency, or other means, to catch up with the fortress. *Teleport* works too. Presuming that the characters can do this, continue with the next scene.

Running along, you occasionally see a broken weapon or torn standard wedged in the cracks of the ground. Rarely, there is also a long greasy, red streak that points toward the moving fortress. As you catch up with the fortress, you see that that its walls have metallic-gray humanoid legs underneath them. It is these that drag the fortress along on steel runners. A fountain of sparks comes from each runner as it slides over the uneven ground, and the metallic ground glows red hot just behind them.

The ground around the tower is littered with bodies of hobgoblins. Arrows fire from narrow slits in the tower pincussioning the force. Other hobgoblins are being crushed by the tower itself!

The PCs have arrived at the end of a pitched battle. If the PCs wish to involve themselves somehow, they may. However, do not roll dice and make it a long drawn out combat. The hobgoblin force is essentially decimated by

this point. If the party actually attacks or interferes with the tower, it will attempt to crush them. The PCs will have 20 arrows per round directed at each PC.

When the battles finishes and presuming the party approaches, continue with the following.

As you get closer to the fortress, you see a hexagonal section of the wall twist open like a camera aperture. A tall woman beckons you closer. She holds something small up to her eye.

If the party makes some sort of attempt at communication or gestures of friendship, she will summon the captain of the tower.

The woman’s name is Merrina. She looked at the party through a Gem of True Seeing and replaces it in a belt pouch.

A half-orc dressed in piece-meal armor jumps down from the tower and walks toward you.

“Welcome!” says the burly half-orc. “I am Captain Estrak Longtooth of the hassitorium Ishtavarek. Your timing is good, there is little other shelter here and the cubes will crash together very soon.”

Estrak will make introductions all around and ask for the same. Estrak notes that the characters are too well fed and clothed to be from Acheron, and so assumes that they are either mercenaries or adventurers. Merrina will also whisper in his ear any interesting facts that she has uncovered with her Gem of Seeing, and he will take these things into account if there is battle. When conversing with the characters he will answer questions. The information below is fairly complete, but Estrak isn’t going to give an info download for a single question. He wants to know what the characters are capable of, what classes they are, what items they have, etc. He is uncertain enough of their power, so he won’t just attempt to overwhelm them to take their things.

If he is convinced that the party is comprised of people to be reckoned with, he will offer them information about Thuldandin and Gheldoin for a price. He wants food and drink, hard items to come by on Acheron. 40 meals worth will be sufficient. Otherwise, he will accept other mundane items useful to his banner.

Discussion

What is this place?

It is the hassitorium Ishtavarek, a walking fortress. It was built by a race known as the hassitor, a race that

became extinct when the baatezu were young. There are few of these wonders, and they are the only trace of the hassitor left, with the exception of a few monuments.

How does it work?

It uses the bodies and life force of the beings imprisoned within its walls. They are its motive force and some of the moving parts. Sometimes those captured in battle are entombed. It is nasty, but then, it is a grim plane. There is no way to remove someone when they have become part of the machine. Only special people can learn how to pilot the hassitotium, but they don't have to be wizards.

Why is it good that we are here?

When cubes collide there are shockwaves that travel all across the cubes. You can be crushed or knocked free and be lost in the void. If there are crevasses in the cube you can take shelter and avoid these fates, but there are few that we have seen in this cube. The hassitorium is so massive that those here are protected from the shock of impact, and the fortress has an anchor as well. Naturally, it would not survive if it was caught between two colliding faces.

What is this plane?

You are in Acheron, a place of endless conflict. There is unending war between the goblins and the orcs, and the duergar are sometimes caught in between. Naturally, the Blood War spills over to here on occasion, but it is actually rare. Mostly, the fiends just recruit. Those knowledgeable are able to cross from cube to cube. Such secrets allow you to move even this thing to a new cube.

How do you survive?

We take from the weak and hide from the strong. Provender stones are edible, but fairly unappetizing. Water is in high demand, and there are some tributaries of the Styx that are drinkable. The trick is to figure out which are tributaries and which are flows from the Styx. Sometimes you are lucky and are able to find a trade caravan from Rigus, the gate town, and you are able to barter for what you need. What they supply is so vital that few raid them for fear that they will stop coming (food, water, wood).

Can you help us with the Great Machine/the stone hand holding the stone ingot?

I know nothing about this machine or its secrets. There is a duergar sage in a rusted out cube Thuldanan who specializes in useless trivia. He may be able to help you.

What do you want?

To dominate the layer, much like everyone else. It is probably an unobtainable goal, but it is a worthy one. We will wait here until after the collision. Then, we will examine what is left.

At some point in the conversation the other cube will slam into this one.

The very fist of Ao slams into the fortress as the two cubes collide. A thunderous clang deafens you as metal strikes metal. The fortress shakes as the ground trembles worse than any earthquake. Soon the vibrations subside to a continual thrumming that makes it difficult to stand. You are not sure if the ringing in your ears is from the thunderous crash or the quivering cube that you rest on.

Once this display is over, Estrak will tell them about the passage.

"In about three hours another cube will collide with this one. On that cube, there is supposed to be a passage to Thuldananin."

Estrak will not help them get from one cube to another, nor will he give them any advice, except, **"Try not to float away."**

Scene III – To Catch a Cube

After few pleasantries, the crew of the hassitorium will leave the party.

In the near distance, you see two cubes. After watching for a moment, you determine that the smaller one is moving toward your cube, and the larger away from it.

In about an hour, the cubes will collide. The party's goal is to get from one cube to the next. Allow the party's creativity to flourish in this attempt. Use these guidelines:

- The party will want to jump onto a cube face perpendicular to their own cube, otherwise they will be crushed. The incoming cube is relatively small (1/2 mile per cube face). The party can move to where they believe the edge will be in about 40 minutes moving at 12'.
- The surfaces of both cubes are made of iron and there is nothing natural to which a rope may be attached (although pitons can be driven in).
- Anyone attempting to jump from one cube to the other must make a jumping or tumbling proficiency check (or Dex at -4) to successfully cross.

Although if they wait until after the cubes have collided as opposed to before, the check must be made at ½.

- Anyone standing on the surface of either cube during impact must make a Dex check at ½ or be thrown off the cubes into the void.

If a character does tumble off of the cube, they must make a second Dexterity check at ½. A success means they have been able to twist about and flap their arms enough so that they have drifted into a cube face's gravity well. They fall 10-60 feet. A failed check means that they drift off into the void. Ropes can be thrown, requiring a to hit roll vs. AC 10, adjusted by magic. The character's Bracers of Defense will work against him here. *Fly, ride the wind, feather fall*, and other such spells can prove useful.

Any character who has not saved from tumbling into the void is considered lost and out of play.

This new cube is quite rusty and pot-marked with battle scars. At times you almost think you can see through the rusty surface inside the cube.

After 7 rounds minus 1 round for every thirty pounds over 150, of standing on the cube, the surface will rust through beneath the surface of a PC's feet.

Suddenly, the very ground you walk on gives way and you begin to free-fall through the cube.

