

The ABYSS



Maps of Hell

by Matthew Boroson



The Abyss

MAPS OF HELL

by Matthew Boroson

The Abyss presents Maps of Hell: by Matthew Boroson. This electronic version of Maps of Hell may be used provided you charge no fee and do not alter its contents or layout. If you wish to distribute this on any webpage or copy in any other format please contact Matthew Boroson for written permission.

The following material developed for the contemporary horror roleplaying game, Kult (Target Games), are created by Matthew Boroson and made available in this format by The Abyss, and are not authorized or endorsed in any way by Target Games or any other publisher of Kult. Neither Target Games or any other publisher of Kult is in any way responsible for the content of this sourcebook. Maps of Hell Sourcebook © Matthew Boroson, All Rights Reserved.

*All images and design © Jason Just. Images may be used provided no fee is charged and or modified or removed from this format.
Contact just.faction@clear.net.nz*

Recommended for Mature audiences.

www.kult-rpg.org

Author: Matthew Boroson

Design/Layout/Graphics: Jason Just
www.geocities.com/~baalreshef/

A Publication from The Abyss
Made for the Kult Roleplaying Game
For Mature Readers

"The Abyss is a not-for-profit worldwide corporation whose aim is to encourage a new publishing company to buy the rights to the Kult role-playing game and bring it back into print. We run an extensive outreach campaign to attract new gamers, and we produce high-quality new material and distribute it for free on the Internet in order to keep gamers interested."

~ www.kult-rpg.org ~

Copyright 1999

Sidotta Rimice was a child in the Italian countryside during the second world war. She and her parents hid in a barn, when fighters were flying overhead; a dropped bomb set fire to the barn and its hay. Her parents were killed in that barn, and her legs were crushed under a falling beam. For the next four days, she passed in and out of hallucinations, she lost blood, went hungry, cannibalized her parents' corpses, while waiting for rescue.

She went insane, a little bit.

Her rescuers found her, a little mad crippled girl, sated from the raw meat her parents' dead bodies offered. In blood-her own blood, her parents' blood, and many other people's blood-she had drawn symbols over the beam that pinned her to the ground. These were the maps of hell, pathetic blasphemies in the eyes of some, powerful occult lore to others.

These were the maps of hell, never published before, until now. Today, on the tenth anniversary of the day Sidotta Rimice was vivisected by Satanists, who wanted to study her brain for hell's secrets. It is in the memory of a sad life, a mad life, that we now publish Sidotta Rimice's seminal Maps of Hell.

"Down through circles and trenches. Down and down into the screaming rock and the molten flesh of Hell.

"Down where lovers, who have promised never to part, are fused together in a tangle of shrieking flesh. Towering, selfless love turned into hate and madness.

"Down through infinite arctic wastes where people wander alone and naked and freezing, never reaching any destination.

"Through the streets of suffering cities where the stones of the houses bleed and beg forgiveness. Where taps drip and fires don't light and hearts burn endlessly,

"Where men and women are made monstrously huge. Bodies so big they cannot move. They can only scream and cry out as other damned creatures burrow and build in their flesh.

"Down and down.

"And down through the pointless grinding banality of Hell."

Grant Morrison

Inferno was once a thriving bureaucracy, efficiently executing its function: to expunge the memories of the dead, in order to make sure no one Awakens. But Inferno has fallen into chaos since Astaroth (also known as Ialdabaoth) has forsaken his charge, and chosen instead to gather power in the Illusion, to rally his forces against Metropolis.

Once, someone from Egypt would go to Sekhet-Aaru, where dog-headed men would rip her heart out and weigh it against a feather; a lifetime of acculturation would make those images especially terrifying. But now, someone from Egypt could just as easily find herself demolished in a Navajo afterlife, where demons and images from an alien culture torture her in ways she would never have expected.

A poverty-stricken man might find himself being tortured for a rich man's sins, a promiscuous man tortured for a woman's life in abstinence. Nothing makes sense anymore; the punishment no longer fits the crime. In a way, the sheer injustice of Inferno now makes damnation all the more horrifying.

Still, the time-honored tortures remain; although their victims were intended for different punishment, there still is no leniency or forgiveness anywhere. No one feels they've gotten off easy, just because they're not being punished for their own crimes.

Inferno is described in the Kult rulebook; there, you can find descriptions of the principal inhabitants of these hells-purgatides, nepharites, razides and Death Angels. The ten Death Angels are depicted fully in Legions of Darkness.

The Seven Levels of Hell

Gehenna: The Waste Land

Gehenna is the only outdoors part of all Inferno, an endless waste land of broken glass. Gehenna is Inferno's highest level, through which all the dead must pass. This is why Gehenna is sometimes called "The Gates of Death." Broken glass lines its desert ground-glass that laughs meanly when you cut your feet, thirsty glass. Wisps of fire blow in its dry air, and dark shapes in the sky hunt out travelers. Since Gehenna is a vast, deserted space, offering no cover, seeing a dark shape coming for you out of the gray sky can be a harrowing experience.



Out in Gehenna's vast wastes, there are scenes of tremendous violence and upheaval. Artillery fires continually over an area known as The Trenches where soldiers of all eras duck for cover. Strange gas-canisters shriek down from the sky, drowning the uniformed boys in their own mucus. Automatic gunfire will kill any who dare to stand above the level of the trenches, and those who wriggle on their bellies, covering their heads, will find the entire region fenced in with barbed wire.

Battleground is a separate region, where armies clash in tremendous violence. If there was ever a semblance of military strategy, it's gone now, as soldiers suffocate in the press of body against body. Brother turns on brother; the blood runs ankle-deep; there is a constant cry from the mutilated. Men sway, dizzy from loss of blood, arms or face hacked or blown off. The battle never ends or slows in Battleground, though combatants may change, and there is never an opportunity for chivalry or fair combat. No one has the time to reflect that almost every combatant wears a different uniform, carries weaponry from a different era; a Viet Cong guerrilla may get his head smashed in with a tomahawk. An old woman called the Morrigan travels our world, smelling out places that will soon open to Battleground, in hopes of finding her lost son, who was sentenced there eternally.

On the six lower levels you can only see the Dead Sun through openings and slats in the prisons, but here, in Gehenna, the Dead Sun dominates the sky, burning a pale shadow out of your body. Although Gehenna is the first stop a soul makes after death, few portals open to it in our world.

An exiled razide called Moloch also stalks these wastes, an old man with horns and a swollen, deformed penis, who gibbers wordlessly while he hunts the escaped souls of children. Above Gehenna, in the airy void, a strange being called Lilith smolders-half razide, half creature of passion, she and her mutant offspring, the succubi and incubi, hunt these lands in a predatory sexual frenzy.

The characters' sense of powerlessness should be reinforced here. Hoping to travel to the deeper levels of hell, they find that they must simply wait, while demonic creatures hunt them, and they can find nowhere to hide. Eventually, a whirlpool will open in the dust and deposit them at a level lower, in the burning and grotesque waters of Shaare Mawet.



Shaare Mawet: The Watery Hell

The waters of Sha'are Mawet are often referred to as "rivers," "lakes," and "seas," but these euphemisms pale in the dark light of the truth. More accurate words would be "sewers" and "cesspits."

Acheron, the river of hate, winds nine times through tunnels around Sha'are Mawet, closing in the rest of the damning waters, and the bizarre blank spaces in which the waters hang. The waters of the Acheron aren't water at all; these churning fluids are the remnants of what were once human beings. An eddy of Klansman rises in stark bitumen



against a blob of what was once a Black Power activist; no memory of the crimes that motivated any of this hatred remains, only vile abhorrence.

The only way to cross the Acheron is to be ferried across by the boatman, Phlegyas. He waits at the Lethe Wharf, the only solid surface to be found in Sha'are Mawet, other than his ferry. Phlegyas is almost four meters tall, and is very, very thin; his face seems to be made of decomposing flesh, over a World War II gas mask where his skull should be, and long black robes that have been spattered with grotesque liquids. For a river crossing, he demands payment in fresh flesh for him to wear—he has a penchant for eyelids. His boat is made of recent comers who refused to pay; slowly they liquefy underneath Phlegyas and his passengers. Phlegyas is very vain, and has been known to be talked out of demanding payment; someone who promised to bring him the fresh eyelids of an Inuit, with their epicanthic folds, might be able to swindle him, or someone who offered to bring him a better, more modern gas mask to be his skull.

Tributaries from the Acheron feed three lakes: a lake of boiling gold to punish the greedy, a lake of freezing lead to punish the miserly, and a lake of iron shards to

punish the abstinent. Of course, now that Inferno lacks the regularity and order that Astaroth brought to it, someone who experienced no greed at all might call out from the boiling gold he swims in, sentenced to eternal suffering.