The PCs will fall toward the center of the cube. They may certainly resist if they desire, but touching the dense blackness at the center of the cube is the passage to Thuldanan. The inside of the cube is akin to a spider web of iron. PCs will take no damage from falling to the center. Once they touch the center, they will disappear into Thuldanan. Read the following once a PC touches the center.

Act III-Thuldanan

Scene I-Deal with the Devil

As you touch the inky blackness that is the center of the cube, you notice a distinct change in the atmosphere. You still touch the blackness of the cube, but the surroundings have changed. The structure of the cube around you is wholly rusted and smells almost of brine. The sky above you is a dismal smoky gray.

The party can now make its way back to the surface of the cube.

Suddenly materializing in front of you is a tall, robed humanoid with the head of a fanged jackal.

This character introduces himself as Veragrim Some PCs probably recall him from an earlier adventure, or possibly recognize his name from a past Trumpeter article as the abductor of the character Lady Irwina, a notably dense paladin of Tyr. Lady Irwina has since been returned to the city. If asked about his involvement, he will comment that it was a tragic mistake. Veragrim will state that he was merely hired to serve as an intermediary between certain forces and a chosen representative of Ravens Bluff. The choice of "representative" was not his to make. Lady Irwina was free to leave any time she chose. And, the matter has been settled peacefully.

Veragrim will present himself as a "fixer". He is a broker of goods, services, and information. First and foremost he is a businessman. He, unlike other entities, does not covet the hearts or souls of the good people of Ravens Bluff. All he wants is to make a profit.

If attacked, he will plane shift away.

If asked why he wants the information, he will reply,

"Simply, because others are."

If Veragrim controls the information about it, then he can sell it to the other interested parties. Veragrim has no great designs other than that.

What do you offer?

Veragrim can get the characters' names cleared in Sigil.

If the characters bring him, and only him, the information that they discovered he can offer them 1,000 gp in the gem of their choice, plus a favor. His favors tend to be mercantile in nature.

Additionally...

"I'll show you an easy way to get to see the sage, Gheldoin, but you must give me the information when you are done. Otherwise, you will face a creature of cast power, capable of destroying them and their precious materials."

"I know that you have faced wyrms before, but nothing like the serpent which awaits you on this realm."

If pressed, he will say specifically that it is a rust dragon guarded by evil birdmen known as Achaierai.

Essentially, the opposite cube face holds the entrance to see the sage, if they go the way Veragrim shows them, they will not encounter the rust dragon (continue onto Scene III). If they go off themselves, they will.

If the party calls upon Ilkaren at this time, he will also be able to point out the right direction without encountering the dragon.

Remember that any sort of divination magic which would give away the position of the opponent will not work on Acheron.

Scene II-The Wrong Side of the Tracks

The party will be able to reach the side of a cube in about 2 hours of travel. After crossing a side, they will travel another 3 hours before the following occurs.

In the distance, you see what seems like a flock of birds on enormous stilts.

These are, of course, these are the Achaierai. This flock has no particular interest in the party except for curiosity. The flock does, however, have a pet rust dragon. This dragon will burst up through the cube one round after the above text. It will smell the metal on the party and be very interested.

If the rust dragon is attacked, the Achaierai will come to its defense (it will take them 3 rounds to get there).

The rust dragon is simply interested in the metal the party is carrying. The round after the following text, the dragon will simply set down on the surface and begin sniffing the largest source of metal on the party.

Suddenly bursting up through the metallic surface is a great wyrm of epic proportions. The dragon with small wings but fierce tendrils flies high into the sky, showing its rust colored body. It rears its head around to greet you.

Ask the party for intentions. In all likelihood, the party will settle in to attack. If this is the case, then begin the battle. If, however, the party does not act in a hostile manner, the wyrm will drop out of the sky and set down next to the player with the largest source of metal.

If the party manages this, they are not yet out of the woods. The dragon is more than willing to leave the

party alone if they will part with some of their metal. 50 lbs. worth is least that he will accept. If the party does not have this amount, he will take ALL that they do have.

He is not concerned with the magic of the items, just their metal content. The more precious the metal, the more interested he gets.

He will not speak common to them. If the party can speak in his tongue, then he will converse. Otherwise, he will nudge the metal items themselves with a salivating grin.

If the party does not give him the required metal within 4 rounds, the dragon will grow impatient and take it himself. Any hostile move by the party (including spellcasting) will trigger an immediate attack.

Tier 6

Achaierai (8): Int High (13); AL LE; AC -1 Legs, 8 body; MV 18; HD 6+6; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/2-8/2d12; SA Command Rust Dragons; SD Stink Cloud; MR 35%; SZ L (15 feet tall); ML 14.

If a bird loses three legs or is otherwise seriously wounded, it will release a stink cloud of black toxic smoke, filling a cubic area approximately 10 feet square. Those opponents caught within the cloud take 2d6 points of damage automatically and must save versus poison or suffer from insanity for 3 hours.

Rust Dragon, Venerable: Int 6; AL LN(E); AC -6; MV 15, Fl 30 (C), Br 12; HD 20; hp 140; THAC0 3; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8+8/1-8+8/2d10+8; SA Breath Weapons(20d6 +10); SD Nil; MR 40%; SZ G (30-foot base); ML 17;

Breath Weapon: Rust dragons have two sorts of breath weapons. The first is a somewhat standard breath weapon, a spray of acid that spews forth in a stream 5 feet wide and extending 75 feet in a straight line. Those unlucky enough to be caught in this stream may save for ½ damage. The second type of breath weapon is more insidious, but no less damaging. It is a cone spray of oxidants and reddish-brown liquid that instantly rusts any metal it touches. The cone is 5 feet wide, extends 75 feet, and is 30 feet wide at the base. Anything metal caught in it must save versus disintegration or immediately disappear into a cloud of rusty brown notes.

Tier 7

Achaierai (8): Int High (13); AL LE; AC -1 Legs, 8 body; MV 18; HD 6+6; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/2-8/2d12; SA Command Rust Dragons; SD Stink Cloud; MR 35%; SZ L (15 feet tall); ML 14.

If a bird loses three legs or is otherwise seriously wounded, it will release a stink cloud of black toxic smoke, filling a cubic area approximately 10 feet square. Those opponents caught within the cloud take 2d6 points of damage automatically and must save versus poison or suffer from insanity for 3 hours.

Rust Dragon, Wyrms: Int 6; AL LN(E); AC -7; MV 15, Fl 30 (C), Br 12; HD 19; hp 148; THAC0 2; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8+9/1-8+9/2d10+9; SA Breath Weapons(22d6 +11); SD Nil; MR 45%; SZ G (30-foot base); ML 17;

Breath Weapon: Rust dragons have two sorts of breath weapons. The first is a somewhat standard breath weapon, a spray of acid that spews forth in a stream 5 feet wide and extending 75 feet in a straight line. Those unlucky enough to be caught in this stream may save for ½ damage. The second type of breath weapon is more insidious, but no less damaging. It is a cone spray of oxidants and reddish-brown liquid that instantly rusts any metal it touches. The cone is 5 feet wide, extends 75 feet, and is 30 feet wide at the base. Anything metal caught in it must save versus disintegration or immediately disappear into a cloud of rusty brown motes.