The Acheron, if not crossed, flows out to 'Tohu Vi' Bohu, the Primal Sea, the uterine waters of first creation. Some mapmakers have located the Primal Sea elsewhere—not in Inferno, but in Metropolis, the Unreal City. This doesn't really make sense; Metropolis is comprised of skyscrapers, potholes, all the signs of urban decay; there is no sea in Metropolis. Also, spirits of the dead never go to Metropolis, as they travel the messy path from life to death to life again.

Portals open between the sewer-sludge of the Acheron and the Underground, leading to those dark, damp places of the Labyrinth where the razides' hatching chambers can be found.

Travelers through Inferno must come here after Gehenna, and barter with Phlegyas, if they want to proceed any farther. The souls tortured here can be rescued—brought out of Inferno in a jar—but they will never be the same; purgatives from the Acheron will have lost all their capacity to feel aggression, while those who were punished in

boiling gold will be absurdly generous-giving away their life savings to a beggar. Someone punished in the lake of freezing lead will spend money indiscriminately, buying whatever they see, while someone punished in the lake of iron shards will be sexually predatory.

On the far shores of the Acheron, all the toxic tunnels of Shaare Mawet fade from view. One stands on an earthen floor, while cavernous walls curve inwards. This is Shaare Zalmawet.

Shaare Zalmawet: The Hell of Seven Hells

In the damp caverns of Sha'are Zalmawet, one is confronted by seven gates. There is a hell behind each gate, but only one of these hells-Kurnugia-can be passed through to Inferno's deeper levels. At each gate is a strange sight; a nepharite stands at each, like a carnival barker, trying to convince passers-by to enter the gate they guard, not one of the other gates.

Purgatides and prisoners in Samjiva, the Hell of Repetition, endlessly repeat the actions of their first few moments upon entering; some science experiments in our world unwittingly open portals to Samjiva. Sometimes practitioners of the Lore of Time and Space wind up here by mistake, eternally caught in the moment of realizing that something has gone wrong.

In Kala-Sutra, the Hell of Black Coils, bodies are stretched out into long wire to constrict and tighten around other bodies; periodically, the coil and the coiled-around are allowed to switch places, and both feel they've gotten the worse end of the bargain. People in abusive relationships have been known to visit Kala-Sutra in their nightmares.

Millions of people are pressed into a tiny area in Samghata, the Crowded Hell, unable to rest or think due to the commotion, the heat, the pressing limbs-prisons in the Third World sometimes open to Samghata. Claustrophobes sometimes have visions of this place, leaving them quaking and jittery for weeks.

Raurava, the Screaming Hell, is a Victorian chamber, made of the compounded substance of spirits that have been there longer-whatever you touch screams, and you know that it will be your fate to become one of these infinitely tender, infinitely suffering velvet curtains, camisoles, feather tics, or stays. Raurava was apparently reshaped in the late 18th Century, by a dying man with a very low mental balance, into the room where he died.

Victims of Tapanā, the Burning Hell, are scorched to ashes, and then the ashes re-form to be burned again. Furnaces and boiler rooms where bodies are burned sometimes flicker at the border of Tapanā, while holocausts and bombings and burnings at the stake open to these smoke-filled, smoke-stained rooms.





Those who enter the sixth gate, to Avici, the Hell of No End, find themselves passing through a gate to Phlegethon. They walk down endless stretches of forgettable road, or infinite tracts of identical condominiums.

The gate to Kurnugia is guarded by a nepharite called Rashnu. Once someone enters the gate, they have to cross a bridge so narrow it's sharper than a razor blade. On the other side of the bridge there are stony caverns and a grisly tree called the Zacornu. Hideous, terrified, suffering human heads grow like fruit on the Zacornu, begging for death.

The heads growing on the Zacornu are tortured by an Awakened, not by a nepharite, although it might be difficult to tell the difference. Erlik, the Awakened, claims to have been the first man; his organs and bones are on the outside, and they glisten sickeningly-but he claims that humans are the false image of him, made inside-out, that he hates us for being such a distorted image of his beauty. He also claims the Zacornu was the tree whose fruit was forbidden. Now, in order to travel deeper through Inferno, one must pick a fruit from the tree and eat it-even as a human face is visible, begging pathetically to be spared.