Tier 8

Achaierai (8): Int High (13); AL LE; AC -1 Legs, 8 body; MV 18; HD 6+6; hp 45; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/2-8/2d12; SA Command Rust Dragons; SD Stink Cloud; MR 35%; SZ L (15 feet tall); ML 14.

If a bird loses three legs or is otherwise seriously wounded, it will release a stink cloud of black toxic smoke, filling a cubic area approximately 10 feet square. Those opponents caught within the cloud take 2d6 points of damage automatically and must save versus poison or suffer from insanity for 3 hours.

Rust Dragon, Great Wyrms: Int 6; AL LN(E); AC -8; MV 15, Fl 30 ©, Br 12; HD 20; hp 156; THAC0 1; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8+10/1-8+10/2d10+10; SA Breath Weapons(24d6 +12); SD Nil; MR 50%; SZ G (30-foot base); ML 17;

Breath Weapon: Rust dragons have two sorts of breath weapons. The first is a somewhat standard breath weapon, a spray of acid that spews forth in a stream 5 feet wide and extending 75 feet in a straight line. Those unlucky enough to be caught in this stream may save for ½ damage. The second type of breath weapon is more insidious, but no less damaging. It is a cone spray of oxidants and reddish-brown liquid that instantly rusts any metal it touches. The cone is 5 feet wide, extends 75 feet, and is 30 feet wide at the base. Anything metal caught in it must save versus disintegration or immediately disappear into a cloud of rusty brown motes.

Scene III-Finding the Sage

After crossing another side of the cube, you travel for two more grueling hours. Finally, you see a patrol of what appears to be duergar approaching you.

This is a patrol which protects the structure which houses the sage, Gheldoin. This patrol is simply looking for specific enemies (in this case, a group of marauding dergholoths).

They do not speak any language besides duergar. They will attempt to question the party as to their intent and knowledge of the dergholoth.

The patrol is obviously rag-tag and underfed. If the party gives them some food and other provisions, they will not only direct the party to Gheldoin, but give them a pass to show to the guard which gives them direct admittance to Gheldoin.

If combat ensues, the party will be able to dispatch the patrol with little difficulty.

The party may also track the patrol back to Gheldoin with a successful tracking roll at -7.

Once the party finds the entrance read the following.

After another 30 minutes of travel, you come upon a lone duergar guard who appears to be standing on an enormous door laid flat into the ground.

This duergar speaks only duergar and goblin. He will grant the party admission immediately if they have a pass from the patrol. Otherwise, he will only grant admission for some food, or a magic weapon. Of course, he has no idea whether or not a weapon is magical. He will accept it if it “feels good.”

If the party asks about the door, it is an intricately carved metal door about 13 feet long and 7 feet wide. In duergar, it reads, “Not the home of Gheldoin the sage.”

Upon entrance...

The massive doors open like a storm cellar to reveal a cavernous room. It seems that sages are sages the whole multiverse-round. The entire chamber is filled with books, scrolls, and other miscellaneous parchments.

In the middle of this library is seated a small duergar so pale, that it almost hides his heritage. After a moment, he notices you,

“By Ladguer’s beard, what do you want?”

Gheldoin is a dour old sage who primarily researches duergar religion and myths. A successful Religion proficiency Check at –4 will reveal Ladguer to be the Duergar God of Magical Weapon creation, skilled artisans, magic, and patron god of duergar. Gheldoin has no interest in the party.

He will aid the party if they can give him some sort of item sacred to the enemies of the duergar. These would be surface dwarves, elves, svirfneblin, or drow. These items may be magical or mundane. But the connection to the race in question must be present. For example, drow chain mail, Cloak of the Elvenkind, Girdle of dwarvenkind, a consecrated holy symbol of one of their gods, etc.

If they acquiesce, continue with the following:

“I vaguely remember something about this artifact.”
He dives into a stack of parchments stacked in the corner of the room. After a few minutes, he comes out with a scroll.

I have an entire collection of myths which may deal with this secret. Unfortunately, I have not had time to decipher the script. You may pour through it if you wish.”

Hand them Player’s Handout #3.

The party has several choices at this point. They may take this scroll and return to the Astral Plane and have A’rinthorm solve the puzzle. Or, they can attempt to solve it themselves.

If the PCs successfully translate the entire message correctly, Gheldoin will reward them, as he will already know the code for deciphering the rest of the scrolls in that group.

The puzzle is solved as follows:

“Great Ladguer journeyed to the cavern of his rival, the acidic monster Blibdoolpoolp. His minions had stolen the sacred stone. Vaulting daringly into his midst, Ladguer grabbed the sacred ingot with his own stone fist. The acidic poison of the god spewed forth and burned into the stony flesh of Ladguer. He would not let go. The sacred ingot was his by divine right. Just as the plane that forged him, what he had claimed would be his forever.”

Gheldoin’s gift for the premiere run is a wizard’s spellbook with some spells not normally available to Ravens Bluff PCs. Otherwise, they will receive the *Favor of Gheldoin*.

Conclusion

Once the party returns to the Astral Plane they will be accosted by either Ilkaren, or Veragrim if they made deals with either one of them. If not, Lithuriel will approach them.

The first two will simply take the information and leave. Lithuriel will enter the parlor in which they sit waiting for A’rinthorm.

Head and shoulders taller than the tallest man here, the striking female adjusts the massive sword on her back so that it rests comfortably between her white wings. Her skin is a rich, liquid green, the color of the finest jade or emerald, and completely hairless. Her piercing blue eyes fix on you party for a moment, and then she approaches. The only sound is the soft swish of her knee length white robe as she crosses the hall.

Approaching the party directly, she speaks forcefully but politely.

“I am Lithuriel of Arcadia. I know you are very busy at the moment, but would greatly appreciate an opportunity to speak with you. May I?”

If told to leave, she does so sadly.

What do you want?

To provide assistance. I am told that you are seeking knowledge on the Great Machine. If we work together, sharing information, we can come to understand that artifact better. Of course, once the artifact’s functions have been determined it must be commandeered for the forces of righteousness or destroyed if it cannot.

What can you do for us?

Lithuriel can tell them the following:

If the characters will tell her, and only her, the information that they discover she will grant them a boon drawing on her own power. The boon will be curative in nature. The information must not reach the impure, so she must be the only one told the lore. They would surely corrupt the Great Machine and use it for evil.

“Your ilk have aided me in the past. Can we once again work together for the greater good?”

After the party has dealt with Lithuriel, she will leave and A'rinthorm will enter.

He will be most anxious to learn what the party has found out. If the party simply gives him the unsolved parchment, he will thank them and send them on their way. If they give him the translation, he will ask them if they can distill the story into a maxim, or philosophy, or moral. The meaning behind the story is:

Once acquired, always retained.

If the party can come up with this or something remotely like it, award them the extra experience points for doing so.

After this information is received, he will send them back through the color pool to Ravens Bluff.

“Thank you for your assistance. Perhaps someday soon I can call upon your aid once again.”

The End

Experience Point Summary

Experience is calculated as follows for Living City events.

1. Sum the experience listed below for objectives.
2. Assign discretionary role-playing experience (0-500 points). These should reward accurate character portrayal throughout the adventure, not just how well the PC interacted socially.
3. NEW: PCs get the experience for the tier for which their INDIVIDUAL level qualifies them, according to the chart below. If the PC falls into a higher individual tier than the party's tier, he or she gets the experience at the adventure tier level. Under no circumstances can a character's individual award exceed the party tier.

For example, if the party has a 2nd level PC, a 5th level PC, three 6th level PCs, and an 11th level PC, the group falls into tier 3. The 2nd level PC gets tier 1 experience, the four PCs on tier 3 get tier 3 experience, and the 11th level PC also gets tier 3 experience.

Tier 6:	Character up to level 13
Tier 7:	Character levels 14 and 15
Tier 8:	Character levels 16+

Act I, Scene II

No Disobedience in Rigus	100 xp
Questioning the Soldiers about the Oncoming attack	100 xp

Defeating Opposing Army	
Tier 6	5000 xp
Tier 7	7000 xp
Tier 8	9000 xp

Being offered Mercykiller Membership	200 xp
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Act II

Getting information out of Estrak	100 xp
Crossing the cubes	300 xp

Act III

Defeating (including surpassing) Rust Dragon	
Achaierai	
Tier 6	10,000 xp
Tier 7	12,000 xp
Tier 8	14,000 xp

Finding Gheldoin	500 xp
Solving Puzzle	1000 xp

Conclusion

Distilling Maxim	500 xp
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Maximum Experience for objectives	
Tier 6	17,800 xp
Tier 7	21,800 xp
Tier 8	25,800 xp

Role-playing Experience	0-1000 xp
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Total Possible Experience

Tier 6	18,800 xp
Tier 7	22,800 xp
Tier 8	26,800 xp

Treasure Summary

PCs may keep items from the scenario which are listed on the treasure list or which meet the following conditions:

1. The item must be non-magical and specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the PCs cannot keep it. Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a log sheet.
2. Animals, followers, monsters, henchmen, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay for the PC to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the PC. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.

3. Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some PCs. Items which are worth more than 5,000 gp, which are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), and magical items will be discovered in the possession of the PC by one means or another. The PC who stole them must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. In addition, the PC caught receives one Infamy point for being a known thief. For other items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment on whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

Any item retained according to these rules which does not have a certificate will not ever have a certificate issued for it.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or gold acquired for things which it later finds unreasonable but which were allowed at the time.

Act I, Scene II

Tuning Fork to Astral Plane

Act I, Scene III

- *Khopesh sword +4, forged in the Outlands*
- *Spell Key (Outlands)- Lightning Bolt*
- *Spell Key (Outlands)-Cone of Cold*
- *Spell Key (Outlands)- Finger of Death*
- *Mercykiller Membership:* This character is a member of the Mercykiller Faction, sponsored by General Drakus of Rigus. This character is of Lawful alignment and has sworn to the eight tenets. Membership (at the namer level) costs one time unit. The namer has the following benefits:
 - May cast *detect lie* 1/day to a single chosen question.
 - Any wizard (or bard) will be taught *shocking grasp* regardless specialty or number of spells currently in her spellbook.
 - Any cleric will have access to the spell *command*, regardless of allowed spheres.
 - Twice per day, a Mercykiller may administer a *blow of justice*. The player must inform the DM before the round starts that the next blow is in the name of justice, and her attack(s) from sword or spell has its total damage doubled. Half of the extra damage caused is immediately subtracted from the PC's hit points.
 - If a Mercykiller commits a crime while pursuing or punishing a known criminal, she considers herself innocent. If she commits a crime outside of the punishment of a felon, she

will and must willingly be subject to the full weight of the law.

****Premiere Item**** (available only at Dis Con 99)

- *Bracers of Defense AC 3*

Act III, Scene III

****Premiere Item**** (available only at Dis Con 99)

- *Wizard's Spellbook:* This spellbook was given to the holder of this certificate by Gheldoin, the Duergar sage. He unlocked the secrets to its arcane contents to the holder alone. Neither this book nor its contents may be traded or shared. All spells are found in the Planewalker's Handbook: *avoid planar effects, gate ward, stabilize chaos, native item, breathe, earth, cubehopper.*

Otherwise

- *Favor of Gheldoin-*This favor is written on a scroll which may be invoked at any time when in the outer planes. Redeeming the favor acts as if a *contact other planes* Spell has been cast, with a 90% chance of knowledge and 95% chance of veracity. There is no chance of insanity.

Conclusion

- 10,000 gold
- *Favor of Silver Mask:* The character named above has earned the favor of Silver Mask. In return, the character can invoke Silver Mask's aid once for one of the services listed below. Some services require two or more favors. Spell-like effects take effect at 18th level. Each certificate counts as one favor.
 - The Silver Mask will remove one effect granted from the Great Machine. If there is a beneficial and detrimental effect from the same exposure to the Great Machine both are lost.
 - The character can consult the Silver Mask on any matter. Treat this as a *contact other plane* – *Astral* with the following percentages: Insanity: 30% Knowledge: 90% Veracity: 100%. Five questions may be asked.
 - The character can invoke Silver Mask's great knowledge to break nearby magic, causing the casting of a *dispel magic* spell.
 - The Silver Mask uses its influence in Sigil to get the character cleared of charges. The character is no longer restricted from entering the City of Doors.
 - For two favors, the character can invoke the power of the Silver Mask for one of the following: *true seeing* (wizard spell), *contact*