Kurnugia is ruled by the razide Nergal, dead lord of Sha'are Zalmawet, and his adulterous wife Ereshkigal. It was Ereshkigal's lover, Namtaru, the spreader of plague, who killed Nergal, and yet Nergal continues to rule from his own grave, while Namtaru and Ereshkigal copulate over him.

Be'er Shahat: The Hell of Fire and Ice

Be'er Shahat is comprised of a frozen land and a fiery one, both underground.

Niflheim, the icy world of the dead, is guarded by Garm, a monstrous, three-headed dog, whose mouths and throats are caked with the dry blood of all who tried to escape from his mistress.

Hel, the raziðe mistress of Niflheim, is a beautiful woman above the waist, but below the waist she is all decay and rot. She experiences sexual pleasure from the maggots in her vagina. All in her presence experience the sensation of extreme starvation, famine. Hel is building a ship out of the dead, a tremendous boat that she intends to sail across the Atlantic Ocean at the world's end, in the endless winter that is to come.

The rest of Be'er Shahat is the fiery pits, where the Duat live, ancient triple goddesses seeking to avenge their exile by cooking souls alive and feeding them to the famine-stricken souls who have strayed too near to Hel. Fire cults in our world often unknowingly worship the Duat. In order to travel down to Ti't Ha-Yawen, one must pass by the murderous Duat and descend through the fiery pits.





Ti'it Ha-yawen: The Hell of Man's Making

Tartarus is here, the hell of the Greeks, and Sekhet-Aaru, the Egyptian hell, and Mictlan, the Aztec hell. The substance of Ti'it Ha-yawen is constantly remade to reflect new visions of hell; its empty spaces resemble huge structures of gray flesh, lined with puckers—each of these puckers is a human being in purgatory.

Tartarus is closed in by iron gates. A three-headed razide named Hecate rules here, feasting on the entrails of humans who have been executed or assassinated. She is aided by the three Hecatoncheires, nepharites who appear as thousands of hands and arms rising from the shadows, and by the kerea, hideous winged death-spirits that only exist in Ti'it Ha-yawen, one for each soul.

Ophion suffers prominently, a giant serpent with bloody, broken teeth. There are thousands of purgatides called "ixions" affixed to burning wheels that revolve forever, and sisyphi condemned to push huge boulders up hills for all eternity, and tantali standing in pools of water that recede whenever they bend over to get a drink.

A razide called Anubis rules Sekhet-Aaru. Inside black pyramids, human hearts are torn out and weighed, with a feather as counterbalance. Those whose hearts are heavier than a feather are made to suffer eternal pain, blinded, given hot sand to drink, and are swarmed by stinging insects.



There is more, much more, in Ti'it Ha-yawen, all the hells humans have feared or imagined.

Abaddon: The Pit of Corruption

Once Abaddon may have held more than just the City, but no one remembers such a time. Dis, the City of Anguish, is all there is to find in Abaddon now. Dis is where cities go, when they go to hell; when human feelings and association have given a city a life of its own, and that life must be expunged. Bars, cafes, restaurants, that "just aren't what they used to be," wind up here, being tortured, as is the entire city of Tenochtitlan. The Warsaw Ghetto, 1930s Paris and London, wherever human adoration of a city caused that city to gleam with its own, inner light, threatening to open up



to Metropolis, that archetype of the city in its whole, these cities wind up destroyed physically by Lictors, and their emotional resonance comes to Dis to be ruined.