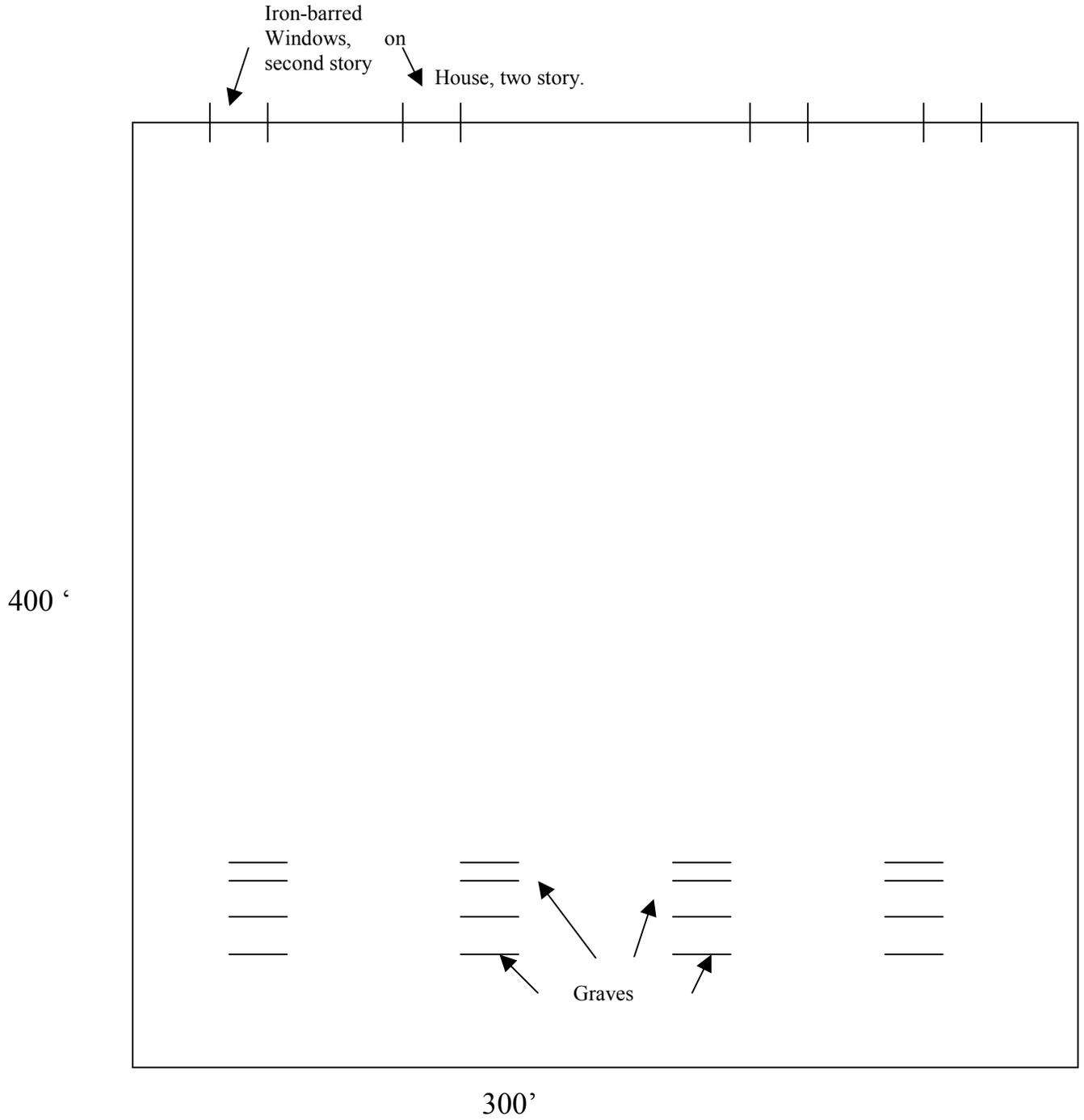
other plane (as above, twelve questions), or *anti-magic shell*.

- *Favor of Veragrim*: The character named above has earned the favor of Veragrim. In return, the character can invoke Verdigris's aid once for one of the services listed below. Some services require two or more favors. Spell-like powers operate at 14th level of effect. Each certificate counts as one favor.
 - The character can invoke some of Verdigris's favors to obtain information, goods, or services. This is mimicked by the following spells: *divination*, *major creation*, or *monster summoning III*. Choice is made at time of use. Items made by the *major creation* will last 24 hours regardless of form. Summoned monsters can perform menial tasks as well as fight.
 - Veragrim can exchange one plussed item for another fashioned on the Great Ring. Weapons, armor, items of protection (not scarabs) are exchangeable. The type of item must be the same (Protection for Protection) but can be of a different type (axe for sword). The item received will not have any special powers other than the "plus" bonus. Mark "VOID" on the traded certificate and mark the Item, Plus, and Plane of Origin on this certificate. The two certificates must be attached for this to be valid. Plane of Origin is one of the planes of the Outer Ring, not including Sigil or the Outlands.
 - Veragrim uses his influence in Sigil to get the character cleared of charges. The character is no longer restricted from entering the City of Doors.
 - For two favors, Veragrim will send a mezzoloth or a green slaad to act as a bodyguard for one week or adventure, which ever is shorter.
- *Favor of Lithuriel*: The character named above has earned the favor of Lithuriel the planetar. In return, the character can invoke Lithuriel's aid once for one of the services listed below. Some services require two or more favors. Spell-like abilities are cast at 14th level. The character does not have to be conscious to use these abilities on himself. Each certificate counts as one favor.
 - This can be used to do one of the following effects: *neutralize poison*, *cure critical wounds*, *cure disease* (even Lycanthropy and Mummy Rot), *abjure*, or *remove curse*. Choice is made at time of use.
 - Lithuriel uses her influence in Sigil to get the character cleared of charges. The character is no longer restricted from entering the City of Doors.
 - Two favors can be used to have Lithuriel cast one of the following: *heal*, or *blade barrier*.

Player Handout 1

- I. I will uphold Justice before all else, purging the multiverse of those who break the law.
- II. In all Situations I shall weigh the rights and wrongs with a clear and impartial mind.
- III. I shall decide where Justice must fall under the law, and I will mete out that Justice with a firm and unyielding hand.
- IV. I believe in the righteousness of my faction; we alone answer to the higher Law of Justice.
- V. I will not pass judgment on good or evil, only on law-abiding and law-breaking, for therein lies wrongdoing.
- VI. I will punish the guilty as the crime demands.
- VII. I will be diligent in my pursuit of the guilty, and while so engaged I will remain innocent of any wrongdoing in the eyes of others.
- VIII. I will never release a lawbreaker until his sentence has been carries out.

Player Handout 2



ητρσψ ασφηιρτ κπιτιμρυρφ ψπ ψφρ τσβρτιμ πυ
φοδ τοβσα, ψφρ στωφοτω ζπιμδψρτ
ναονφππαθππαθ. φοδ ζομοπιμδ φσφ δψπαρμ ψφρδστω
τρφ δψπιμρ. βσιαψομη φστομηαυ ομψπ φοδ
ζοφδψ, ασφηιρτ ητσννρφ ψφρ δστωτρφ ομηπψ
εοψφ φοδ πεμ δψπιμρ γοδψ. ψφρ στωφοτω θποδπιμπυ ψ
φρ ηπφ δθρερφ γπτψφ σμφ νιτιμρφ ομψπ ψφρ δψπιμυ γ
αρδφ πυ ασφηιρτ. φρ επιαφ μπψ αρψ ηπ.ψφρ δστωτρφ
ομηπψ εσδ φοδ νυ φοβομρ τοηφψ.

judge Aid #1: the Astral plane

The Astral is a plane of transit, a planar link between the prime material and outer planes. Another view is that it is not really a plane at all, but rather the void between all true planes. It is a realm of the mind which touches the Prime Material Plane as well as the first layer of each outer plane at all points. Lastly, it is the scaffolding upon which the true planes were built.

The Astral appears as a bright, well-lit grayness that extends endlessly in all directions like a thick, silver atmosphere. Although very big objects can be seen at great distance, both vision and hearing have effective ranges of 200 yards. Of the few breaks in this infinite silver expanse, the most common are conduits to/from other planes, along with small islands of matter which have broken off from their native dimensions. A very rare occurrence is the forgotten husk of a dead power. The Githyanki fortress in this adventure is built within such a structure.

The Astral plane is gravitiless and directionless. Objects have mass but not weight, so that they can be thrown at normal velocities. There is no up or down, or magnetic directions. There are only reference points. Further, concepts such as space, distance, time, movement, body, and even plane itself exist only as perceptions, not necessarily as reality.

The Astral plane may be traveled either physically or via *astral projection* magic. All creatures in this adventure are physically traveling, so the projection rules may be ignored for this tournament. Physical travel involves physically moving into the Astral plane, bringing along all of one's possessions. As occurs when traveling to the true planes, travelers and their possessions are translated into Astral material. That is, they are translated into constructs of the mind, composed only of mental energy. In this tournament, the PCs enter through a metallic-silver color pool (a form of Astral conduit).

Time does not pass on the Astral plane. As a result, poison and aging attacks are ineffective and potions are permanent on the Astral plane. However, when a visitor returns home, all the time that he missed instantly catches up with him (although hungry, the visitors will not suffer from starvation). **For purposes of this tournament, ignore any time paradoxes which may occur.**

Movement

Visitors to the Astral plane must become acclimated. Movement is accomplished in either of two ways, only one of which may be used in a single round:

Physical: accomplished by pushing off of objects, movement continues indefinitely at the following rates per round, all of which can be negated by force of will:

A large object pushing off of a small object moves 10 feet per round, regardless of the rate of the small object. For example, a man firing an arrow moves backwards 10' per round.

Two similarly sized objects pushing off each other each move at a rate equal to ½ the total intelligence involved.

A small object pushing off a large object moves at a speed equal to its intelligence. The large object moves in the opposite direction at a rate of 10' per round.

Mental: accomplished by concentrating on where to go, with a movement rate equal to one's intelligence (measured in yards). This movement is similar to the *fly* spell, although sudden stops and maneuvers require a successful intelligence check. Once engaged in melee, differences in combatant speed will probably not make much difference. Rules for long distance travel do not apply for this adventure.

Combat

Combat is governed by weightlessness and mentally-controlled movement.

Armor Class alterations:

- Dexterity provides no bonus. Instead Wisdom score is used to determine defensive adjustment on the Dexterity table.
- Magical armor and protective devices are reduced in effectiveness by 1 bonus point (see the subsequent section entitled "Effects on Magical Items" for more detail).

Attack and Damage alterations:

- Strength provides no bonuses. Instead the Intelligence score is used to determine these on the Strength table.

Missile Fire alterations:

- Dexterity provides no bonus. Instead Wisdom is used to determine missile attack adjustment on the Dexterity table.
- Those from planes with gravity suffer a -2 penalty on all their shots.

All ranges are double their prime material equivalents.

- Beyond long range, all missiles miss their targets and continue moving until they strike something.

Engagement in melee can occur from above and below, as well as from the sides. The maximum numbers of attackers are:

<u>Defender</u>	<u>Size of Attackers</u>		
	<u>S</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>L</u>
<u>S</u>	8	6	3
<u>M</u>	12	8	6
<u>L</u>	18	12	8

Individual orientation is self-determined and can change each round. The “higher” opponent is usually granted a +1 THACO bonus, unless the combatants have opposing orientations (i.e. they are both “above” each other).

Character Class Considerations

Wizards

- Spells cannot be recovered normally due to the slow passage of subjective time.

Priests

- Unless his deity resides in the Astral plane, the priest must find a plane with faster time flow to regain spells. None of the Forgotten Realms deities resides in the Astral plane.

Rogues

- The chance to hide in shadows is virtually 0%, since light comes from the Astral plane itself.
- The chance to move silently is virtually 100%, unless the PC purposefully moves in such a way as to create noise.
- The ability to *climb walls* is usually of little value since most movement is by mental concentration. However, it can be used to move over an object’s surface without pushing off into space.

Rangers

- Can still surprise others normally, but lose their advantage against being surprised.
- Tracking skills are only useful on solid objects.

Effects on Magical Items

- **IMPORTANT: Weapons, armor, and protective devices (except those which confer a particular armor class) are reduced by one magical bonus point.** This applies to attack, damage, AC, and saving throw protection.
- Potions normally have the viscosity of ketchup and tend to cling to the sides of solid containers (such

as vials but not wineskins), requiring 1d4 rounds to consume. Solid containers also have a 5% chance of causing choking which loses the effect of the potion. Magical oils are applied by dipping a finger into them and allowing them to flow over the user for a round.

- Magical items are subject to the magical effects listed in the next section. For example, items involving extra planar space, such as a *bag of holding*, do not function.

Effects on Magical Spells

This magical plane is one in which spells are easily cast. Spells which have casting times of less than a round are reduced by one segment. Those spells which normally require more than one round only require one round to cast here.

All spell ranges are increased by 50%. Further, the duration of mind-affecting spells is increased by 50%, and a -1 penalty to saving throws applies (if such is allowed).

The modifications for each wizard school are listed below. Priest spells behave similarly, but function only if the cleric’s deity resides in the Astral, Prime, or Outer planes. Spells from the priest creation sphere behave like wizard alteration spells. Priest spells from the divination, necromancy, and summoning spheres behave similarly to spells from wizard schools of the same name.

Abjurations - work normally, but cannot affect the fabric of the Astral plane itself, which overwhelms all spells. For example, a *dispel magic* spell could disrupt a spell effect but would not disrupt the astral properties in its area of effect.

Alterations - have the following qualifications:

- Spells that deal with physical matter, time, or space must behave according to general rules for this plane.
- Spells cannot contact the ethereal or inner planes, or make use of extradimensional space.
- Objects that are animated by alteration spells have an intelligence of 0 for movement purposes.
- Spells can modify existing conditions, but cannot call conditions into existence.

Conjurations/Summonings - are 25% likely to fail, and:

- Creatures of the Outer planes are aware of how the Astral plane functions and will not move into spells which ensnare, subjugate, or harm them.

- *Monster Summoning* spells can call creatures from the Prime or Outer planes.
- Spells which call for the direct intervention of a power work only if it is native to the Astral plane. No Faerunian deities are native to the Astral plane. Other deities may be beseeched but are reluctant to involve themselves.

Divinations - operate normally, with exceptions:

- *Detect magic* causes the entire plane to radiate (due to a flaw in the spell), although with a little effort it is possible to detect other magic against this background.
- *True sight* reveals the infinite nature of the plane, possibly overwhelming the caster (with a 100% - 5%/viewer level chance of being stunned for 1d4 rounds) when first used.

Enchantments/Charms - operate normally with exceptions:

- The target creature(s) must be present in the plane.
- Extra-dimensional space cannot be called into being or manipulated.
- For example the *feblemind* spell works normally, resulting in an intelligence of zero for purposes of movement and combat.

Evocations/Invocations - operate normally except that materials created by evocation spells have physical properties appropriate to the Astral plane. Exceptions are those spells which deal directly with matter.

Illusions/Phantasms - very effective in the Astral environment since they may well be more believable here... Illusions are 30% likely to be usurped by “floating thoughts”, which randomly alter them.

Necromancies - n/a

Judge Aid #2- The Outlands

All gate towns are on the 9th ring of the outlands, and therefore all levels of magic can work. Physical conditions differ from gate town to gate town, but in general do not vary from the Prime Material.

Even if a body's standing in the right ring or layer, she still might find that some of her spells don't work. That's just the way it is on the planes. But don't give up yet, berk - a spell key might set things right.

A spell key is a special item, method, or even another spell that'll allow a particular spell to be cast. Without the right key, a spell could putter out halfway through or not even work at all. They only work for wizard spells, though (priest spells use the mysterious power keys).