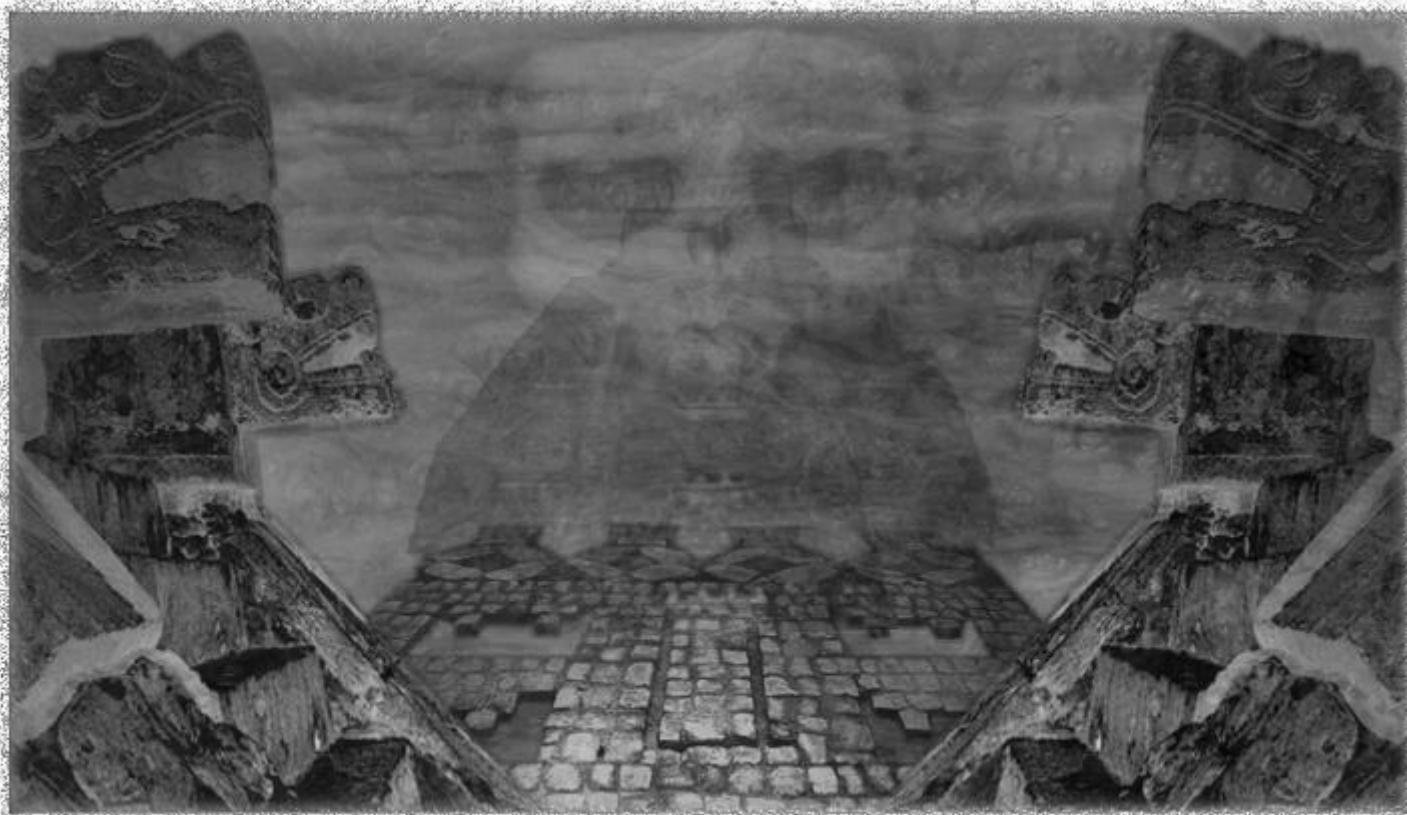
Functions of high society, gala affairs, go on through the evening, and then a swarm of nepharites comes in to desecrate the soiree-pissing in the champagne fountains, gang-raping the debutantes, sodomizing the eligible bachelors. The glamor of the day turns to horror, until the people who loved the city most come to hate their unending torment, and the city's own pretensions slough away. Walls can be heard crying, for the life that was once within their grasp.

The Dark Citadels are here, steel labyrinths burrowed into the ground, exerting the death angels' control over humanity. The Dark Citadels are described more fully in *Legions of Darkness*. Dis is the most likely destination behind a journey into Inferno; once here, a traveler will discover there are many ways back to the ordinary world through the citadels.

Here you can find Rats' Alley, where the dead men lose their bones. Muggings, chemical overdoses, and streetside rapes can



open a portal to Rats' Alley, an infinite stretch of poorly lit alleyways, with neglected fire escapes, graffitied walls, and trash spilling from its containers. Portals also open between Rats' Alley and Delirium.



In addition to the Dark Citadels and Rats' Alley, Dis is also the home of the House of Fun, a tremendous arcade dedicated to tortures. Those who are victimized in the House of Fun find themselves spinning inside a giant pinball machine; they have been encased inside a silver ball, which lurches and rolls nauseatingly. The bumpers transmit an electrical charge through the hollow ball, shocking its prisoner. Eventually, the victim will slip down one of the three gutters and exit the pinball machine. It's likely that a group of people traveling together will find themselves split up here.