Cutters have to tumble to the nature of spell keys on their own. A lot of that stuff is dark to most folks. But the kinds of spells that need keys are pretty well known:

- Divination spells that contact powers and creatures in the Inner Planes.
- Elemental conjurations that summon creatures or effects from the Inner Planes.
- Ethereal-based spells that need access to the Ethereal Plane.
- Energy Plane spells that need access to the Negative or Positive Energy Planes. Shadow magic spells that need access to the Demiplane of Shadow.
- Spells of any type that conjure, contact, or tap energies from the Inner Planes, the Ethereal Plane, or any of the Demiplanes. These spells (like dismissal or drawmij's instant summons) might work just fine in the Outlands, but if a body wants to use them to reach one of those other planes, it'll take a spell key.

By the way, any berk who figures on using psionic abilities to duplicate these spells or reach the Inner Planes, Ethereal Plane, or Demiplanes is out of luck.

Judge Aid #3: Acheron

Physical Conditions

Acheron's divided into four layers, each layer stressing order over evil, the group over any single soldier. Only the first layer is Thickly inhabited, and even that's a stretch. After all, Acheron isn't made to support life. Each layer consists of enormous iron cubes floating in an airy void, cubes that collide in jarring, echoing blows like the ring of swords in battle. The cubes themselves are pitted and scarred with craters, cracks, and dents from their many collisions, though in the orderly plane of Acheron the cubes always rust or fracture along straight lines and at right angles. Not even weeds grow in Acheron.

All four layers drift in a void of air that supports life and flight. Gravity here conforms to the shape of the solid, always pointing to the center. Thus armies can range on all six sides of one of the immense cubes, or they can walk on both the top and bottom of Ocanthus's drifting plates. Travelers in Avalas and Thuldadin must be wary of collisions between the cubes, since everything between the two masses is crushed. Nearing cubes are seen a day or two in advance, depending on size, giving just enough warning to escape. (So pitched are some of the wars between legions that they fight until crushed, ignoring all other perils.)

The plane's lit by a gray, fluctuating light that varies slightly between bright moonlight and a dark, cloudy day: never bright enough to harm the eyes of orcs or the goblin races, but never so dim that a cutter can't see the hand in front of him. Though the source of this illumination has never been found, it's strong enough that the cubes break the light up into shafts and shadows, and some recently collided cubes have surfaces shiny enough to reflect the shafts of light in odd directions. Some say that a single cube somewhere glows bright enough to light the rest of the plane, and that it's been glowing forever - after all, that's the only way it could light an infinite space. Regardless of the explanation, the light is there.

Magical Conditions

Magic in Acheron's usually straightforward, and proceeds with frightening order and precision. There's no half measures, no gray, no maybes or power-sharing. Every magical action has a magical reaction. What one mage gains, another must lose.

What's this mean for a cutter who's just arrived from across the Great Ring? Well, for each new spirit that enters Acheron, another spirit must die. For each ice storm, a fire storm occurs elsewhere. For each healing,

someone suffers. Each of these reflections appears at the moment the spell takes effect and then rushes off, just like a whizzing spell crystal. It doesn't matter what it's called, it's the reversed, frozen form of another spell, resembling an ioun stone or a spell crystal from some prime world. The reflections can be captured by a spectral hand, a Bigby's hand spell of any kind, and certain magical gloves.

If captured, reflections are used to undo the magic that created them, so long as death isn't involved. A berk polymorphed into a snail returns to her own form if touched by the crystal formed when her shape was first shifted; a berk frozen by a cone of cold becomes unfrozen, and regains the hit points lost to the spell in the first place. Reflections last one hour per level of the spell; there's not much point to tracking down the reflection of a magic missile (even if it could be found within an hour), but the chance to undo a wish gone awry is certainly worth the chase. Most reflections are useful only as counter-measures to negate malevolent spell effects.

Conjuration/Summoning: Creatures summoned to Acheron must always obey the letter of any command, though they strive to avoid the spirit; no order can be refused, no matter how suicidal. Since elementals, fiends, and other creatures have no chance of disobeying a caster's commands or slipping from his control, these summoned creatures are often used as suicide troops to break strongpoints and strategic locations.

There's a price for such perfect obedience, however. For each creature summoned, the mage who calls must provide a petitioner or planar in its place as a sort of magical hostage; in the case of summoned baatezu, this duty usually results in the death of the unfortunate victim.

The hostage automatically trades places with the intended summoned creature. The intended victim's entitled to a saving throw versus death magic to avoid the effect. If the victim makes the save, the caster must then make a saving throw versus death magic to avoid being drawn in as a hostage. If both victim and caster save, the summoning spell fails. If the caster fails and is pulled away, the desired creature arrives without magical restraint - unfortunately for whomever's left in the area.

Divination: Divinations in Acheron can never be used to spy on opposing forces; the nature of the plane

requires careful scouting and encourages surprise attacks. This applies only to divinations that might have military significance; it has no effect on civilians or adventuring individuals, objects, or places with little strategic value.

Omens are common and are often skewed to show the worst possible result. Any positive or negative omen (from an augury or divination) always applies to the entire group that the caster belongs to, whether that group is a party of heroes or an army of thousands. For this reason, casters who report too many bad omens to their generals rarely live to enjoy their old age.

Necromancy: Acheron's a good plane for raising armies of the undead, for any number of followers can be raised here to serve as an army. However, other forms of necromancy are less successful. All necromancy on Acheron depends on the magical aptitude of the caster. If his life force is greater than the life force of his target, his spells succeed. Specifically, if the caster's level or Hit Dice are greater than the target's, then the spell works. Trouble is, if the casters life force is weaker, his spells reverse and redouble against him, draining hit points equal to twice the level of the failed spell. For instance, a cutler tries to fend off a rust dragon with an enervation spell, but the rust dragon has 10 Hit Dice and the necromancer only has 7, and so the necromancer loses 8 hit points (twice the spell's level) himself.

Elemental: With the right keys, elemental magic works well on Acheron, especially the magics of fire and water. Earth magics have absolutely no effect on the iron cubes of the plane. Air magic works, though only on the surface of cubes - within the cubes all air magic fails. Fire magic affects everything, including the iron of tide cubes, which reacts as if under a heat metal spell near any fire. The diameter of the heated metal is 10 feet per level of the fire spell involved. A fireball, for instance, heats the metal in a 30foot radius. Water magic works normally within the cubes, but on the surface such magic only rusts the iron within a radius of 10 feet per level of the spell.