The left gutter leads to the Lady or the Tiger room, where there are only two doors and a wall slowly pressing in on prisoners. One door opens to a gigantic, hideously malformed, vicious tiger, while the other opens to the Sheila Nagig, an enormous vagina with fangs and an ancient hunger. The right gutter leads to the Hall of Mirrors, where your own mirror images rise to turn against you. Some of these may be identical images, while others are compressed or extended by concave and convex mirrors; then there are images of you as a child, you in the midst of some terrible act, you as an adolescent.

The central gutter drops its victims down to a bumper-car room, to ride around; but the rest of the bumper-cars have huge steel jaws, and at each pass they bite off a little more of your protection.

Sheol

A place of shadows and ghosts where the dead wander forever, outside of time. Boredom is perhaps the ultimate torture. All the shadows that once were men or women look exactly the same; some of them still walk around, although there is nothing to see or do anywhere. Most, however, sit or sprawl, gray on the gray ground, knowing nothing but the hollowness they feel and the hollowness in the eyes of everyone they see.

Those who come here feel as if they've always been here, as soon as they arrive, because time has stretched out into an eternal, unforgiving moment. Who knows? Perhaps only a few moments of our time pass, before these spirits bow down under the weight of their loneliness and forget, forget, forget everything; then they are drawn up to the Tohu vi' Bohu, the Primal Sea, to be reborn.



Nepharites

"Within each hell are as many other hells, as varied as the sins that built them. Between Dante's Inferno and Sartre's stark room lies an immense expanse, as yet unexplored. For as soon as human thought conceives a new version of Hell, that hell exists."

Alisa Kwitney

Few people can conceive of a relationship as profound or as despairing as the relationship between a nepharite and its victim. Nepharites, described in the Kult rulebook first edition, share a personal link with the soul it tortures. After all, this is its sole purpose; it answers the call of a human's feelings of guilt, and shapes itself according to her beliefs and fears. They might spend eternity locked in this embrace of meaning. What could be more intimate?

There are nepharites who do not touch victims themselves. A Nepharite Magister recruits new nepharites, imprinting their spiritual bodies with unique designs, known as Torment Palimpsests. Each Torment Palimpsest is individual, designed to correlate somehow with the nepharite in question. Carved into its body or soul, the Torment Palimpsest is actually the source of a nepharite's power. They can look like scarification, ritual tattooing, diseased flesh, metal piercings, razorwire, thorny vines, and so much more. A nepharite is an infinitely suffering thing, as well as a tormentor; the individual Torment Palimpsest is always extremely personal to the nepharite, in ways that might not be



apparent to anybody else. Carving a Torment Palimpsest is a terrible, unbearably painful, process, which strips a being of all its loyalties and memories.

Bone, sinew, and a wrapping of skin might be what hold your body together, but these are superfluous for a nepharite. The Torment Palimpsest is a nepharite's true body, although the nepharite has a body as well. If you were to destroy a nepharite's forearm from elbow to wrist, its hand would float as if the forearm were still there.

Nepharite Magisters create their own realms within Ti'it Ha-Yawen, and they answer directly to a Death Angel. Within a Magister's realm, it is served by a number of Berashith, small demon-creatures who respond to its will. The Magister has absolute power over the Berashith, so they appear and act according to its personality. The realm also corresponds to the Magister's personality, although the actual purgatories connected to it are the product of a Nepharite Cheza's imaginings. It is impossible to defeat a Magister on its own turf.

Somewhere in each realm is a Pillar of Nephesch, a struggling mass of twisting blackness, that resembles countless bodies writhing together-which is precisely what they are. Even as a purgator is tortured by a Nepharite Cheza, in a private and inconsoably painful purgatory, her spiritual body is added to the churning mass that is called a Pillar of Nephesch, and also occupies space as a pucker on the walls of Ti'it Ha-Yawen. These Pillars gather up all the energy the pained dead offer, gather up their suffering and lamentation, distilling it into a liquid for a Death Angel to drink. This liquid is known as Blood Ambrosia.

Built in to each Magister's Torment Palimpsest is a Phrixus. When the Phrixus is activated, the Magister's fingers begin to grow incredibly long, tapering to filaments that split into an uncountable number. Each of these filaments crosses between worlds and connects with someone who is suffering; the Magister can then see through these eyes and hear through these ears-the eyes and ears of everyone who is suffering at a given moment.

Its name might startle those who know about reality beyond the veils of Illusion, but there is another kind of nepharite that does not torture humans-this is the kind of creature known as a Nepharite Geburah. These are the punishers of nepharites who have failed their Magister, or of Magisters who have failed their Death Angel. They track down these stray wrong-doers, and drag them off to their very own purgatories.

The most common kind of nepharite is the Nepharite Cheza, usually created from humans such a long time ago that they have no recollection of their previous life. They appear as tormented beings themselves, pierced in ways no human being could live through, with their own unique Torment Palimpsest disfigured into their flesh.

The Labeled Vov

Jewish tradition holds that human redemption rests upon thirty-six righteous souls who, through their actions, justify man's ways to God. At any point in time, there are thirty-six truly decent human beings, without whom Hell would come to earth. These thirty-six are known as the Labeled Vov.

Tradition is almost right. There are thirty-six gates between Inferno and the Illusion, and each gate has a human gatekeeper. These gatekeepers cannot be killed; they die only of natural causes, at their appointed time. When a gatekeeper dies, someone else needs to assume her mantle, so it is always part of a gatekeeper's responsibilities to try to find a successor. The successor, however, is not invulnerable to attack until her predecessor is dead; this means that Infernal forces will try to destroy or kill anyone whom a gatekeeper might want to appoint.

The gates are shut as long as the gatekeepers live, but this doesn't mean the gates are powerless. Razides and

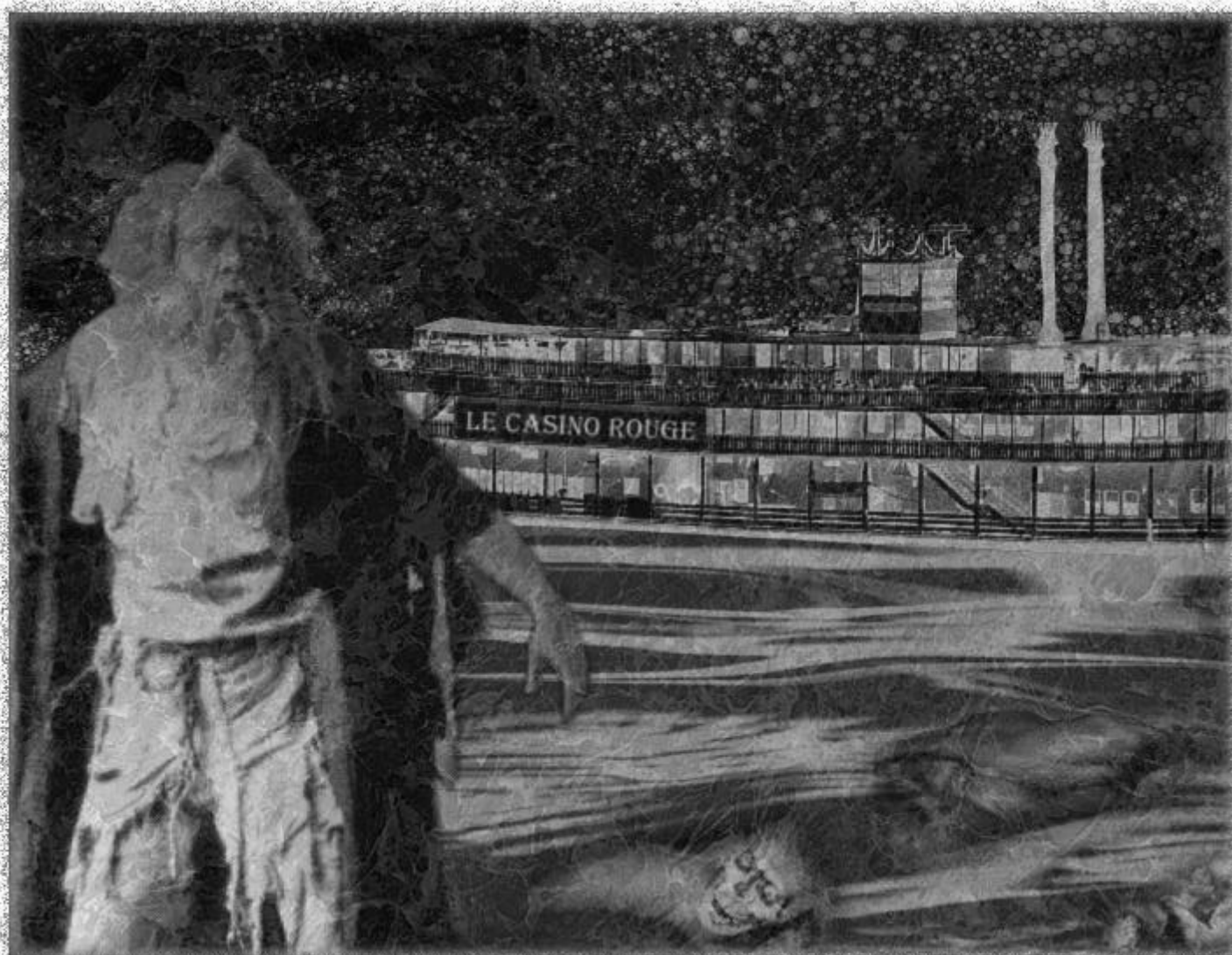
Nepharites cannot pass through these gates, but the gates themselves can take on tempting disguises in order to draw people to their damnation.