Judge Aid #4-Planar Reference Tables

(Taken from the *Planewalker's Handbook*)

TABLE I: WIZARD SPELLS WITH PLANAR PATHWAYS AND EXTRADIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS
Astral (Cannot be cast on the Inner Planes, the Ethereal, or layers of planes separated from the Astral)

Astral spell
Duo-dimension
Find familiar*

Ethereal (Cannot be cast on the Astral or Outer Planes)

<i>Conjure elemental**</i>	<i>Estate transference,</i>	<i>Shades</i>
<i>Conjure elemental-kin,</i>	<i>Etherealness,</i>	<i>Shadowcat,</i>
<i>Demishadow magic</i>	<i>Invisible stalker</i>	<i>Shadow form</i>
<i>Demishadow monsters</i>	<i>Leomund's secret chest</i>	<i>Shadow magic</i>
<i>Detect phases</i>		<i>Shadow monsters</i>
<i>Dimension blade*</i>	<i>Major creation</i>	<i>Shadow walk</i>
<i>Distance distortion</i>	<i>Minor creation</i>	<i>Summon shadow</i>
<i>Energy drain</i>	<i>Phase door</i>	<i>Vanish</i>

Lorloveim's shadowy transformation

Dual (varies)

<i>Banishment</i>	<i>Drawmij's instant summons</i>	<i>Reincarnation</i>
<i>Contact other plane</i>	<i>Ensnarement</i>	<i>Sending</i>
<i>Demand</i>	<i>Hornung's random dispatcher**</i>	<i>Succor</i>
<i>Dismissal</i>	<i>Magic mirror</i>	<i>Vision</i>

Extradimensional (Cannot be cast on the Astral Plane [and possibly some Ethereal demiplanes])

Deepockets
Maze
Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion
Rope trick

* May or may not cross planar pathways, depending on the creature called.

** Remember that with the proper spell key, the mage summons a pseudoelemental as described above.

TABLE II: PRIEST LEVEL LOSS BY PLANE (QUICK REFERENCE)

<i>Deity's Plane</i>	<i>Priest's Plane</i>	<i>Loss</i>
<i>Astral</i>	<i>Outer Planes</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Astral</i>	<i>Prime or Sigil</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Astral</i>	<i>Ethereal Plane</i>	<i>-1</i>
<i>Astral</i>	<i>Inner Planes</i>	<i>-2</i>
<i>Ethereal</i>	<i>Inner Planes</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Ethereal</i>	<i>Prime or Sigil</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Ethereal</i>	<i>Astral Plane</i>	<i>-1</i>
<i>Ethereal</i>	<i>Outer Planes</i>	<i>-2</i>
<i>Inner Plane</i>	<i>Ethereal, Prime, or Sigil</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Inner Plane</i>	<i>Astral Plane</i>	<i>-2</i>
<i>Inner Plane</i>	<i>Outer Planes</i>	<i>-3</i>
<i>Inner Plane</i>	<i>adjacent Inner Plane</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Inner Plane</i>	<i>other Inner Plane</i>	<i>varies</i>
<i>Outer Plane</i>	<i>Astral, Prime, or Sigil</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Outer Plane</i>	<i>Ethereal Plane</i>	<i>-2</i>
<i>Outer Plane</i>	<i>Inner Planes</i>	<i>-3</i>
<i>Outer Plane</i>	<i>adjacent Outer Plane</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Outer Plane</i>	<i>other Outer Plane</i>	<i>varies</i>
<i>Prime</i>	<i>Ethereal or Astral</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Prime</i>	<i>other prime world or Sigil</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Prime</i>	<i>Outer or Inner Planes</i>	<i>-1</i>

The diagrams of the Great Wheel (page 13) and the Inner Planes (page 26) to determine adjacent planes. Remember Outer Planes are adjacent to the Astral (and the Outlands that all Inner Planes touch the Ethereal. For a complete of all planar changes to priest spells, see page 156.

TABLE III: MAGICAL ITEM BONUS LOSS BY PLANE (QUICK REFERENCE)

Astral Outer Planes or Prime	- 1
Astral Ethereal Plane	-2
Astral Inner Planes	-3
Ethereal Inner Planes or Prime	-1
Ethereal Astral Plane	-2
Ethereal Outer Planes	-3
Inner Plane Ethereal Plane	- 1
Inner Plane adjacent Inner Plane	- 1
Inner Plane other Inner Plane or Prime	-2
Inner Plane Astral Plane	-3
Inner Plane Outer Planes	-4
Outer Plane Astral Plane	-1
Outer Plane adjacent Outer Plane	- 1
Outer Plane other Outer Plane or Prime	-2
Outer Plane Ethereal Plane	-3
Outer Plane Inner Planes	-4
Prime Ethereal or Astral	- 1
Prime Outer or Inner Planes	-2

Note that items forged on the Astral or the Outlands lose only - 1 on all the Outer Planes (since they're adjacent to all of those planes), making them some of the most useful items around when adventuring on the Great Ring. For a complete chart of all planar changes to magical items, see page 157.

Items reduced to +0 bonuses are still magical and can strike creatures vulnerable only to magical weapons. They register as magical when subjected to detect magic spells, and are still generally extremely sturdy and finely crafted. Items that have additional powers lose such powers when the item's bonus falls to +0, so a defender sword +4 with the special ability to detect sloping passages loses the defender ability and the power to detect sloping passages at this point. A weapon with two sets of bonuses, such as a sword +1, +4 vs. lycanthropes, uses the higher bonus to determine the loss of additional powers. As a final note, cursed items with negative bonuses aren't affected in any way by planar travel.

TABLE IV: ORDER OF OUTER PLANES (LOOPING AROUND)

Limbo
Pandemonium
Abyss
Carceri
Gray Waste
Gehenna
Baator
Acheron
Mechanus
Arcadia
Mount Celestia
Bytopia
Elysium
Beastlands
Arborea
Ysgard

judge Aid #5: Party Planar Alterations Sheet

<u>Character Name</u>	<u>Armor Class</u>	<u>Saving Throw</u>	<u>Magical Weapon(s)</u>
	<u>Astral / Acheron</u>	<u>Bonus</u> <u>Astral / Acheron</u>	<u>Astral --> decrement by -1</u> <u>Acheron --> decrement by -2</u>
1)	/	/	
2)	/	/	
3)	/	/	
4)	/	/	
5)	/	/	
6)	/	/	
7)	/	/	

Note: before beginning play, ask the players to provide the following information for their characters:

- 1) Intelligence
- 2) Wisdom
- 3) All items, magical and otherwise, which enhance their armor class or saving throws.

Use this information to complete the table above.

Determining Planar Modifications

When traveling the planes away from the plane of their enchantment, magical items which contain a “plus” value attenuate. For each plane removed, these items lose one “plus” value. The Astral Plane is one plane removed from the Prime Material plane, while Acheron is two planes removed. Effects on “plus-based” magical items are described below. Note that items reduced to +0 lose all other powers, since although they are still magical, their secondary powers are subordinated to this attenuation.

Armor Class is worsened in that all magical protection items (such as enchanted armor, shields, rings/cloaks of protection, etc.) each have their bonuses reduced. On the Astral the penalty for items originating on the Prime Material plane is one magical “plus”, while on Acheron the penalty is two. Devices which confer a particular AC (e.g. *bracers of defense*) are unaffected.

Saving Throw Bonuses are also reduced by the same factor. On the Astral the penalty for items originating on the Prime Material plane is one magical “plus”, while on Acheron the penalty is two.

Magical Weapons, like other magical devices, these are similarly reduced by one “plus” while on the Astral, and two “pluses” while on Acheron. Therefore, THAC0 and damage bonuses are similarly worsened when traveling the planes.

Importantly, there are exceptions to these guidelines (such as the *planar voyager* short sword and *long sword of the planes*). Weapon bonuses can also be magically altered by such things as *oil of sharpness* or *oil of impact*.