One such gate, Amprodias, has taken on the appearance of a Mississippi riverboat, Le Casino Rouge. The riverboat never seems to dock overnight; it picks up passengers and sets off. Cajun cooking, slot machines, blackjack, craps shooting, roulette, and poker provide much of the activity above-decks, while underage prostitutes provide some nocturnal warmth.

There are six cooks in the kitchen, all of whom were excellent chefs when they were still alive; dead, their eyes have been gouged out and they have been left to prepare an astonishing amount of food, for all eternity. Anyone who sees through the Illusion will notice blood, maggots, and the occasional human knucklebone in the food.

The slot machines accept discs of flesh as well as tokens; the most compulsive gamblers stand there day and night, cutting at their own skin for a chance at a jackpot. The ones who have been there longest have organs hanging out through their skin.

The prostitutes are all girls ten or twelve years old, known as the Nashimiron. They are beautiful and a little awkward,



at the start of puberty; during sex they grow progressively older. By the time it's over, the woman looks to be a hundred years old.

Amprodias' gatekeeper is Phillippe Metoyer, a homeless Creole man in his fifties. People think Metoyer is a drunk, because he occasionally yells at the demons that torment him, which only he can see. He wanders Louisiana on foot, trying to warn everyone about the evil riverboat, but no one believes him. He is emphysemic and covered with mosquito bites, as anyone would be who slept outside through a Louisiana summer. Metoyer thinks his death is coming, so he is eager to find someone to succeed him as gatekeeper. The Inferno creatures, for their part, would like to see Metoyer arrested on some trumped-up charge before he manages to find a successor.

Paradise and its Devils

There is, of course, a Paradise, where the souls of those with positive mental balance go after death. It may not be what they expect. Much of Paradise is burned, and the corpses of angels who were killed have never been cleaned up; they rot in the ivory halls. Excesses of glory suddenly strike its residence with ecstasy enough to kill, blinding geometries or musics in a too-much of beauty that no one could withstand, let alone desire. Understanding that Inferno is even worse than Paradise, many souls here become sycophantic, serving the whims of the angels, who have taken every advantage in the absence of the Demiurge. Many of them keep harems or stables full of human souls, who thought they were coming here to be saved.

The angel Balzazis, driven mad by the Demiurge's departure, has attempted to re-create Paradise on a distant planet. Balzazis routinely kidnaps humans and forces them to live in his Eden Two, where a middle-aged, married accountant might be forced to mate with a partner the angel has chosen at random. Balzazis holds Eden Two's inhabitants to a strangely rigid moral code, straight out of the Book of Genesis: they must have sex, but without desire; they must go naked, but be modest. The angel has tamed the planet's nature-it's nothing like Gaia-but Eden Two is still inhospitable to newborn babies abandoned on its slopes and sallow city-dwellers suddenly in an alien wilderness. Even a rugged farmer might have difficulty here, on the alien landscape, unable to tell which of these unfamiliar plants might be deadly when ingested.

Many of the angels have fallen, gone to serve Astaroth since they could not survive without the Demiurge to tell them what to do. It was this defection that began the struggle that devastated Paradise. Notably, some of these fallen angels are Angra Mainyu, the Adversary; Lucifer, the Lord of Light; Belial, the Worthless; Mastema, the Great Enemy, who is half human, half fallen angel; Beelzeboul, the Lord of Excrement, who now lives in Dis; Beelzebub, the Lord of Flies; Azazel, Lord of the Wasteland, neglecting his duties in Gehenna; Ukoback, now assigned to keep hell's fires burning; Samiaza, Yomael, and Urakabameel, who were the leaders of the fallen, and Xaphan, who set fire to Paradise.

FINE